

The Medieval

Magazine

Volume 2 Number 28

October 30, 2016

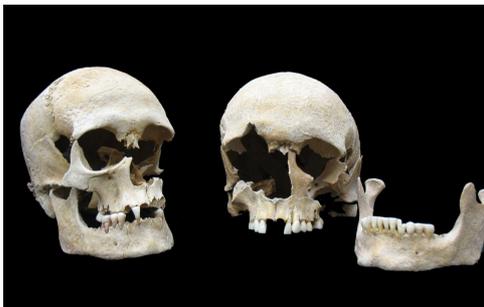


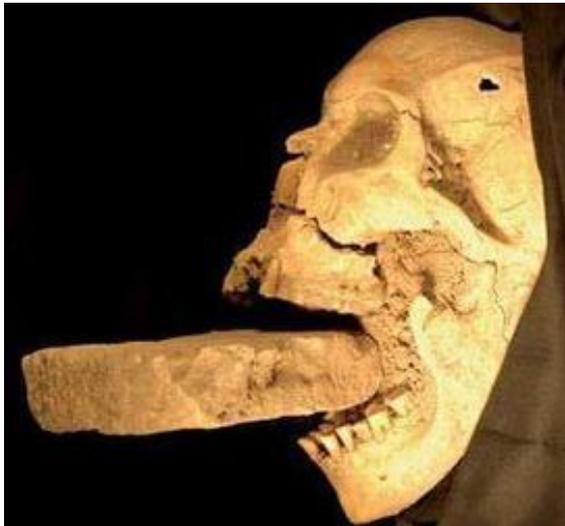
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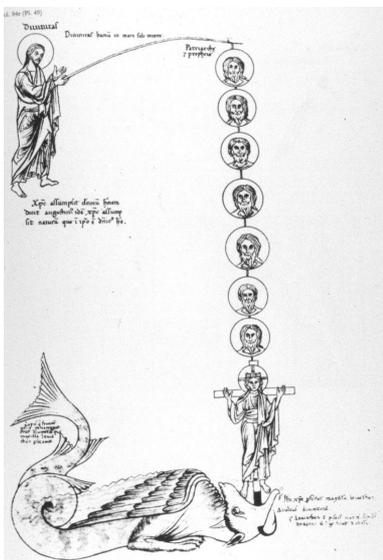
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THE MEDIEVAL MAGAZINE

Editors: Sandra Alvarez and Danielle Trynoski

Website: www.medievalists.net

This digital magazine is published bi-monthly.

Cover Photo Credit:

Medieval stuff + Halloween stuff = lots of fun

Dear Ghouls and Goblins,

I've always love Halloween. In fact, it's my favourite holiday. Pumpkin carving, trick o' treating as a kid, and all the fabulous costumes I have worn over the years. As an adult, my love of Halloween has blossomed into a love horror movies and scary stories. To say that I looked forward to putting together this issue would be a grave understatement (pun intended!)

As a nod to our *The Walking Dead* fans (of which Peter and I - Sandra speaking in this Letter from the Editor - count ourselves) **Daniéle Cybulskie** looks at medieval zombies - and more importantly, how to kill them! We have two fantastic excerpts this issue to inspire your next book purchase: ***Pilgrim Routes of the British Isles*** by **Emma J. Wells**, which I reviewed **in our last issue**, and ***Henry III: The Son of Magna Carta*** by **Matthew Lewis**. I caught up with Lewis in London at his book launch this week and that is featured in our new segment, *Londinium*. We've also got stories of cemeteries, momento mori, and the medieval dead! Welcome to our spooktacular Halloween issue. Ghosts, ghouls, and all manner of medieval things that go bump in the night are here to greet you!

insert evil laugh

Ghoulishly yours,

Spooky Sandra & Demon Dani

Sandra Alvarez

Sandra is the co-founder and editor of Medievalists.net, and The Medieval Magazine. Sandra has a Hon. B. A. from the University of Toronto in Medieval Studies, & a diploma in Human Resources from George Brown College. She is a content writer for a digital marketing agency & lives in London, England with her Jack Russell Terrier, Buffy. When she's not doing something medieval, she can be found with her nose in a book, attempting to learn 3 languages, & planning her next adventure. You can follow her on Twitter @mediaevalgirl or check out her blog Mediaevalgirl.com.



Danielle (Dani) Trynoski

Danielle earned her MA in Medieval Archaeology at the University of York in England. She is passionate about "the stuff" beyond the text of primary sources, & how modern people engage with medieval culture. When she's not visiting museums and historical sites, she's riding horses, reading about Vikings, or making loose leaf tea in a French Press. She currently lives in southern California and manages CuratoryStory.com. She is a contributor to Medievalists.net & editor at The Medieval Magazine. You can follow Dani on Twitter: @MissDaniTryn.



Danièle Cybulskie

Also known as The Five-Minute Medievalist, Danièle studied Cultural Studies & English at Trent University, earning her MA at the University of Toronto, where she specialized in medieval literature & Renaissance drama. Currently, she teaches a course on medievalism through OntarioLearn, & is the author of The Five-Minute Medievalist. When she is not reading or writing, Danièle can be found drinking tea, practicing archery, or building a backyard trebuchet. You can follow her on Twitter @5MinMedievalist or visit her website,



Peter Konieczny

Along with being a co-founder and contributor at Medievalists.net, Peter is the editor of Medieval Warfare Magazine, and the web admin at De Re Militari: The Society for Medieval Military History. He has been working to spread knowledge about the Middle Ages online for over 15 years. Peter lives near Toronto, Canada, and enjoys all the books publishers send to him. When he is not reading about medieval history, you can find him trying to keep up with his son in Minecraft. Follow Peter on Twitter @medievalicious.



Top 10 Strange Things done with the Medieval Dead

In 2014, the story of a 13-year-old girl who was buried face down in a medieval grave in Italy led us to look into what unusual things happen to the dead in the Middle Ages. From piles of bones to embalmed hearts, with stories about mass graves and sleeping for hundreds of years, here is our top 10 list of strange things done with the medieval dead.



Dargavs - City of the Dead: Just outside the village of Dargavs in North Ossetia lies a complex of 99 different tombs and crypts. Historians believe that it dates back to the 12th or 14th century, and for hundreds of years it has served as the burial ground for the villagers. Local myths and legends include stories of how entire families, infected by the plague, would go into a crypt and await death.

Santa María de Wamba: In the northern Spanish town of Wamba, a monastery was established in the 10th century. Over the centuries, thousands of people were buried around it, but sometime between the 15th and 17th century the monastery decided to dig up the cemetery. They took all the bones and put them into huge piles inside a shrine. At the entrance to the shrine one can read this epitaph: "As you see yourself, I saw myself too. As you see me, you will see yourself. Everything ends in this. Think about it and you won't fall into sin."



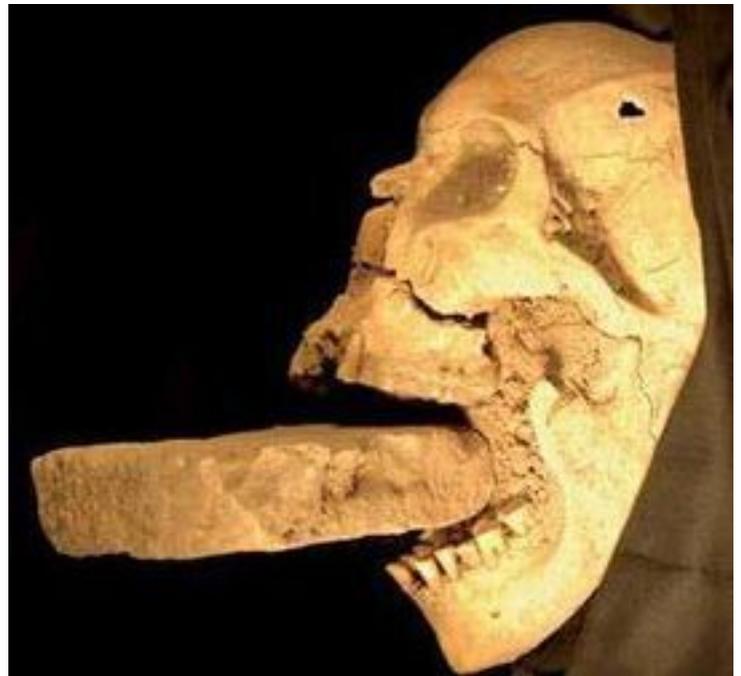
Seldec Ossuary: This small chapel in the Czech Republic contains the skeletons of between 40,000 and 70,000 people, whose bones have in many cases been arranged to form decorations and furnishings for the chapel. By the end of the 13th century this chapel had become a popular site with people from around the region wanting to be buried here. By the 16th century the monks began using the bones as decorations, including creating a chandelier.





Deviant Burials: This one of two skeletons discovered in 2011 near the Irish lake of Lough Key. One was an elderly man and the other a young adult male, and both were buried in the 8th century. They also both had large rocks jammed into their mouths. Scholars believe that those who buried the men feared they might rise from the dead as revenants.

Vampire Skeletons: Many other examples exist of 'vampire' skeletons have been found throughout Europe. Bricks or rocks were often thrust into their mouth, under the belief that this would prevent the corpse from rising from the dead. The image here is of a Venetian woman, whose corpse was found buried with plague victims from the 16th century. Some parts of Europe had their own local traditions - one 800-year-old skeleton found in Bulgaria was stabbed through the chest with iron rod.



Viking Mass Grave: In 2010 construction workers building a road near the English town of Ridgeway uncovered a bone. The archaeologists came and began digging - and soon found dozens of bodies, all beheaded. Eventually 51 skulls were found - scientific tests determined they were from Denmark and lived between 972 and 1025 AD. The research suggests these men were brought to pits here, stripped, and then executed, but the mystery remains on why these men were killed.

Richard the Lionheart's embalmed heart: During the High Middle Ages, the practice of dissecting corpses and embalming their remains was popular for royalty and other high ranking members of society. When King Richard I was killed during a siege in 1199, his body was opened up and had its internal organs removed and buried in a coffin near the site he died. Meanwhile, his heart was taken separately and sent to a church in Normandy, and the rest of his body was transported to Fontevraud Abbey to be buried close to his father Henry II.



Head of John the Baptist: One of the most revered relics in the Christian and Islamic religions is the head of John the Baptist. It is so popular that there are several claims to who possesses the head. The Papacy states the head on display in San Silvestro in Capite in Rome is that of John the Baptist, but you can also find John's head at Amiens Cathedral in France. Meanwhile, Islamic tradition states that head was placed in what is now the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. This hasn't stopped several others from claiming to possess or to have recently found his head.





Relics and Reliquaries: Relics of saints, including their bodies and body parts were very important in medieval religion. Ornate reliquaries were built to house these relics, and many of them were shaped to look like the body parts they carried. Arm reliquaries were very popular, as they were useful as a liturgical prop.

The Seven Sleepers: There are several medieval legends about people, including kings such as Arthur and Charlemagne, who will one day return from the dead. One of the most



famous stories is that of The Seven Sleepers: how a group of young Christians hid in a cave to escape Roman persecution in the third century. They then woke up 180 years later to find that the world had changed.

Reconstructing the 6th century plague from a Victim



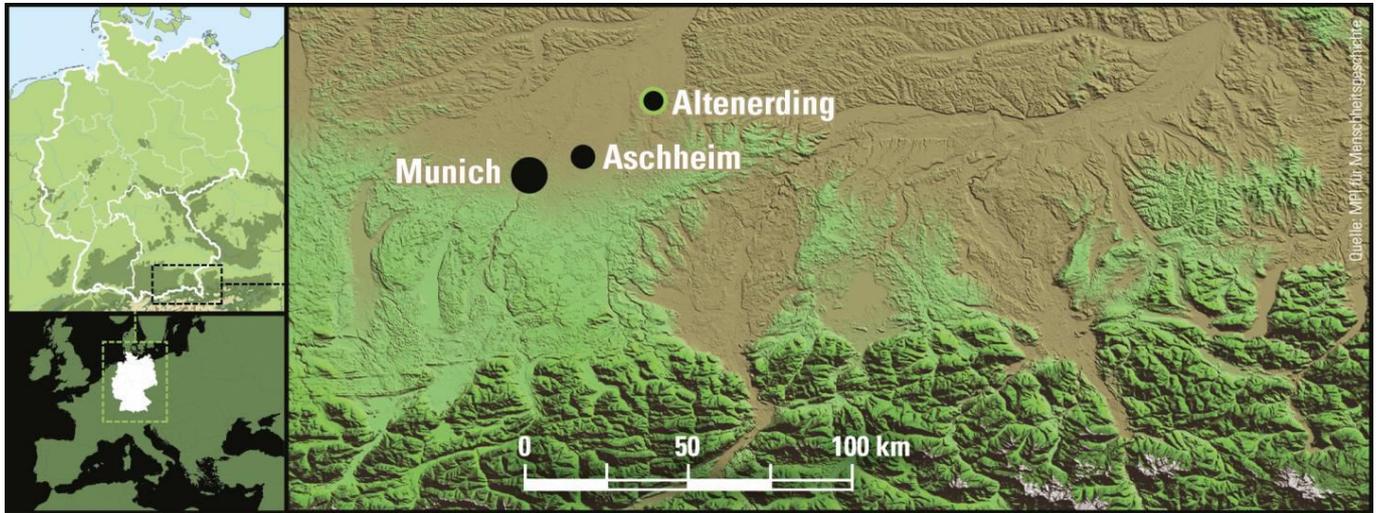
*Skulls of both plague victims buried together in one grave at the Altenerding cemetery. Right: Individual 1175 (female, 25-30 years old) left: individual 1176, (male, 20 to 25 years old). The *Yersinia pestis* genome was extracted from individual 1175. Image by State Collection of Anthropology and Palaeoanatomy Munich*

Before the infamous Black Death, the first great plague epidemic was the Justinian plague, which, over the course of two centuries, wiped out up to an estimated 50 million (15 percent) of the world's population throughout the Byzantine Empire-----and may have helped speed the decline of the eastern Roman Empire.

No one knows why it disappeared. Recent molecular clues from ancient plague victims have suggested that plague

may have been caused by the same bacterium, *Yersinia pestis*, which was responsible for the Black Death. But the geographic reach, mortality and impact of the Justinian pandemic are not fully known.

Both information from ancient hosts and bacteria could shed light on the role of plague, which has afflicted mankind for more than 5,000 years.



*Geographical map specifying the location of the archaeological site "Altenerding". The other site, where *Y. pestis* has been identified, and its genome has been previously reconstructed (Wagner et al. 2014), is the cemetery of Aschheim, which is located approximately 20 km southwest of Altenerding. Image by State Collection of Anthropology and Palaeoanatomy Munich*

Now, scientists based in Germany, including Michal Feldman, Johannes Krause, Michaela Harbeck and colleagues have confirmed this by recovering the bacterial culprit from sixth century skeletons found in Altenerding, an ancient southern German burial site near Munich. The Altenerding genome dates back to the beginning of the plague. They have generated the first high-coverage genome of the bacterial agent responsible for the Justinian plague. In addition to revealing new insights in the molecular evolution of *Yersinia pestis* since the Byzantine times, the new sequence shows features that could not be detected due to the limitations in the coverage of a draft genome previously reported by Wagner*, including 30 newly identified mutations and structural rearrangements unique to the Justinianic

strain., as well as correcting 19 false positive mutations.

"The fact that the archeological skeletons which gave these exciting insights were excavated over 50 years ago underscores the importance of maintaining well curated anthropological collections," said author Michaela Harbeck.

"We were very fortunate to find another plague victim with very good DNA preservation in a graveyard just a few kilometers from where the individual analyzed in Wagner et al. was found. It provided us with the great opportunity to reconstruct the first high quality genome in addition to the previously published draft genome."

Three are located in genes critical to plague virulence: *nrdE*, *fadJ* and *pcp* genes.

Their data also suggested that the strain was more genetically diverse than previously thought. How and why the pathogen reached Germany remains a mystery.

This new findings allow the authors to develop guidelines that could help improve the quality and authenticity of genomic data recovered from candidate ancient pathogens. And with plague classified as a re-emerging infectious disease in certain regions, an important historic, high-quality reference resource has been generated to offer insights into key the evolutionary changes, adaptation and human impact of plague.

”Our research confirms that the Justinianic plague reached far beyond the historically documented affected region

and provides new insights into the evolutionary history of *Yersinia pestis*, illustrating the potential of ancient genomic reconstructions to broaden our understanding of pathogen evolution and of historical events,” said research colleague Michal Feldman. ”Our reanalysis of previous datasets stresses the importance of following strict criteria to avoid errors in the reconstruction of ancient pathogen genomes.”

**Wagner DM, Klunk J, Harbeck M, Devault A, Waglechner N, Sahl JW, Enk J, Birdsell DN, Kuch M, Lumibao C. 2014. *Yersinia pestis* and the Plague of Justinian 541- 543 AD: A genomic analysis. *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* 14(4):319-26.

*Adult woman AE1175 (left) and adult man AE1176 (right) excavated at Altenerding and found positive for presence of *Y. pestis* © State Collection of Anthropology and Palaeoanatomy Munich). The arrow shows the third Molar sampled from individual AE1175 from which the Altenerding high coverage genome was obtained. Grave goods of individual AE1175 and AE1176 typical of the middle of the 6th century (© Archaeological State Collection Munich), Grave goods not shown true to scale). Image by State Collection of Anthropology and Paleoanatomy Munich*



Skeletons: Our Buried Bones

This year, Wellcome Collection and the Museum of London are collaborating to unearth the stories behind bones from burial grounds across the UK. 'Skeletons: Our Buried Bones' will see skeletons from the Museum of London's 20,000-strong collection go on a UK-wide tour for the first time, starting at The Hunterian, University of Glasgow, where they will be displayed from 19 August, alongside skeletons from burial grounds in Scotland.

This is a touring exhibition that, after Glasgow, will travel to Bristol and Leeds in 2017, displaying the Museum of London's skeletons alongside bones discovered locally. In-depth analysis by experts at the Museum of London has provided insights into the health and history of each individual, helping to bring to life the stories that have long been hidden beneath the ground.

The skeletons on display in Glasgow reflect a rich and varied past, with individuals coming from diverse locations, both geographically and socially, and periods of time.

Excavations have uncovered burial grounds across the UK, ranging from

the Neolithic period through the Iron Age to Roman London and up to the 19th century. Each individual skeleton reveals aspects of their life and times, including fractures and trauma, multiple myeloma – cancer, the effects of syphilis, rickets or arthritis, and tooth decay.

Emily Sargent, curator at Wellcome Collection, said:

"Spanning thousands of years and from opposite ends of the country and social scales, the bones of these individuals offer us a rare and special glimpse into history. Yet we identify with their rotten teeth or broken bones, and are reminded that

Exhibition Tour Schedule

Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow, 19 August 2016-8 January 2017

M Shed, Bristol, April 2017-August 2017

Leeds City Museum, Leeds, September 2017-January 2018

skeletons can tell us more about what people lived with, rather than what they died from."

Sharon Ament, Director of the Museum of London, said:

"This is the first time our skeletons have gone on tour and really shows how museums at opposite ends of the UK can work together to show their joint collections. We can learn a lot from the bones of our ancestors, who all lived through very different versions of the London we know today, and this is a wonderful opportunity to share their stories alongside those of their local Scottish counterparts for the first time."

Research carried out on the skeletons has helped shed new light on the grounds they were discovered in and the circumstances in which they were buried, from plague pits in urban London to the beaches of South Uist." Specially commissioned photographs by photographer Thomas Adank

capture the sites as they are now, and will be displayed in the exhibition next to each skeleton, contextualising them as a reminder of the layers of human history all around us.

Jelena Bekvalac, Curator of Human Osteology at the Museum of London, said:

"Research carried out on these skeletons has given us vital clues into the lives of these individuals, some of whom lived thousands of years ago. Putting them in context with where they were buried and what those sites look like now will mean visitors will have a real, tangible connection to these people. It is a unique opportunity for the skeletons from London to be displayed in Glasgow alongside their Scottish counterparts, and truly demonstrates the rich diversity of burial in the British Isles."

Museum of London skeletons

- > An adult Roman male who was discovered to have multiple myeloma, a type of blood cancer.
- > A Medieval male aged between 36-45 yrs old, from the Black Death catastrophe cemetery, East Smithfield who, although likely died from plague, had an arrowhead lodged in his spine.
- > A Medieval male aged around 46 yrs old from Bermondsey Abbey who sustained multiple injuries and fractures throughout his life.
- > A Post-medieval female aged between 17-25 yrs old from Crossbones – a burial ground in Southwark for paupers and 'single women' (prostitutes) – who sadly suffered the ravages of syphilis

Skeletons from Scottish collections

- > A Neolithic individual from Tiree, Inner Hebrides, from The Hunterian collections, whose distinctive sternum suggests a childhood vitamin D deficiency.
- > A Pictish female from South Uist, Outer Hebrides, on loan from the Museum of the Isles. Aged between 36 and 45, her teeth show signs of severe decay and heavy wear.
- > A late Medieval possible murder victim from Perth's Horse Cross cemetery on loan from Perth Museum & Art Gallery.
- > A late Iron Age male from Blair Atholl, Perthshire, also on loan from Perth Museum and Art Gallery with lesions in the ribs indicating a chest infection.

Islamic Art Circle begins at University of York

Lecture and discussion series aims to enhance understanding and collaboration

The University of York will host the first Islamic Art Circle in the north of England – a series of talks exploring Islamic art and heritage. A collaboration between the University’s Islamic Society and the Department of History of Art, the Islamic Art Circle events are the first to be hosted outside of London, Oxford and Cambridge. Launching on Thursday 13 October, nine events will take place throughout the year, all aimed at a non-specialist audience.

The launch event, *Storytelling in the Great Mongol Shahnama*, will see Professor Robert Hillenbrand, author of ten books on Islamic architecture and paintings, speak on the *Shahnama* – the national epic of Iran. Part myth, legend, history and romance, the *Mongol Shahnama* was commissioned by a member of the royal family in the early fourteenth-century, after the Mongol conversion to Islam.

Professor Robert Hillenbrand is Professor Emeritus of Fine Art at Edinburgh University and Professor of Islamic Art at St Andrews University. He has written ten books on Islamic architecture and painting, edited seven books and co-edited four more. He has also published some 120 articles on aspects of Islamic art and architecture. He has held visiting professorships at seven universities and was Slade Professor of Art at Cambridge in 2008. In 2006 he was awarded the Book of the Year prize of the Islamic Republic of Iran for *Shahnama: The Visual Language of the Book of Kings*. He has visited Iran many times, and travels regularly to Central Asia, Northern India and the Middle East.

Subsequent events include *Exploration, Orientalism and Revival: the European Discovery of Egypt’s Islamic Heritage* on 17 November, and *William Holman Hunt: Pre-Raphaelite and Orientalist* on 1 December.

Saher Ahmed, Secretary of the University of York Islamic Society, said: “The Muslim world spans from the borders of China to Spain, and offers a rich and varied artistic heritage. Indeed Yorkshire is home to a large Muslim community with roots in South Asia.

The Islamic world's architectural legacy includes the Alhambra Palace in Granada, the Taj Mahal in Agra, the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, and the minaret of Jam in Ghor, Afghanistan. The material legacy includes ceramics, metalwork, textiles, and beautifully illustrated manuscripts."

"Far from popular misconception, a rich and diverse artistic heritage exists, and continues to flourish within the Muslim world today. We are launching the York Islamic Art Circle to encourage discussion, learning and debate, open to the general public. In the coming months, we will explore Persian painting, orientalism, mythology, ceramic art, Islamic gardens, overland travel in the Islamic eastern Mediterranean, textiles, and cross-cultural exchange. All of our talks are aimed at a non-specialist audience - you do not have to be a specialist to enjoy Islamic art.'

The first Islamic Art Circle event occurred on Thursday 13 October at the University of York's Ron Cooke Hub.

For more information about Islamic Art Circle events, email: Islamic-art@york.ac.uk

Upcoming events:

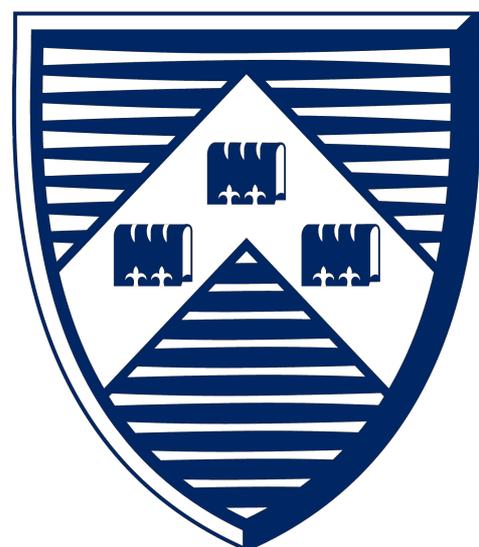
"Exploration, Orientalism and revival: The European discovery of Egypt's Islamic heritage" with Professor Doris Behrens-Abouseif, SOAS University of London

To register for this Islamic Art Circle on November 17, visit <http://www.york.ac.uk/news-and-events/events/public-lectures/autumn-16/exploration-orientalism/>

"William Holman Hunt: Pre-Raphaelite and Orientalist" with Dr Nicholas Tromans, Kingston University

To register for this Islamic Art Circle on December 1, visit <https://www.york.ac.uk/news-and-events/events/public-lectures/autumn-16/william-holman-hunt/>

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Paranormal Activity in Medieval England: The Ghosts of Byland Abbey

By Peter Konieczny



Premonition by Henryk Weyssenhoff, probably from 1893

Just like today, many people in medieval England believed in ghosts and the paranormal. Throughout the Middle Ages, one can find countless references about the spirits of the dead wandering the land of the living. While at times they were things to be feared, these ghosts were usually not interested in haunting. Instead these medieval spectres often needed help.

The stories about ghosts from medieval England (and other parts of Europe) were often connected the Catholic idea of Purgatory. Emerging in the twelfth-century, this was the belief that many souls did not go directly to Heaven or Hell – instead they would find themselves in an intermediate state, where they had to cleanse themselves of their sins before entering Paradise.

The living, who were understandably anxious about the souls of their dead parents and other family members, had ways of helping them - – masses could be said for the souls of people, which would lessen the time they spend in Purgatory. By the later Middle Ages the church had a lucrative business going on, as they had set up a system, known as chantries, where people could pay the salary of a priest to have them perform masses for particularly people (this was often set up by the person in their will with the masses to be done for themselves), and by selling indulgences, where people could literally pay money to have their time in Purgatory reduced. If the soul was not in Heaven or Hell, it had to be somewhere, and that place could be hanging around Earth, generally not getting in anyone's way. However, some spirits could appear to and interact with the living. Often they did so because they wanted their assistance in leaving Purgatory. For example, one tale recorded in a 15th-century commonplace book explained that a man was visited by the 'dark shadow' of his dead mistress, who told him *"I can be freed from the punishment I am suffering, if masses were said for me by good priests."*

In other cases the ghost might ask a person to return a stolen good to its rightful owner, or even to pay a debt. In one story from 1457, a ghost demanded that his nephew go on a pilgrimage to Compostella in Spain, apparently the only place where a mass could be said that would release the uncle from Purgatory.



Byland Abbey

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"I can be freed from the punishment I am suffering, if masses were said for me by good priests."

In other cases the ghost might ask a person to return a stolen good to its rightful owner, or even to pay a debt. In one story from 1457, a ghost demanded that his nephew go on a pilgrimage to Compostella in Spain, apparently the only place where a mass could be said that would release the uncle from Purgatory.

Among the numerous stories of paranormal activity written down in medieval England are twelve tales from Byland Abbey. Around the year 1400, one of the monks made use of a few leftover pages at the end of the book to record stories he had heard. These were often frightening tales – the monk was even scared to write it! – but they reveal how people dealt with ghosts. Jacqueline Simpson, in her article *Repentant soul or walking corpse? Debatable apparitions in Medieval England*, explains that "most of the Byland stories have the following pattern: a living man encounters an alarming ghost; he urges it to say why it has appeared; it replies that it is suffering because of an unforgiven sin, which requires posthumous absolution and/or some requiem Masses; the living man informs a priest, who fulfils the request; the ghost can rest."

She adds that in most of these tales from Byland Abbey, these ghosts:

However frightening they look at first, they are not demonic, and they do not seriously injure people or spread plague; on the contrary, they long for forgiveness and peace, but being unable to take any initiative themselves must wait for a living man to ask what the trouble is, and offer help; they can then confess, be absolved, and find rest through Masses and prayers offered on their behalf.

Next, concerning another spirit following after William de Bradeforth and shouting "how, how, how," three times over three nights.. It happened that on the fourth night, about midnight William returned to the new place [sic] from the village of Ampleforth. And while he was going back along the road heard a terrifying voice yelling far behind him, as if it were on a mountain. A moment later it yelled again but this time nearer. A third time he heard the voice shouting at the crossroads ahead of him, and then he saw a pale horse. His dog barked meekly, but then hid itself between William's legs utterly terrified. When this happened, William charged the spirit in the name of the Lord and by the power of the blood of Jesus Christ to depart and not block his path. When the spirit heard this, it withdrew, looking like a canvas sail unfurling its four corners and billowing away. From this it can be gathered that this was a spirit greatly wanting to be conjured and given effective aid.

Remember that the said Robert, son of Robert Botelby of Kilburn, died and was buried in the graveyard. But it was his custom to go forth from his grave at night and disturb and frighten the villagers; the dogs in the village followed behind him barking ferociously. Finally, the young men of the village were talking together and they proposed to capture him any way they could. They met at the graveyard, but at the sight of him, they all fled except for two of them. Of these, Robert Foxton, grabbed him as he was going out of the graveyard and put him on the church-stile. His friend shouted bravely, "Hold him tight till I get there." Robert yelled back, "Run to the parish priest who can conjure him. For God willing, what I've got, I'll hold till the priest gets here." His friend hurried swiftly to the parish priest and he came and conjured the ghost in the name of the holy Trinity and by the power of Jesus Christ to tell them what they asked. So conjured, the ghost started speaking not with his tongue but from deep within his innards, echoing like an empty barrel. He confessed his various sins. After the priest heard these, he gave him absolution. But he cautioned the two young men who had captured the ghost not to reveal any part of his confession. Afterwards, he left the ghost to rest in peace, God willing. But it is said that before his absolution, he would stand at the doors and windows of houses, and beneath their walls and partitions as if listening, perhaps waiting for someone to come out and conjure him to help him in his need. Others say that he had aided and plotted the murder of a certain man, and that he had done other evil things the particulars of which should not be mentioned at present.

Old people tell how a certain James Tankerlay, formerly Rector of Kirkby, was buried in the Chapter House at Byland, but used to walk forth as far as Kirkby by night, and one night he struck out one eye of his former mistress. And it is said that the abbot and monks had his body dug up from the grave, together with the coffin, and forced Roger Wayneman to cart it as far as Gormire, and how when they were throwing this coffin in the water the oxen almost sank in too in their terror. May I not be in any peril myself for writing such things, for I have written just what I heard from my seniors! And may God Omnipotent have mercy on him, if indeed he might be among the number of those to be saved!

To learn more, see also:

Jo Bath, "Dark Shadows: The English Ghost, 1100-1530" *Medieval History*, Issue 9 (2004)

A.J. Grant, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories" *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 27 (1924),

M.R. James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories" *English Historical Review*, Vol.37 (1922)

Andrew Joynes, *Medieval Ghost Stories: An Anthology of Miracles, Marvels and Prodigies* (Boydell, 2003)

Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society* (Chicago, 1998)

Feature

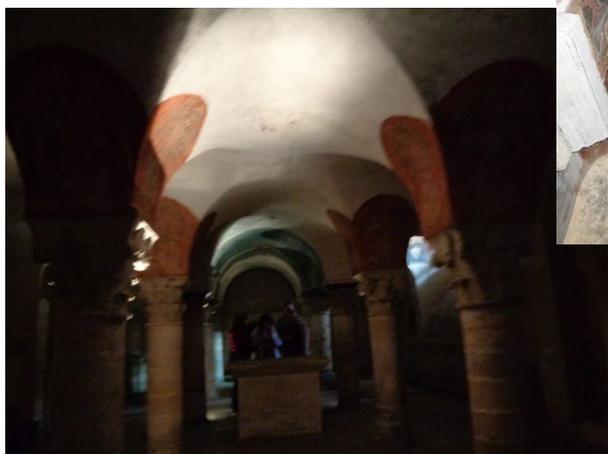
Building the Medieval

Crypt: A vaulted space or underground chamber beneath the pavement of a church, often housing relics or tombs. May contain mausoleum or sepulcher. Because of the protection from light and weather, the decorative elements in crypts are sometimes surprisingly well-preserved.

Originally built as additional sacred space beneath the main altar of a church, many medieval crypts housed relics. This allowed pilgrims and worshipers to view the relics without interrupting mass at the altar. As pilgrimages increased in the 11th century, relics frequently moved "upstairs" to increase accessibility to pilgrims and increase the church's likelihood of receiving donations. The crypt of a medieval church was used for tombs and burials to provide additional space near the main altar, and this usage continued throughout the Middle Ages. These spaces may also be identified as hall crypts or confessios.

Confessio: A type of crypt which consists of a series of linked passages. The most famous confessio crypt during the Middle Ages was that of Old Saint Peter's church in Rome, which contained the tomb of Saint Peter.

Hall crypt: A crypt in the form of a large space of uniform height, subdivided by columns. Photos by D. Trynoski. Upper left: Hall crypt at Monestir Sant Pere de Rodes. Lower Left: Hall crypt of Bayeux Cathedral. Upper Right: Decorated capitals with paint remnants at 12th cen crypt of St. Aignan's Church. Center & Lower Right: Frescoes from 12-15th cen. in crypt of St. Aignan's.



The Getty Center Enchants with Alchemy

*Exhibition series explores the
marvelous, multi-faceted world of
this mysterious science*

by Danielle Trynoski



*"Doctor Examining a Flask
Before a Patient within a
Urinoscropy Wheel," artist
unknown, author Gilles de
Corbeil, Venice, 1494. Lent by
the History and Special
Collections for the Sciences,
UCLA Library Special
Collections.*

Long shrouded in secrecy, alchemy was once considered the highest of arts. Straddling art, science, and natural philosophy, alchemy has proven key to both the materiality and creative expression embedded in artistic output, from ancient sculpture and the decorative arts to medieval illumination, and masterpieces in paint, print, and a panoply of media from the European Renaissance to the present day.

"Alchemy is a fascinating subject that cuts across continents and epochs," said Thomas W. Gaehtgens, director of

the Getty Research Institute. "It is because the Getty Research Institute collections are so diverse and intricately connected that we are able to deeply investigate and present this often misunderstood subject. This exhibition reflects the human ambition to explore and understand the wonders, the materiality, and the laws of nature since the earliest times. Imagination, curiosity, scholarship, enchantment, science, philosophy, and chemistry amalgamate in the artistic processes of Alchemy."



*Above: A view of The Art of Alchemy at the GRI.
Right: A few details from the Ripley Scroll.*



These three related exhibits at the Getty all explore the principles of alchemy and its modern ancestor, chemistry. The first reference to alchemy is in Egypt in the 1st century A.D. The Egyptians had a long-standing mastery of materials in building, creating, synthesizing, and painting. This knowledge combined with Greek natural philosophy led to an interest in creating synthetic materials from the systematic treatment of natural ones. The manifestation of this is the blending of pharmaceutical practices with art practices, and it's this mixing which really captures the attention of the curators of these three exhibits. It's easy to see why alchemy is considered the fore-runner to modern chemistry, as these exhibits explore in multiple narratives, yet also perfectly suited to an art museum exhibit. The exhibit content is supplemented by the unique perspectives of the exhibitions' curators: several of them are full-time art and manuscript conservators. This means that the objects were carefully selected to

showcase the creation process of these art pieces, and interpret the alchemy involved in that creation. Thematically cohesive, the exhibitions all included little extra touches which expanded the scope to address more facets of the topic at hand. Curator tours of each exhibit provided a little extra insight, such as Nancy Turner's comment about the palette of medieval colors placed discreetly behind one of the manuscripts. This palette is collecting data on the environmental effects of light, humidity, and temperature on the medieval manuscripts. Changes in the materials will be evaluated to better understand the evolution of materials in manuscripts, and to make more informed decisions on exhibiting them in the future.

The Art of Alchemy, hosted at the Getty Research Institute, is produced in a rich color palette of burgundy with gold accents and slate blue with silver accents. It runs on a roughly

chronological layout, starting with Greco-Roman philosophies about the physical nature of the world its elements, moving into medieval Asia, medieval Europe, early modern Europe, and finally into modern industry.

The Art of Alchemy examines the impact of alchemy around the world on artistic practice and its expression in visual culture from antiquity to the present. On view at the Getty Research Institute through February 12, 2017, the show features over 100 objects, including manuscripts, rare books, prints, sculpture, and other works of art dating from the 3rd century BCE to the 20th century. The exhibition was organized in partnership with the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, where it will be on view in 2017, and is curated by David Brafman, associate curator of rare books with assistance from Rhiannon Knol. The exhibition is presented in three parts: "*Alchemical Creation*," "*Alchemy and Creativity*," and "*Alchemical Culture*."

The stand-out objects in the "*Alchemical Creation*" section are the Red Lead Mummy Portrait and the depictions of Hermes Trismegistos. The Red Lead Mummy Portrait is one of the finest examples of Roman Egyptian art work, and is a unique manifestation of early alchemy. The lead used in the red paint not only gave the mummy portrait a striking frame, but also defended the mummy from rodents. The creation and application of the pigment had effects in multiple ways; alchemists regularly grappled with this ripple effect. Hermes Trismegistos, a philosopher,

was absorbed into the alchemists' mythos and dogma as a mythic father-figure of alchemical practice. The display involves loans from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, University of California Los Angeles Bio-Medical Collections, and Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Despite the complicated logistics, curator David Brafman saw the opportunity to tell the story of how alchemy was an integral part of trade and exchange in the past. The famous Silk Road could also be called the Alchemy Road, since sulfur, cinnabar, and other alchemical ingredients traveled along with silk and other luxuries.

Moving further into the exhibit in "*Alchemy and Creativity*" and "*Alchemical Culture*," the visitor is introduced to more principles of alchemy. Each symbol and element held multiple meanings drawn from a variety of sources; for example, Hermaphrodite was a relatively common figure in alchemical texts. In this figure, Hermes representing mercury and Aphrodite representing copper were frequently used to illustrate the 'Chemical Wedding' of the two metals. Various other chemical actions and substances were depicted as dragons, lions, birds, and even tiny humans within laboratory vessels. Their vaunting ambitions of playing God increasingly inspired alchemists to create and commission elaborate works of art encompassing their understanding of the entire universe through an alchemical lens, from the operations of the heavens to the anatomy of the human form.



Contemporary works using alchemical practices of gilding to give golden appearance. L: "Christ in Majesty," c. 1188, Limoges School, France, engraved & gilt dopper with enamel. Lent by the Getty Museum. R: "The Bodhisattva Maitreya, 12th century, Nepal, gilt copper with gemstones. Lent by LACMA.

The section "Alchemy and Creativity" illustrates how practical alchemy and its larger scientific and spiritual concerns crucially influenced both artistic practice and expression. The centerpiece of this section is the twenty-foot long Ripley Scroll, a cryptic, hand-painted 18th-century manuscript scroll named for a Catholic clergyman and poet George Ripley. This unusual art object is filled with fantastical allegorical symbolism depicting the operations of alchemy and the creation of the fabled "philosophers' stone." It is a wonderful and weird object which demands ten or fifteen minutes of observation to notice all the small details.

The third section of the exhibition, "Alchemical Culture," explores how the successes achieved by the

experimental spirit of alchemy continued to spark creative inspiration from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, while advances in technology continually fed the ambitions of the human imagination. Alchemists' expertise in the management of mines and the other material resources attracted rulers whose technocratic ambitions were fueled by the discovery of a new world and its untapped natural resources. Patrons were not motivated simply by the possibility of filling the treasury with gold made to order, however; alchemical efforts also included perfecting the soul, relieving pain and sickness, and even proposing social utopias modeled after the divinely designed intelligent order of the cosmos.

The spirit of alchemy persisted into the Industrial Age, even after its transformation into the field of chemistry. The Bayer pharmaceutical company developed a rainbow of aniline coal tar dyes from petroleum waste, while at the same time working on a new, more effective painkiller—which would eventually be patented as “heroin.” The age of plastics also renewed the alchemical urge to imitate nature for the creation of everything from costume jewelry to life-saving medical devices.

“Alchemy was a science tinged with spirituality and infused with a spritz of artistic spirit. Most people think of alchemy as a fringe subject when really it was a mainstream technology and worldview that influenced artistic practice and expression throughout the world,” said David Brafman, curator of the exhibition. “Alchemy may well have been the most important human invention after that of the wheel and the mastery of fire. Certainly it was a direct consequence of the latter.”



The Shimmer of Gold: Giovanni di Paolo in Renaissance Siena focuses on medieval art and the alchemy of painting with gold, but also examines the modern processes of conservation and restoration.

Manuscript illuminator and panel painter Giovanni di Paolo (c.1399–1482) counts as one of the most distinctive and imaginative artists working in Renaissance Siena, Italy. *The Shimmer of Gold*, on view through January 8, 2017 at the J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center, brings together several examples of his brilliantly colored paintings on both

panel and parchment, including the work that scholars consider to be the artist’s masterpiece.

The exhibition centers on Giovanni’s most important commission, the Branchini Altarpiece, a multi-panel polyptych completed in 1427 for the Branchini family chapel in the church of San Domenico in Siena. The exhibition reunites—for the first time since it was dispersed sometime after 1649—the glorious, large central panel, representing the Virgin and Child surrounded by *seraphim* and flowers, with the altarpiece’s four surviving *predella* panels, smaller

narrative paintings that decorated the lower register of the altarpiece.

"This exhibition had its beginnings, like many others at the Getty, in the conservation studio when a small panel painting by Giovanni di Paolo came to the Museum in 2012 for treatment thanks to the generosity of our Paintings Council," says Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "This opportunity gave our conservators and curators the chance to study the panel, compare it to other works by the same artist, and eventually develop an exhibition that presents Giovanni's art in all its richness and complexity."

The signed and dated central panel, the so-called "Branchini Madonna," on loan from the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, was the only portion identified as part of the altarpiece until 2009, when scholars in Europe connected it with other works. When asked about the exhibition, Norton Simon Museum President and CEO Walter Timoshuk said, "The Getty Museum has presented a wonderful opportunity to learn more about our 'Branchini Madonna,' a highlight from our early-Renaissance collection, and we are delighted to see it exhibited in this revelatory way."

The team at the Getty recently had the opportunity to study the panel from the Norton Simon when it came to the Museum for conservation, along with a small *predella* panel representing the *Voyage of the Magi*, which had been loaned for study and treatment by the Kröller-Müller Museum in the Netherlands. Technical analysis is still ongoing, but it seems to support what scholars had already suspected: that

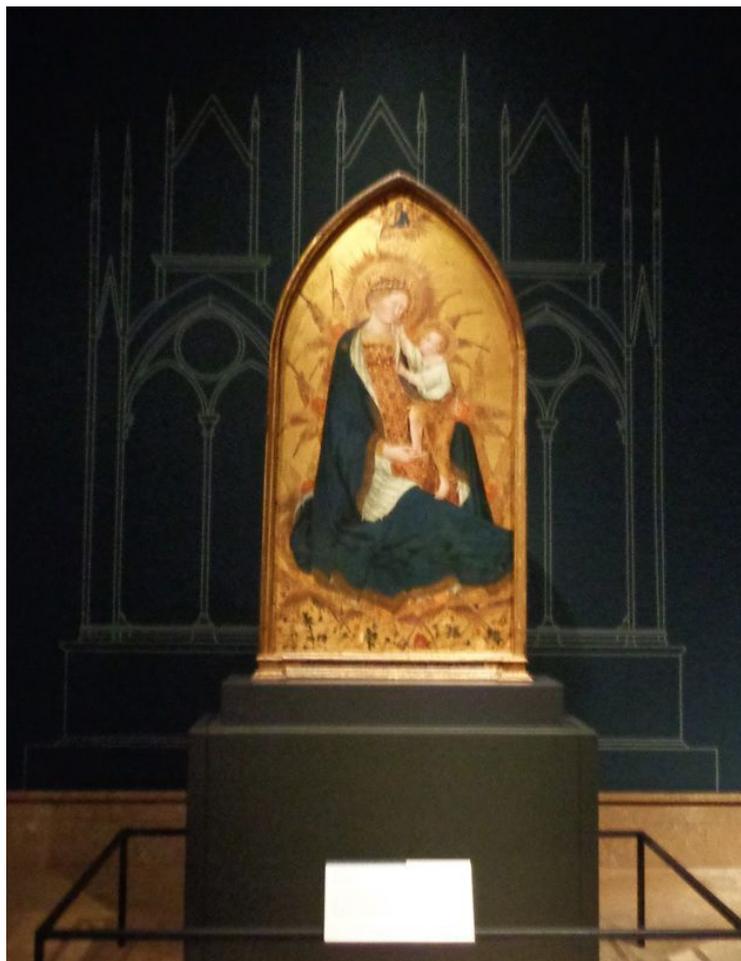
the *Voyage of the Magi* panel was indeed part of the Branchini Altarpiece, as were three other *predella* panels in the collection of the Pinacoteca Nazionale of Siena. All four surviving *predella* panels (there was a fifth panel, which is yet to be found) are gathered together in the exhibition.

According to co-curator Bryan C. Keene, it's the first time that so many representations of di Paolo's identified work has been exhibited in North America. "Other missing parts of the polyptych have not yet been found but technical analysis may help identify other works in the future," says Davide Gasparotto, senior curator of Paintings at the J. Paul Getty Museum and co-curator of the exhibition.

Adds Yvonne Szafran, senior conservator of Paintings Conservation at the Getty Museum and co-curator of the exhibition: "Scientific analysis of art is becoming extremely sophisticated, and technological advances allow us to examine paintings more comprehensively than ever before. With the help of our colleagues at the Getty Conservation Institute, we can now discover material information about paintings that was previously hidden, in this case revealing links between panels that were separated long ago."

The exhibition also brings into focus the highly decorative and richly colored painting technique, which included extensive use of gold leaf, that peaked in Italy in the early 15th century, and of which Giovanni di Paolo was a celebrated master. Over

the course of his lengthy career, Giovanni received prestigious commissions from private individuals and families, patrons such as the Pope, guilds, and numerous religious orders, including the Dominicans and Augustinians. His brilliantly colorful paintings on both panel and parchment reveal him to be an artist whose style drew uniquely from Sienese and Florentine models. In the 1420s, Giovanni di Paolo and fellow Sienese artists responded enthusiastically to the courtly splendor of the newly arrived painter Gentile da Fabriano, one of the most successful artists in Italy at the time, who traveled to Tuscany from northern Italy for numerous commissions, and who immediately worked with and sometimes under the supervision of Siena's leading creative personalities.



painting methods are apparent. The sophisticated layering of paint and gold as well as the careful execution of elaborate and fine decorative details is evident in the work of both artists, and each were masters at depicting the luxury brocaded textiles and animal furs that were so valued during this period.

In the exhibition, leaves and cuttings from choir books illuminated by Sienese and Florentine artists underscore the shared working methods, itinerant travels, and – in particular – the prevalent use of gold in the religious imagery of the period; as well as explore Giovanni di Paolo's influence on the painted arts in Renaissance Tuscany. "The illuminated choir book is one of the most significant art forms to demonstrate the combined efforts of multiple artists, a theme demonstrated through a grouping of miniatures lent by the Burke Family Collection and the Ferrell Collection," says Keene, assistant curator in the department of Manuscripts at the Getty Museum, who also co-curated the exhibition.

The Branchini Madonna, loaned by the Norton Simon Museum. This stunning piece of medieval art is unusual for several reasons: it's signed by the artist and it is still on its original panel. di Paolo was a master of materials, and layered the blues and golds to give the painting dimension at various viewing distances.



Above: The Alchemy of Color in Medieval Manuscripts, North Pavilion, the Getty Museum

Below: "Theodas with the Book of Magic and the Devil," workshop of Diebold Lauber, Hagenau, 1469. The red color in this manuscript is the only known use of rhubarb as a pigment in a medieval context. Imported from Asia, it was a luxury!



Today color is appreciated primarily for its aesthetic qualities, but during the Middle Ages it was also recognized for its material, scientific, and mechanical properties. The manufacture of colored pigments and inks used for painting and writing was part of the science of alchemy, the chemical transformation of matter. Manuscripts not only transcribed the scientific practice of alchemy—a medieval antecedent to modern chemistry—but were created with alchemically produced materials. Through January 1, 2017, *The Alchemy of Color in Medieval Manuscripts* at the J. Paul Getty Museum sheds light on medieval manuscript illumination within the context of alchemy as early chemistry and craft practice. With objects from the Museum's renowned manuscripts collection complemented by generous loans, the exhibition examines colorants and medieval

recipes for pigments and imitation gold in a presentation that highlights the Getty's ongoing research into the materials used by book illuminators. "Alchemy was the medieval antecedent to modern chemistry," says Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "Manuscripts exemplify this tradition well, not only as a medium by which scientific texts were transmitted, but because the painted illuminations are themselves made with alchemically produced materials. Our ongoing research into materials that were used for manuscript illuminations reveals an alchemical rainbow of colorants made from plants, minerals, and metals." The exhibition is divided into three sections exploring the technical aspects of alchemy, the manufacture of color, and the use of gold.

"Alchemical Heritage in Manuscripts"

Medieval technical manuals and early scientific books are filled with recipes and instructions for manufacturing pigments. Alchemy was an ancient tradition known to medieval readers through texts compiled and copied over centuries in manuscripts.

Alchemical knowledge from antiquity entered medieval encyclopedias, craft manuals, household miscellanies, and literary texts.

This section of the exhibition describes the types of documents in which alchemical texts reside, including medicinal, astrological, scientific miscellanies, and craft treatises, as well as the earliest mention of the practice of alchemy in medieval literature in *The Personification of Nature Making Birds, Animals, and People* (about 1405). The authors, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean

de Meun, likened the female personification of Nature to the most adept alchemist, transforming base materials and hammering at the anvil to make all the creatures of the world. Evoking the ancient challenge for artists to imitate Nature with their skillful handling of materials, this trope positions alchemists and craftsmen as rivals to Nature herself.

"The Alchemical Rainbow"

As the medieval forerunner to chemistry, alchemy was concerned with the basic transformation of matter, and this included the fabrication of beautiful coloring materials for painting. This section highlights the colors and pigments utilized by illuminators, such as ultramarine blue, vermilion red, orpiment yellow, and other lesser known pigments.



*A study in blue (L-R):
Lapis lazuli
(mineral), German
or azure blue
(mineral), Indigo
(plant-based), Smalt
with ultramarine
blue (mineral).
13-15th centuries.*

Some pigments were made from colored earths or semiprecious stones ground to a fine powder and mixed with a sticky medium. Other pigments required chemical separations or synthesis by heating or exposing metals to corrosive or reactive agents. Highly toxic products and materials often yielded the most brilliant colors, creating a remarkably varied alchemical rainbow. One of the highlights of this section of the exhibition is an illuminated manuscript of Saint John (late fourteenth –early fifteenth century). The Indigo blue used for this painting was produced by the fermentation of the tropical *indigofera* plant. This plant was not only used as a dyestuff for textiles but also as a painting material. Its color can range from blue-black to a paler greenish-blue, as used for the background coloring in this illumination.

"Illuminating with Precious Metals"
"Contrary to the popular misconception that the pursuit of alchemists was simply chrysopoeia, or the making of gold, for many alchemists the goal was nothing less, in fact, than the reproduction of the divine act of creation itself," says Nancy Turner, J. Paul Getty Museum conservator and curator of the exhibition. The term used to refer to

paintings within books – "illumination" – derives from the Latin *illuminare* meaning pages "lit up with gold." Having come to epitomize the art of book painting, gold is used not only for its incorruptibility, purity, and high value as a material but also for its spiritual connotations. Among the examples on view in this section of the exhibition is Pentecost (about 1030-40). The illuminator depicted the moment when the Twelve Apostles are imbued with the Holy Spirit of God. The shimmering gold background adds to the radiant, visionary images, and was achieved by painting onto the parchment layered applications of granular gold paint, which was polished with a stone burnisher to achieve a highly lustrous effect.

You can even download your own Alchemical Symbols guide so you can create your own magical formulas! Explore the exhibit websites for videos, images, and other resources to delve into the world of alchemy.

Follow the Getty on Twitter @thegetty. #GettyInspired

All photos by D. Trynoski.

The Art of Alchemy (October 11, 2016-February 12, 2017 at the Getty Research Institute)

http://www.getty.edu/research/exhibitions_events/exhibitions/alchemy/

The Shimmer of Gold: Giovanni di Paolo in Renaissance Siena (October 11, 2016-January 8, 2017 at the Getty Museum)

http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/giovanni_di_paolo/index.html

The Alchemy of Color in Medieval Manuscripts (October 11, 2016-January 1, 2017 at the Getty Museum)

http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/alchemy_of_color/index.html

Related programs & events

Culinary Workshop: Edible Alchemy

Journey to the medieval world in this culinary workshop led by educator and chef Nancy DeLucia Real. Participants visit the exhibitions *The Alchemy of Color in Medieval Manuscripts* and *The Art of Alchemy*, explore connections between food, color, science, and alchemy, then prepare a class feast for the eyes, body, and spirit. Course fee \$95. Complimentary parking. Tickets available beginning Tuesday, November 1.

Thursday, December 8, 10:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. Repeats Friday, December 9.
Getty Center, Private Dining Room

Chemical Rainbows and Liquid Crystal Souls: The Spirit of Alchemy in the History of Art

Lecture by David Brafman

Wednesday, January 18, 2017, 7:00 p.m.

Museum Lecture Hall, Getty Center

Tickets available November 10, 2016

The Art of Alchemy Colloquium

Thursday, January 19, 2017, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Museum Lecture Hall, Getty Center

Tickets available November 10, 2016

Artist at Work: Color and Gold

Medieval and Renaissance paintings and illuminations are alive with color and shimmer with gold. Drop by as artist Sylvana Barrett explores how these beautiful and exotic colors were made and demonstrates techniques for creating elaborate gold gilding. Free, drop-in program.

Sunday, November 27, 1:00–3:00 p.m.

Thursday, December 22, 1:00–3:00 p.m.

Friday, December 30, 1:00–3:00 p.m.

Tuesday, January 3, 1:00–3:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 8, 1:00–3:00 p.m.

Getty Center, Museum Studios

Curator's Gallery Tour

Nancy Turner, conservator of manuscripts and exhibition curator, the J. Paul Getty Museum, leads a gallery tour of the exhibition. Meet under the stairs in the Entrance Hall. Sign-up begins at 1:30 p.m. at the Information Desk.

Capacity limited.

Wednesday, November 2 and 16, 2:30 p.m.

Getty Center, Museum galleries

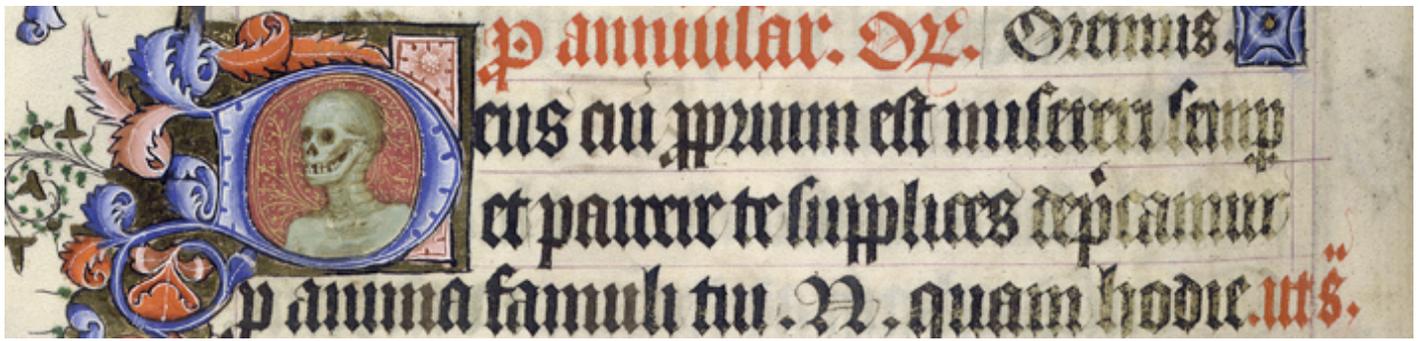
How to Kill a Medieval Zombie

By Daniele Cybulskie



Dealing with the Dead - British Library MS Stowe 39 f. 32

I've often said that people in the Middle Ages shared the same hopes and fears that we do. Believe it or not, that includes the walking dead. Although medieval Europeans would not have recognized the term "zombie", they did tell tales of corpses rising from the grave to terrorize the living. So, the inevitable question is: how did you kill a medieval zombie?



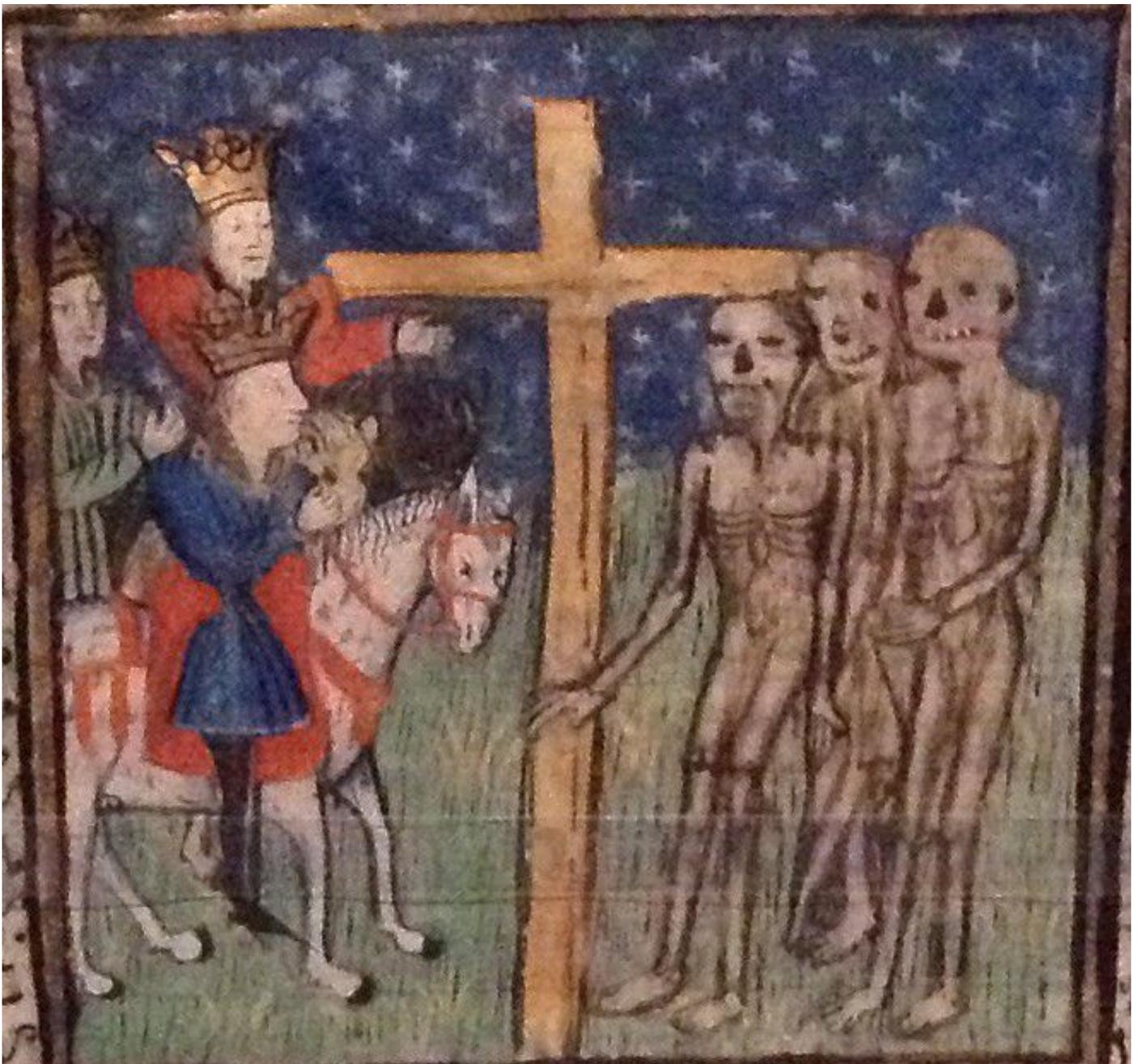
Medieval Christians believed that the souls of the dearly departed were to enter heaven, hell, or purgatory, but there were always grey areas in which the unexplained happened. As a result, these tales were extra-fascinating: how could these people have missed their exits on the heavenly highway? One compiler of this type of horror story was the twelfth-century writer William of Newburgh, who included them in his *History of English Affairs*. William's zombies, though buried with Christian ceremony, came alive at night to torment their former loved ones. There is no mention of their eating brains, but in one case, a reanimated corpse frightened and "nearly crushed [his wife] under the immense weight of his body", and several were pestilential. Clearly, no one wants to wake up being smothered by a corpse or dying of plague, so zombies needed to be stopped by any means necessary.

Naturally, invoking the power of faith was an option for the devout, and that is exactly what did the trick in the case of the smothering husband zombie. The wife and brothers of the deceased appealed to their archdeacon, who brought the case to the bishop of Lincoln. The bishop thought it would be unnatural and undignified to investigate or disturb the corpse without ceremony, so he wrote a letter to the archdeacon absolving him of any sin in inspecting the body. "Once the tomb was opened," William says, "the corpse was found exactly as it had been laid there", presumably intact and undisturbed despite its frequent rampages in the community. The archdeacon placed the bishop's letter on the chest of the deceased, and resealed the tomb. The holy letter did the trick. Writing a letter was a risky maneuver that showed the bishop's faith in divine power, and he chose to do so over and above the advice of his companions. They told the bishop,

such prodigies have happened in England quite often and explained with many examples of previous incidents that the people would find no peace unless the body of this most wretched man was dug up and burned.

While the squeamish bishop in this story refused, in three of William's other stories, villagers took the matter into their own hands and burned the zombies to ash.

In Berwick, Scotland, the villagers were literally plagued by a "scoundrel" of a man, who returned from the dead and wandered around "followed by a pack of loudly barking dogs", although William does not say if the dogs were sounding an alarm or were complicit in the haunting. "If a solution was not found quickly," the villagers believed, "the very air would become infected and corrupted by the repeated wandering of this foul corpse, causing disease and the deaths of many people". Something had to be done. William says,



***15th century manuscript folio depicting the
Three Living and the Three Dead***



The Graveyard - Photo by Amadeusz Jasak / Flickr

they enlisted ten young men, renowned for their boldness, to dig up the abominable corpse. Once they had chopped it limb from limb, they set it alight and made it food for the fire. When this was done, the affliction ceased.

Well, sort of, anyway. William goes on to say that the resulting disease killed loads of people, but at least there wasn't a zombie in the neighbourhood anymore. Interestingly, it was the zombie, himself, who told the villagers how to kill him:

For this monster, while it was being animated – as it is said – by Satan, it is said to have told certain people who it encountered by chance that they would not have any peace so long as he was unburned.

Apparently, this zombie lacked for his own brains.

The second story involves a sinful priest – with the “notorious nickname Hundeprest, that is, ‘Houndpriest’” because of his inordinate love of hunting – who returned to torment his former mistress. The mistress enlisted the help of a badass monk who, while on zombie-patrol, “buried a battle-ax he was wielding deep into [the zombie’s] body” and then followed it back to its tomb, dug it up, and burned it. Talk about getting medieval.

Finally, the last zombie story in this collection features a man who, while spying on his adulterous wife from the rafters of the bedroom, fell and so died unshriven. This undead husband also wandered followed by a pack of dogs and spread pestilence until two brothers who had lost their father to the disease had had enough and vowed revenge. The brothers dug up the corpse, who they found to be “filled with the blood of many people, like a leech”. They pulled out its heart and dismembered the body, burning it to a crisp, as witnessed by the local priest. This time, William says, the burning stopped the disease in its tracks. Actually, William says it in this absolutely wonderful sentence:

When that infernal monster was thus completely destroyed, the pestilence that had prowled among the people ceased, as though the air, which had been corrupted by his loathsome activity, was cleansed by the fire that had consumed that wretched cadaver.

He then adds, casually, “Now that I have explained these events, let us return to the course of history”.

You can find these amazing stories of the undead along with a whole bunch of other creepy medieval stories in Scott G. Bruce’s great new compilation ***The Penguin Book of the Undead: Fifteen Hundred Years of Supernatural Encounters***. Who knows? You may even find some more great medieval tips for surviving the zombie apocalypse.

You can follow Danièle Cybulskie on Twitter [@5MinMedievalist](https://twitter.com/5MinMedievalist) or visit her website, danielecybulskie.com.



Albi, France

This moderately sized city was the seat of Catholic power during the 13th century Albigensian Crusade, considered by some to be a pre-cursor to the witch-hunting of the Spanish Inquisition. Primarily an initiative to eliminate the sect of Catharism in southern France, the Crusade also had a political front with territory struggles between the Counts of Toulouse, the French Crown, and the Counts of Barcelona. Between 1208-1244, the Languedoc territory saw battles, sieges, and skirmishes but Albi, having one of the main bridges in the region, maintained some form of prosperity. It grew in the 14-16th centuries, and much of the city's buildings from this period remain in good condition due to the early use of brick and the city's dedication to conservation and preservation.

Among the city's many historic buildings and streets, its crown jewel is the towering Cathédrale Sainte-Cécile. Its 78 meter tall bell tower is visible from miles around, since it was intended to be a clear manifestation of Catholic dominance over the region.

Completed between the 13-15th centuries, it's far from the oldest building in town as it falls behind the Palais de la Berbie (Bishops' Palace, mid-13th century) and the collegiate Church of Saint-Salvi (13th century cloister, church elements from 7th century).



Albi is a UNESCO World Heritage Site

known for its red brick buildings, boutiques, timber-framed buildings, cobbled streets, and delightful French cafes. Photos by D. Trynoski. Above: A view of the city. Below, Center: A typical view of the historic city centre. Below, L & R: Sainte-Cecile.



Memento Mori: Medieval Images of Death

By Danièle Cybulskie



John FitzAlan's free-standing cadaver tomb was opened in 1857, to reveal a skeleton

If you've ever taken a look at medieval art, or wandered around a cathedral with visible tombs and monuments, you've most likely noticed that there are a whole lot of spooky images appearing from about the fourteenth century on. Not surprisingly, in the years following The Black Death (c. 1346-1353 CE), which killed approximately one third of Europe's population, there was a trend in medieval art that highlighted looking death in the face, rather than shying away from it. Many artists created images and sculptures that ask the living to "remember death" (memento mori): that it is always waiting, and that it spares no one. In honour of All Hallows' Eve, let's take five minutes to look at how death was expressed in art in the late Middle Ages.

1. Corpses

This is a fairly obvious one, but it's amazing how creative people got on the corpse theme. Rather than just skeletons, you can find images of corpses in various states of decay, and some of these are very prominent, like those you find on cadaver (or transi) tombs. Cadaver tombs feature, instead of (or along with) a flattering effigy of the deceased, a decomposing corpse. Here's a good image of a cadaver tomb, this one of John FitzAlan, Earl of Arundel, at the Arundel Castle chapel.

2. Frogs, Toads, Worms, and Snakes

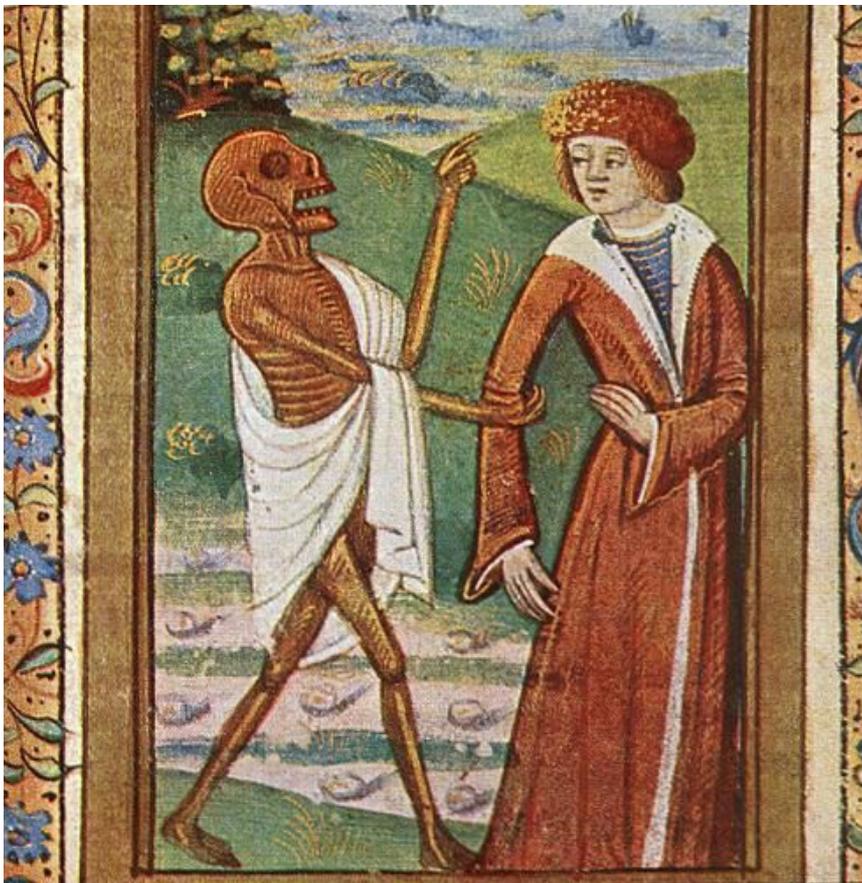
As if it weren't enough to create an image of a corpse to make people consider their own mortality, medieval people also added the creatures that feast on corpses – or so they thought. If an artist wanted to be particularly gruesome, he would add toads, frogs, worms or snakes. Although these creatures (with the exception of worms) aren't usually found feeding on corpses in nature, they were associated with evil (think: Garden of Eden) and death at the time. You can find images of feasting creatures on the effigy of Francois I de la Serra, and in this image from the British Library.



*Yates Thompson 31 f.
170v The Torments of
Hell.*

3. Protesting Mortals

Naturally, even though medieval people were encouraged to contemplate death, that didn't mean they actually welcomed it. Memento mori images frequently feature death or his minions coming for an unwilling victim. Often, the mortal is showing his or her reluctance through body language, as in this picture, but sometimes, there are words, too.



Death depicted in a Book of Hours

4. Demons at the Deathbed

Since memento mori and related images were created to encourage people to think about death in terms of Christian salvation, there are plenty of demons to be found in medieval images of death, particularly in deathbed scenes. For example, here are demons tempting the sinner in his last moments, and distracting the ill man from the counsel of the angels. Demons were thought to be always at the ready to drag sinners down to hell.



Hieronymus Bosch death and the miser. (1494–1516).

5. Dancing Skeletons

A popular and lasting image of death and dying that you can find in the late Middle Ages is the Danse Macabre or “Dance of Death”. In these images, death is merry, ever eager to pull people into the dance. The Danse Macabre often features many dancing skeletons, such as in this wall decoration.



The Dance of Death (1493) by Michael Wolgemut, from the Liber chronicarum by Hartmann Schedel

Although we mortals aren't looking forward to it, the skeletons in late medieval art have a great time dancing the Dance of Death. While death imagery was ultimately meant to urge a sinful public to contemplate eternity and repent, medieval artists took a certain glee in reminding viewers that death comes for kings, clergy, and commoners alike, something that The Black Death taught them all too well. This week, memento mori and All Hallows' Eve both give us opportunities to contemplate the relationship between life and death for commoner and kings, but only one of these, sadly, is accompanied by tasty treats.

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Feature

Talk the Talk

Samhain

"November,

Summer's End"

The merging of Samhain and All Souls Day gave rise to the modern celebration of Halloween

Old Irish - Noun



An Irish Seán Na Gealaí turnip lantern from the early 20th century at the Museum of Country Life. (Wikipedia)

Londinium

Book Launch: Henry III: Son of Magna Carta Matthew Lewis

By Sandra Alvarez



Henry III by Matthew Lewis on display at Daunt Books in London. (Photo by Medievalists.net)

Matthew Lewis is the author of several medieval books, and also runs the **Richard III podcast**. His latest non-fiction book, **Henry III: The Son of Magna Carta**, examines an English King who seemed to have disappeared into a void, sandwiched between the infamous reign of his father, King John (1166-1216), and the spectacular reign of his son, Edward I (1239-1307).

On October 27th, **Amberley Publishing** hosted a book launch at **Daunt Books** in North London. Lewis spoke briefly at the event about what drew him to retell Henry's story. His goal was to bring Henry III out of the shadows and to share his achievements and legacy. Lewis expressed surprise and dismay at the lack of attention given to Henry's reign, especially since he ruled during such a pivotal period in English history. In 1216, nine-year old Henry inherited a country that was left in a shambles. King John had veritably handed over the country to the Pope, lost territories in France, and left Henry horrific instability in the wake of Magna Carta. Henry had a daunting task ahead of him and Lewis felt his efforts weren't fully appreciated.

Lewis was keen to explore his kingship and demonstrate that Henry belongs alongside other popular English monarchs like Richard I, Richard III, William the Conqueror, and his son, Edward I. Lastly, he was also interested in examining the personal aspects of Henry's kingship, such as his close family ties, and his relationship with wife, Eleanor of Provence (1223-1291).

BUY Henry III: The Son of Magna Carta

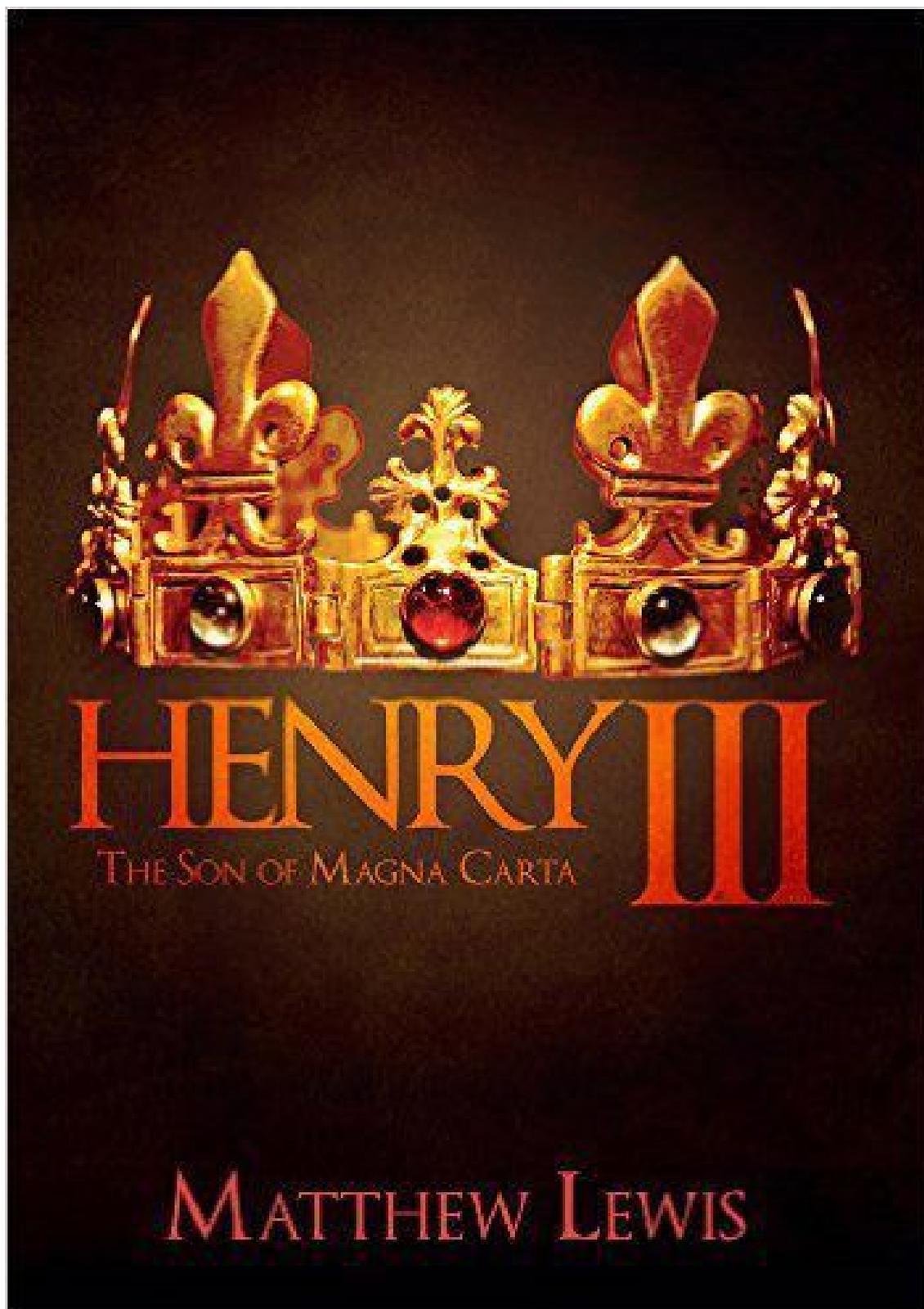
For more information, please visit: **Amberley Publishing**



*Author Matthew Lewis holding a copy of his latest release, **Henry III: Son of Magna Carta***

Book Excerpt

Henry III:
The Son of Magna Carta
by Matthew Lewis



Henry III became King of England within days of his ninth birthday. His father, King John, had overseen a disastrous period in English history and the boy king inherited a country embroiled in a bitter, entrenched war with itself. With barons inviting a French prince to take the crown, the young Henry was forced to rely on others to maintain him in his position.

As he grew into adulthood, Henry had to manage the transition to a personal rule, wrenching power from men who had held it almost unchecked for years. With a settled position at home, attention could turn to the recovery of lost territory abroad and the salvaging of Henry's family reputation. All would not go according to plan.

Failures abroad led to more trouble at home as restless barons became disillusioned and found a figurehead in Simon de Montfort, a man who would transform himself from Henry's favourite to a de facto king. Imprisoned and stripped of his power, Henry would again have to fight for his kingdom, relying not on older mentors now, but on his immensely capable son.

Henry was handed a poisoned chalice, a crown that was cracked and tarnished. He was given fifty-six years to mend the damage his father had done. It was to be over half a century of highs and lows in a country crying out for stability, and the final measure of Henry's achievements will lie in understanding the crown that he left to his son, Edward I, and in measuring the impact of tumultuous events on him and his effect on those events.

October marks several important moments in the life of Henry III. On October 1, 1207, he was born at Winchester Castle and on October 28, 1216, he was crowned King of England at Gloucester Cathedral. 2016 marks the 800th anniversary of his hasty coronation. After King John's sudden death of dysentery at Newark Castle on October 19, 1216.

While much has been written about his son, Edward I (1239-1307), and the important figures in Henry's reign, such as William Marshal (1146-1219), and Simon de Montfort (1208-1265), Henry III seems to have been overlooked by historians. Matthew Lewis is attempting to rectify this and offer a different perspective on the period with **Henry III: The Son of Magna Carta**. The book is also available in Kindle, Kobo and iBook formats.

Henry III: The Son of Magna Carta

Chapter 2: The Marshal

by Matthew Lewis

On 28 October, ten days after his father's death, King Henry III was crowned at Gloucester Cathedral in a ceremony overseen by Guala, the papal legate, who delegated the honour of performing the ceremony to Peter des Roches, the Bishop of Winchester. Henry stood before the high altar and, following the dictated words of the Bishop of Bath, he recited the traditional coronation oaths to protect the Church, deliver justice to his people and drive out evil laws and customs wherever they were found in his realm. The nine-year-old king next gave homage to the Pope on behalf of England and Ireland, vowing to maintain the thousand-mark tribute agreed by his father. Peter des Roches, aided by the bishops of Worcester and Exeter, anointed and crowned the new king. With the ceremony completed, and Henry apparently feeling the weight of the day, Peter d'Aubigné lifted the young king up and carried him back to his lodgings to change out of his heavy robes ready for the coronation feast.

The legate's presence gave the papal seal of approval to the new king's rule, and Marshal's support was squarely behind the boy, but there were many indications of the true extent of the trouble their cause faced. The very fact that the ceremony took place at Gloucester and not Westminster speaks volumes. Henry's coronation robes had to be begged and borrowed, cut down to fit him as he had none of his own and no time to have them made. The coronet that des Roches lowered onto Henry's head was a borrowed band, perhaps loaned by Henry's mother Isabella of Angoulême. Guala had excommunicated Prince Louis to prevent any member of the clergy crowning him, and the need for haste reflected the fear that Louis might be proclaimed king at any moment.

The coronation feast was a small affair, perhaps muted given the circumstances and the tiredness of the king, but proceedings were interrupted when a messenger burst in and delivered aloud to the room a desperate plea from the constable of Goodrich Castle for aid. The castle had been placed under siege by forces loyal to Louis and, most worryingly of all, Goodrich was only around a dozen miles from their current location in Gloucester. The pressing nature of Henry's predicament could hardly have been more pronounced. Here, on the day of his coronation, was a sharp reminder, if one were needed, that the enemy was all but at the gates. Even within the royalist camp all was not peace and unity. The most notable absence from the coronation was Ranulf of Chester, who had not arrived in time for the ceremony; many had called for a delay to await his arrival, but necessity had driven them to see it done. William might have been the obvious choice to lead their cause because he was on the spot, but Ranulf had at least as good a claim to the role as Marshal, and William seemed all too aware of the possibility that he might be seen as making a grab for power.



A 13th-century depiction of Henry III's coronation

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Virgin Sacrifice à la Twelfth Century Hohenburg

By Christine Arguello

If you put a group of bookish virgins up against a monster bent on devouring the world, what do you get? Something approximating salvation, right?

Thanks to the leadership of Abbess Herrad of Hohenburg (c. 1130–1195), her sisters were allowed to achieve intellectual independence in huge ways through Herrad's commitment to reform and adherence to the virtues of enclosure. Within the walls of their monastery during the twelfth century, these women lived in accordance with the attitude of *contemptus mundi*. In other words, they cultivated a discipline which involved denying themselves worldly pleasures in order to pursue the fruits of a spiritual life.

In this sense, we can grasp the name of their grand work, the *Hortus Deliciarum*, or the *Garden of Delights*.

Unfortunately it was destroyed during the siege of Strasbourg in 1870, but much of it was traced and compiled back into book form thanks to the work of the Warburg Institute and the work of earlier scholars. Within their monastery walls, these women set to work exploring some of the juicy topics coming out of the Paris schools at the time by producing their very own books. But, their great encyclopedic *Hortus* was not solely about spiritual pleasures and intellectual forays into the pagan philosophies and Arabic writings becoming popular at the time. The work was largely about overcoming the base bodily functions of mundane life and establishing a

Divinitas

Divinitas hanc in mare salis mittit.

Patriarche
& prophete



Xpc assumptit carneu hominem
dicit augustinus idē xpc assump-
sit natura que ī ipō ē dñic⁹ ho.



capitū a fronte
piscis respiciens
frontē hōmīnis
maxilla leuā
hōmīnis pectus



Et sic xpc p̄stat magistru leuethon
sculeus diuinitatē
et leuethon ē piscis maris in illis
draconi & sic hanc a diabolo

Folio 84 recto of the *Hortus Deliciarum*, created by in the later half of the twelfth-century.

salvation narrative that integrated the Old Testament and New Testament stories into local Hohenburg history.

One thing that is particularly difficult for a modern reader to grasp in this the monastery's work are the intricate layers of meaning which emerge from its text-image relationships. These text-image pairings and their endless allegorical linkages draw the female readership to absorb the text in a contemplative/meditative way. During their readings, the sisters were invited to place themselves within the stories as active participants in moments of salvation history.

How then, do the profuse amounts of visual and textual imagery dealing with monsters and beasts eating one another uphold the spiritual leanings of these sisters? One particularly monstrous text-image relationship surrounds the *Leviathan* theme on folios 83 verso to 84 recto. This theme unravels at a critical juncture in the *Hortus Deliciarum* where Old Testament narratives transition into New Testament narratives. How were these women depicted as the antidotes to these monstrous figures of sin; monsters who are shown to thrive by cannibalizing themselves?

These women established their virginity and continence as the key to salvation in a world consumed in bodily debauchery. As virgins, they were living representations of the Holy Virgin who allowed Christ to be brought into the world through her untouched womb. Unlike those still

living with their bodies open to the pleasures of the world, like the Leviathan monster with his mouth gaping wide in the large folio 84 recto image, the virgins sacrificed these pleasures through their lives of enclosure. They maintained their virginity within the walls of the monastery while upholding Augustinian rules on how to eat, sleep, and interact with their fellow sisters.

Looking at the image of the dual Christ conquering the Leviathan on folio 84 recto, the modern reader may be perplexed over the image of the two Christs, particularly when one is dangling over the mouth of the Leviathan monster. The two Christs, one who is human (bottom right) and one who is divine (top left), are at opposite sides of a fishing pole. Between them is a fishing line stringing along medallions of seven prophets and patriarchs. If one looks closely, there is more at stake in these images of Christ, his predecessors, and a monster. The two Christs are conquering the Leviathan exactly where the monster's weakness lies: in its never ending desire to consume and give in to its bodily impulses. At the level of the image, Christ begins invoking the power of the virgins and the weight of their worldly sacrifices.

When you look to the Latin texts on folio 83 verso, the first text is *De sancta Maria*, or *On Holy Mary*, which firmly drives home the fact that when Mary was impregnated by the Holy Spirit, she received semen-like bits of flesh (*sementivam*). It was absolutely *not*



Herrad of Landsberg - perhaps a self-portrait from *Hortus deliciarum*, ca. 1180.

The description in Latin reads:

"Herrad hohenburgensis abbatissa post Rilindam ordinata ac monitis et exemplis eius instituta".

These are the initial words of the description from the last miniature (fol.322-323) of the *Hortus deliciarum*.

semen. The idea of worldly semen entering the Virgin womb ruined the image of an immaculate carriage awaiting the savior. So instead she received holy semen-like *stuff* which was to become Christ. It is important to remember the role that this text plays opposite the actual Leviathan image of the dual Christs. Mary is the holy, enclosed vehicle which allowed Christ to arrive after the chain of Old Testament figures depicted on the fishing line. Her enclosed womb is the reason Christ conquers the Leviathan through its open, gaping mouth.

After Mary is confirmed to be free of worldly semen, we find another text evoking the importance of enclosed spaces, or untouched wombs. This following text, *De Leviathan qui significat diabolum*, or *On the Leviathan* who signifies the devil, uses the context of an Old Testament narrative. Here, the importance of enclosure and the virgin womb is established in a different way. The text begins with the story of Daniel after he killed the dragon and destroyed the idol adored by the Babylonians. The angry Babylonians cast Daniel in a den of lions for seven days, but the king keeps the angry Babylonians from entering the den by placing a seal over it.

With the help of an angel of God, the prophet Habakkuk is able to deliver food to Daniel by passing through the seal without braking it, just as the Holy Spirit delivered the semen-like stuff into Mary without breaking her seal. Daniel also evades being consumed by the hungry lions for seven days. When

the seal is removed on the final day and he emerges untouched, the king casts his angry Babylonian enemies into the lion's den where they are promptly devoured. The narrative then ends with a meditation on Christ's ability to enter Mary's womb without removing her seal of "virginal modesty." Notice how beasts, virginity, and food each play a part that enforces the grander mission of telling the story of salvation with virginal power being a major force in the story.

Finally, we have a final story on folio 83 verso that textually establishes visual reversals of the dual Christ image on the following folio. *De Leviathan*, or *On the Leviathan*, sets up a food chain of vices where each vice, like gluttony and rage, is signified by a certain locust or worm contained in a sphere which will disappear in a cloud of dust once it is conquered. Each one of these insects feed off of one another in a perverse food chain. The spheres of insect-vices hang on a string which begins at the Leviathan's nose and doesn't end until the string reaches hell. Instead of a chain of prophets and patriarchs which prefigure man's

salvation like in the dual Christ image, we have a chain of bodily vices which will lead the individual directly to damnation. The text continues to explain that each sphere can be conquered through personal effort, but another vice-sphere will pop up in place of the defeated vice. It's like a rigged video game.

The reader is lead to believe that while one remains connected with the body and its unholy needs, the chain of vices will always be present. You will be forever tempted and drawn into hell like a fish taking bait on a hook. But you cannot take the bait if you keep your mouth shut and virginity sealed. The texts and image work in conjunction to celebrate the life of the virgins and the place they hold in fulfilling salvation history. For these twelfth century nuns, they weren't waiting for knights to come save them from the evil forces of the world. They themselves possessed the forces garnered from their sacrifice of worldly pleasure that ensured their own salvation and that of the world.

Christine Arguello holds an MA in Medieval Studies from the University of Toronto and a BA in Comparative Literature from UC Berkeley. She has an eye for the weird in every era. Currently, she is bouncing back and forth between Los Angeles and San Diego, California as a freelance writer.



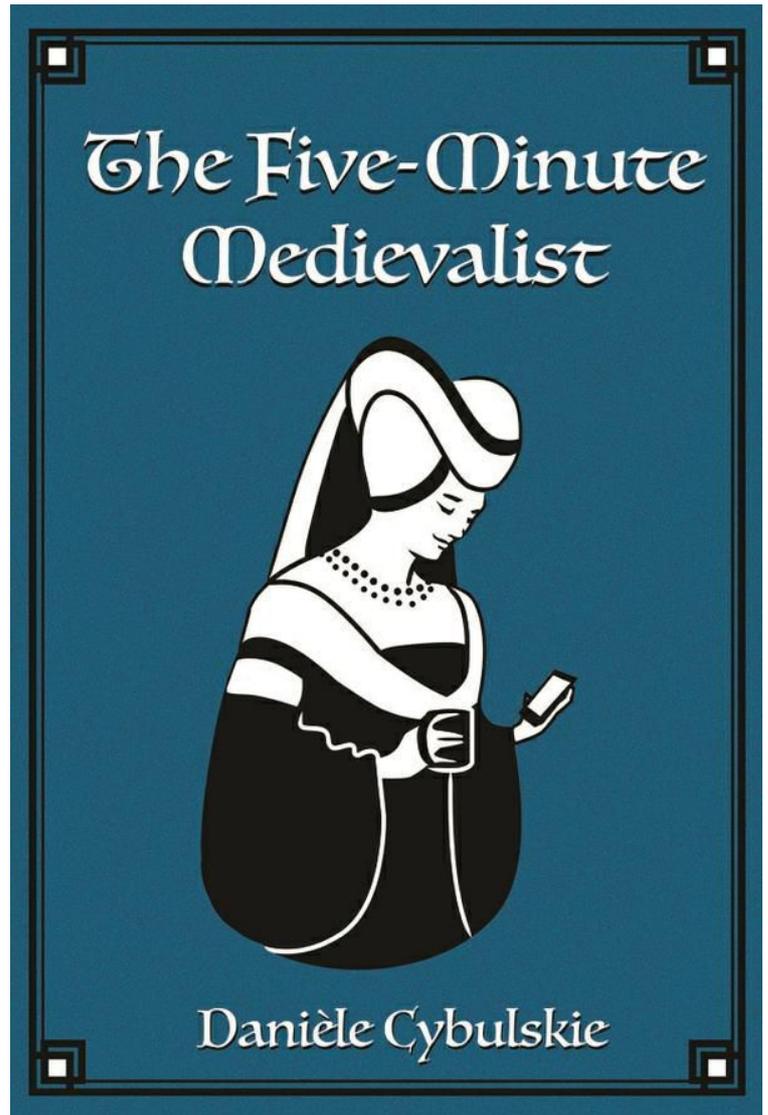
Woman of the Apocalypse - another image from the *Hortus deliciarum*

The Five-Minute Medievalist

By Danièle Cybulskie

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