ATHANOR LX
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY

Cosmic oven or Athanor from Annibal Berlet,
Le Vray Cours de Physique,
Paris, 1653

ATHANOR LX

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ATHANOR is an Art History Journal published by the Department of Art History of Florida State University and the FSU Libraries in conjunction with its annual Art History Graduate Symposium. Each issue compiles expanded and edited versions of the papers presented in the Symposium. Inaugurated in 1981, the FSU Art History Graduate Symposium participates in a long tradition of student conferences in our discipline. This open forum brings together students, professors, and members of the community to share ideas and expertise. We call it a symposium, with all the classical associations of that word, to suggest that it is not just a series of lectures, but a conversation.

Our purpose is to provide the opportunity for students to present the results of their scholarly efforts in twenty-minute talks, and to profit from the audience’s response. At the end of each paper, the speaker engages directly with the audience, both students and faculty, so that the ideas they present become the basis for further exploration. Each year we invite a distinguished scholar to deliver the keynote address and participate in these discussions. Sharing research, meeting others in our field, creating long-lasting friendships and professional associations—these vital interchanges are at the core of the FSU Symposium experience. We seek to broaden the professional, personal, and academic horizons of every participant: the visiting young scholar, the returning alumnus, the local undergraduate considering graduate work and of course the professors. Call for papers are published every fall semester, to be presented in the Symposium during the spring, and later published in ATHANOR. The papers are selected by a committee of graduate student representatives. ATHANOR began as a paper journal, but it has evolved with the times to a digital platform.

Every year a keynote speaker is selected with input from the department graduate students. Our 2023 keynote speaker was Heather Igloliorte, Associate Professor of Indigenous Art History and University Research Chair of Circumpolar Indigenous Art, Concordia University, Montreal. Dr. Igloliorte presented “Qummit Qukiria / Up Like a Bullet: The Rise of Contemporary Circumpolar Indigenous Art.”

Thanks to the Symposium structure, ATHANOR presents diverse topics within the field of art history, ranging from antique to contemporary art from all around the world. This issue gathers essays about documentary photography in twentieth-Brazil, sixteenth-century royal portraiture in France, the decorative program of a ninth-century Byzantine rock-cut church in Cappadocia, a utopian architectural model in twentieth-century Tokyo, and graphic narratives in twentieth-century Cambodia. This reflects the Department of Art History’s critically engaged global approach to art history.

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Blackness in Black and White: Serra Pelada and Sebastião Salgado

Samuel Rushing

Abstract: Since their publication in Sunday Times Magazine in 1987, the photographs of the biblically sized Serra Pelada gold mine in northern Brazil by Sebastião Salgado have garnered an emphatically positive reception. In “Blackness in Black and White: Sebastião Salgado and Serra Pelada,” I argue there is a system of racial coding in his photographs of the Serra Pelada gold mine that has received little attention in the photographic discourse. I examine the photographs in dialogue with visual histories of enslavement and the exploitation of black bodies in nineteenth-century Brazil and the United States, and the complexities of racial identity and hierarchy in late twentieth-century Brazil. Through this analysis, I also highlight blind spots in the English-language discourse on Salgado’s gold photographs, which seek to both universalize their themes and aestheticize their content by challenging his own characterization of the photographs. My primary objective is not to argue that Salgado’s photographic decisions, which were made manifest in this systemization, were premeditated, but rather to assert its presence within the photographs and in doing so, offer a more politically and culturally nuanced analysis of the photographs.

Key words: Serra Pelada, photography, Sebastião Salgado, racial identity

In September 1986, Brazilian documentary photographer Sebastião Salgado arrived at a remote hill in the state of Pará in northern Brazil. As Salgado himself described the scene thirty-three years later, “When I first reached Serra Pelada, I was left speechless. Before me, I saw a vast hole, perhaps 200 meters in diameter and almost as deep, teeming with tens of thousands of barely clothed men, roughly half of them carrying heavy sacks up broad wooden ladders, the other leaping down muddy slopes back into the cavernous maw.”1 Before him, some 50,000 men worked with rudimentary tools in search of gold. The rugged terrain and weather made it impossible for heavy machinery to be used.

Taken over the course of four weeks, the photographs of the miners at Serra Pelada were the first installment of a six-year project undertaken by Salgado to photograph manual labor in an industrialized and mechanized world. The project, eventually titled Workers: An Archaeology of the Industrial Age, took him to five continents photographing lead and iron mines and refineries in Kazakhstan, tobacco and sugarcane plantations in Cuba, fishing in Galicia and Sicily, and bicycle factories in Shanghai and Tianjin, China, in addition to twenty other sections. There has been a largely successful campaign by proponents of the Workers photographs and Salgado himself to universalize their subject matter and themes, with sociologist Tamara Kay arguing his work covers “the ‘Family of Man’ gamut, depicting people working, building, loving, warring, playing, celebrating and grieving—without invoking stereotypes.”2 Particularly, the discourse on the Serra Pelada photographs tends to universalize themes and aestheticize the contents of the photographs. I argue the photographs of Serra Pelada shun these rather simplistic and one-dimensional interpretations, instead requiring a more nuanced and multi-dimensional analysis of their thematic and

1 Sebastião Salgado, Gold (Cologne: Taschen, 2019), 5.
aesthetic ambitions. I will argue that within Salgado’s photographs of Serra Pelada, there is a systemized racial coding of black labor, which engages with both visual histories and contemporary socioeconomics. Through the evocation and allusion of race and class dynamics in Brazil, the photographs collectivize rather than universalize. Thus, the photographs must be situated within the context of late twentieth-century Brazilian economic and labor politics and visual histories of black labor in the United States and Brazil.

The discovery of gold at Serra Pelada in January 1979 by a local farmer brought some 22,000 prospectors to the area within five weeks. Without any regulation or oversight, the site and nearby boomtown quickly descended into the chaos. In the photographs taken from the upper rim of the mine, the viewer is forced to confront the sheer scale and enormity of the operation, both in terms of the mine’s physical size and the amount of people [Figure 1]. While anybody was allowed to prospect with rudimentary tools, thus leading to the almost biblical amounts of prospectors, the actual mineral rights were those of the government. In May 1980, the government in Brazil ordered the Federal Police into Serra Pelada, and the state-owned mining company Companhia Vale do Rio Doce, or CVRD, opened an office at the site. Salgado had first attempted to photograph Serra Pelada in 1980, but was denied access by the military dictatorship, which had instituted restrictions on the press when it seized power in 1964. Salgado was living in Paris at the time, in self-imposed exile as protest against the regime. By 1986, the military dictatorship was no longer in power and the prospectors cooperative indulged Salgado’s request. Despite the free-for-all appearance, the mine operated under a regimented structure. The open pit was divided into plots or barrancos, each around sixty-five meters square (6.5 x 10 ft.). In the introduction to Gold, the 2019 exhibition catalogue for the entire body of Serra Pelada photographs, Salgado describes a labor hierarchy made of three classes: the owner of the plot; an investor in the operation who functioned as a form of supervisor, called the capitalista; and some thirty peons, or diggers and carriers. Working eleven hours a day, six days a week, the peons would dig up the ground on the plot, filling sacks with forty kilos (eighty-eight pounds) of earth, and carry them up the slopes on narrow paths and up ladders. From the numerous sacks of earth dug each day, each peon would pick one to keep for themselves, with the capitalista taking the others. Inevitably, the vast majority of sacks contained no gold or other valuable minerals like manganese and black gold, which can be separated into regular gold and palladium were thrown out in the search for gold.

One of the most recurrent themes across the photographs is the physicality of gold mining, with many emphasizing the exhaustion of the men and the emotional and physical toll their labor has taken on them. Often, this takes visual form in men completely covered in mud and dirt. In these images, the men have become almost completely consumed, in appearance, by the mine [Figure 2]. Through this, their individuality is lost and bodies and faces merge into large, amorphous, and unruly organisms.

While Salgado himself said in 2019, “Here, blacks and whites and men of every shade between worked shoulder-shoulder, with gold the only color on their minds,” I am not certain that this statement tells the entire truth. For one, the notion of a space without considerations of color is problematically simplistic given the immense complexity of racial and ethnic identity in Brazil. Equally, there is something potentially problematic in how Salgado describes the racial complexity of the miners, with white and black
on the opposite ends of a spectrum. I would argue that Salgado deliberately suggests a colorized labor hierarchy, critical to which is the usage of black-and-white film.

In the nearly all photographs of Serra Pelada by Salgado, the *capitalistas* are easily identifiable in their white t-shirts amongst a sea of ochre stained skin and clothes. In one image, the *capitalista* stands on a flat piece of ground, as lines of peons slowly trudge past him towards the ladders [Figure 3]. He looks towards the sky, with a watch on his wrist and a clipboard in his hand. On the far right of the image’s lower register, a man identifiable as of African descent looks directly at the camera as he waits his turn to climb the ladder in search of wealth. Within the visual vocabulary Salgado utilizes, there is a colorization of the worker hierarchy in the mine that explicitly suggests black labor and white management. Those who work are identified with dark colors and those who oversee are identified with lighter colors. Even in images that show labor on smaller scales, that division is still clear. While the peons pan for gold in what is likely water heavily toxified by mercury, a pair of *capitalistas* lean against a wooden railing, looking out of frame.

Unlike works by other photographers, including Alfredo Jaar and Robert Nickelsberg, a considerable amount of Salgado’s photographs of Serra Pelada are focused on the floor of the mine, as opposed to around the rim. As such, many images, particularly those of the ladders, have a striking upward viewpoint [Figure 4]. These images, in effect, embody the perspective of the peons, and through this compositional device, Salgado intimates a literal stratification of labor. In many images from within the mine, like the one discussed earlier, the *capitalistas* are positioned above the peons, often standing upon these huge piles of sandbags. Equally, within a given image, the peons could outnumber the *capitalistas* twenty or thirty to one. This huge disparity in the amount of dark labor and white management is visually suggestive of a slave plantation. This is undoubtedly a serious comparison to make, and I do not do so lightly.

One particular photograph directly engages with the visual history of slavery [Figure 5]. In it, a young man sits before the wall of ladders. The dark tones of the man’s skin and shirt appear to almost merge into a single surface. The rippling on the back of the young man’s shirt is undoubtedly suggestive of photographs of keloid scarring on the backs of enslaved people from the nineteenth-century United States [Figure 6]. While the image of *Gordon* by William McPherson is from the United States, the visual evocation of slavery within a Brazilian context is a loaded one. The abolishment of slavery in Brazil had occurred less than one hundred years prior to these photographs, in May 1888. Photographs of slavery and enslaved people by the likes of João Goston and Marc Ferrez during the final years of its existence in Brazil belies its immense brutality. Of the roughly twelve million African people enslaved and trafficked to the New World, almost half were sent to Brazil.

Beyond the more direct connections to imagery of slavery and exploited black labor, other compositional techniques are more metaphorical. Images specifically of the ladders and those taken from the rim of the mine emphasize it as a space of containment of black labor. In many images of Serra Pelada, the ladder itself functions as a metaphor for the existence of the peons. In climbing the ladder, they are attempting to climb the social ladder. Each trip up the ladder represents their potential ticket out of Serra Pelada and to a new life, but each failed trip sends them back into the mine and back into the clay. When a peon would find gold, they would don a clean, striped t-shirt, making themselves identifiable to the guards as in need of protection from theft or assault.⁸ Not only have they obtained wealth, but they are also now entitled to protection by, what is in effect, law enforcement.

Within the color hierarchy, this is in effect, a “mulattoization” of the peon upon their discovery of gold and obtainment of wealth.⁹ Still, they are not allowed to fully transform into a *capitalista* and don a white shirt. In wearing a striped shirt, they are no longer a peon, but not quite a *capitalista*. Even upon their gaining of wealth and associated socioeconomic status, their status as a peon, an ochre-stained laborer,

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⁹ The term “mulatto” is a problematic one in English, but I decided to use it given the Portuguese linguistic context as the term is common in Brazil.
cannot be forgotten. In one particular image, a man in a striped shirt, sits on a rock ledge, looking out across the vast mine which he has now, partly, and perhaps only temporally, escaped from. To his left, a man in a black shirt and shorts slowly climbs into frame. The thick wood rungs on the ladder partially obscure him. His head looks downward at the dozens of men beneath him. If he were to find gold in the sack on his back, he may don a striped shirt too and be allowed a moment of reflection and relaxation.

In press coverage of Serra Pelada, there was an attempt to characterize the operation in relation to nineteenth-century gold rushes, with it being described in a *TIME* article from September 1980 as “a tropical version of the nineteenth-century Klondike.” Following the discovery of gold in the Klondike region of the Yukon Territory in 1896, some 100,000 prospectors made the long and dangerous journey to the minefields over the next three years. While gold fever was not a new concept and can explain the general fervor, the specific reasons why so many would go to Serra Pelada requires us to examine the socioeconomic conditions of 1980s Brazil. It was under the military dictatorship that the Brazilian government expanded economic policies of state-centralized planning and market regulation begun during the Estado Novo in the 1940s by Getúlio Vargas, partially through the creation and expansion of state-owned enterprises like CVRD. These economic policies and their consequences were described by economist Marcos Mendes as having “amplified an already historically high income and wealth inequality, making Brazil one of the most unequal countries in the world.”

In 1985, forty-two percent of the Brazilian population lived below the poverty line and these economic inequalities affected Afro-Brazilian people at much higher rates. According to the Institute of Applied Economic Research, while the white and black populations six years later, in 1991, accounted for fifty-one percent and forty-seven percent of Brazil’s 147 million people, respectively, sixty-four percent of the nearly fifty-nine million in poverty were black. I do not dispute Salgado’s claim that people of a multitude of racial and ethnic backgrounds worked and prospected at Serra Pelada, but given how Afro-Brazilian people disproportionately experienced income inequality and poverty and the potential riches on offer in gold mining that would likely be unobtainable otherwise, it is not unreasonable to assume the majority of peons at Serra Pelada were people of color.

However, much of the popular discourse on the Pelada photographs does not engage with the political context or the evocation of race. Inevitably, the discussion focuses on the scale and monumentality of the photographs’ subject matter and Salgado’s methodology. Praise is effusive and free flowing. In a 2019 review of *Gold*, Neill Burgess, the man responsible for the photographs being first published in *Sunday Times Magazine* in May 1987, described the series as “a romantic, narrative work that engaged with its immediacy, but had not a drop of sentimentality. It was astonishing, an epic poem in photographic form.” The vaunting of the photographs draws in the monumental, perhaps the biblical. A strange phenomenon exists in the discourse in which the photographs are discussed in the abstract and not as actual photographs. Among the sources that deal with the Serra Pelada photographs more or less exclusively, there is not a great deal of formal analysis, and it seems that the photographs are, disappointingly, utilized as proxies for large and grandiose discussions of the universal human experience. That is not to say that all these discussions are not valuable or intriguing, but most of them miss the mark.

A sizable portion of the discourse focuses on the importance of the Pelada images in the revitalization of black-and-white documentary photography. Indeed, color photography had surpassed black-and-white in importance by the mid-1980s, and color photographs of Serra Pelada had already appeared in *Life Magazine* in December 1980 and *Time Magazine* in 1985. Salgado shot in color earlier in

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10 Russell, “The Treasure of Serra Pelada.”
his career, despite his preference for “the chiaroscuro palette of black-and-white images.” Indeed, it is the heightened expression of drama and intensity of black-and-white photography that gives the Serra Pelada images so much of their baroque magnetism.

Equally, it is the usage of black-and-white film as a system of control that allows for the colorization of labor to be effective as a visual vocabulary and thematic device. Given how deliberate and patient Salgado is in all aspects of his practice, the notion that those specific details would have come by chance or accident simply does not fit. And that begs the question, why does Salgado not acknowledge these choices? He does allude to race consistently in the exhibition catalogues for Workers, which included twenty-eight images of Serra Pelada and Gold. In the brief introduction to the photographs of Serra Pelada in Workers, Salgado writes, “No one is taken by force, yet once they arrive, all become slaves of the dream of gold and the need to stay alive. And once inside, it becomes impossible to leave.” This single quote alludes to three distinct aspects, both historic and contemporary, of the black experience in Brazil from the Atlantic Slave trade and enslavement on plantations to contemporary socioeconomic repression. Dynamics of race, socioeconomics, and labor inequality are all at play within the mine and they are at play in Salgado’s photographs.

While there is criticism and dissent among scholars and critics about Salgado’s practice more broadly and these photographs in particular, the issue of race is typically not directly addressed in relation to the Serra Pelada photographs. Criticism is usually focused on the aestheticization of suffering, which is a frequent point of discussion with regard to Salgado’s work. That said, I am not the first English-language scholar to assert the visuality of black labor in these photographs. Marcus Wood makes mention of Salgado’s Serra Pelada photographs as the late twentieth-century photographic apogee of the intersection of action photography and the visuality of black bodies in Brazil in Black Milk, although the discussion is contained to a single sentence.

Regardless of intentionality, to allude and evoke the complexities of blackness, racial identity, and labor politics in Brazil in the visual themes and subject matter of the photographs, in the written promotional materials, and in the scholarly and critical discourse, and then to deny or simply not address those complexities as a critical part of the photographs’ thematic ambitions is both a wasted opportunity to examine the images in their dynamic sociopolitical context and more troublingly, a relegation of the importance of black labor and black bodies to the point of non-acknowledgement. The evocation and allusion to blackness is more explicitly and deliberately present than Salgado himself says.

And herein lies the key stumbling block of discussing and examining Salgado’s images of Serra Pelada and its miners. By not recognizing the evocation and allusion to the complexity of labor and race in Brazil, we are unable to engage with the photographs from the perspective that is the most important. Widening the scope further to include the entire body of Workers, what makes the photographs deeply magnetic, consequential, and captivating is the way in which they engage with their temporal and geographic contexts. How gold miners in Brazil relate to ranchers in North Dakota or oil workers in Kuwait in a globalized, complex system of labor is vastly more interesting than how the photographs document the universal aspects of work and humanity. Rather than focusing on the universal, we must focus on the collective and the complex. In doing so, we will be both getting the most out of Salgado’s photographs as works of art and documents of socioeconomic tectonics and doing the most for ourselves as we attempt to end inequity and inequality.

13 Salgado, Gold, 193.
15 Susan Sontag, Regarding the Pain of Others (New York: Picador, 2003), 78–9.
Bibliography


Figure 1. Sebastião Salgado, *Serra Pelada, State of Pará, Brazil*, 1986, Museum of Fine Arts Houston.

Figure 2. Sebastião Salgado, *Serra Pelada, State of Pará, Brazil*, 1986, Philadelphia Museum of Art.
Figure 3. Sebastião Salgado, *Serra Pelada, State of Pará, Brazil*, 1986, Brooklyn Museum.

Figure 4. Sebastião Salgado, *Serra Pelada, State of Pará, Brazil*, 1986, Philadelphia Museum of Art.
Figure 5. Sebastião Salgado, Serra Pelada, State of Pará, Brazil, 1986, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Figure 6. William McPherson, Gordon, 1863.
Parrots, Princes, and Popes: Translatio Imperii in Jean Clouet’s Portrait of Francis I as St. John the Baptist

Emily DuVall

Abstract: At first glance, a green parrot featured in Jean Clouet’s Portrait of Francis I as St. John the Baptist appears out of place. The parrot was a prized import that first graced Europe upon Alexander the Great’s victorious return from his conquest of the Persian Empire and India. Why is this foreign bird exhibited in a sixteenth-century French royal portrait? Repeated in a portrait of Francis I’s sister, Marguerite d’Angoulême, the green parrot was evidently no casual inclusion. Francis I’s green parrot contains a complex visual message. Considering the implications of the parrot and the ambitions of Francis I, this paper will argue that the appearance of this particular bird served to glorify and endorse a new branch of the Valois dynasty.

Key words: Parrot, portraiture, Francis I, Clouet, Marguerite d’Angoulême

Francis I (1494–1547) became the king of France in 1515 and he quickly made clear his desire to expand the borders of his kingdom. Jean Clouet’s Portrait of Francis I as St. John the Baptist (now in the Musée du Louvre, Paris) subtly displays these ambitions of the first king from the Angoulême branch of the Valois dynasty [Figure 1]. This inference can be supported by examining the green parrot featured in the portrait, which appears again in Jean Clouet’s portrait of Francis I’s sister, Marguerite d’Angoulême (now in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool), executed eight years later [Figure 2]. How can we make sense of the unusual features of this cryptic portrait? What sort of parrot is this? Why include a parrot? Interrogating the inclusion of such a unique bird reveals the parrot’s role—a sign of Francis I’s preordained right to rule Christendom.

Before specifically addressing the parrots in the Clouet portraits, we must consider the presence and significance of the parrot in sixteenth-century France. The parrot was known in Europe as early as 327 BCE when Alexander the Great returned from his conquest of the Persian Empire and India.¹ The emperor is credited with introducing the Alexandrine parrot (Psittacula eupatria), named in his honor, and the rose-ringed parakeet, or “Green Indian parakeet” (Psittacula krameri), to Greece.² The parrots quickly became a prized import and were associated with Alexander’s imperial success in the East. Aristotle’s History of Animals, written in 350 BCE, explicitly names the Indian parrot, noting its ability to mimic human speech and its brashness after drinking wine.³ By 77 CE, Pliny the Elder had also written on the Indian parrot in his Natural History. The vast trading networks of the Roman Empire had made the parrot an available and recognizable foreign product. Pliny remarks that “India sends us this bird,” and “It will duly salute an

¹ Alexander’s encounter with parrots in India and the legacy of the connection between Alexander the Great and parrots is explained by Bruce Boehrer, Parrot Culture: Our 2500-Year-Long Fascination with the World’s Most Talkative Bird (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), Chapter 1.
emperor and pronounce the words it has heard spoken.”⁴ Pliny’s comment about saluting an emperor refers to an incident following the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE when Octavian (soon to become Emperor Augustus) defeated Mark Antony and claimed the Roman imperial title. A parrot called from a crowd of Octavian’s supporters, “Hail Caesar, conqueror and leader”—an act that spoke to the parrot’s remarkable capabilities and its owner’s loyalty.⁵ This wording and delivery revealed the existence of some human faculties in the bird. The parrot could identify an emperor; this act was more than just repeating a phrase on command. The storyline of Caesar Augustus and the parrot was integrated into the narrative of several medieval rulers, lending them legitimacy. For example, Thomas de Cantimpré’s On the Nature of Things, written in 1240 and read widely in the sixteenth century, was an encyclopedia of the natural sciences intended for the clergy. The text includes an entry about King Charles I of France and a parrot. While Charles was traveling through Greece, he encountered some parrots who called out to him in Greek saying: “Farewell, Emperor.” Thomas explains that this was a prophecy because at the time Charles was only the king of France, and not yet Emperor Charlemagne.⁶ References to parrots by Aristotle, Pliny, and Thomas de Cantimpré ensured that by the sixteenth century parrots were linked to emperors in the courtly imagination.

Although native to India, parrots made their way to Europe in different ways throughout the centuries. In antiquity, after Alexander’s initial introduction, parrots were bred in Greece and traded in Egypt.⁷ While they continued to be bred locally throughout the Middle Ages, they were also imported through Venice and Constantinople. By the sixteenth century, Spain had begun to import them from the Atlantic world; however, the Alexandrine parrot and the Green Indian parakeet are not indigenous to the Americas, and they would not have been among the parrot species introduced to the European market by Spain.⁸ The bird that appears in Francis I’s portrait—the Indian parrot, which was the species most entangled in the narratives of emperors—carries particular economic and imperialist connotations that warrant scholarly exploration.

Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the foreign origins and exoticized features of parrots rendered them commodities of status. Along with elephants, monkeys, and giraffes, parrots were often included in Renaissance menageries of kings, emperors, and popes.⁹ A king’s possession of a

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⁴ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, X.LVIII.
⁶ Thomas de Cantimpré, *On the Nature of Things* V.CIX.
magnificent creature like a parrot made the king, by ownership and proximity, a magnificent king.⁹⁰ Synonymous with economic success and social rank, simply owning a parrot indicated that its owners could afford the cost of import, and they would accordingly boast their financial abundance by parading the vibrant, charming birds.

Lauded as clever speakers by ancient authors, the birds would also signify an owner’s intellectual sophistication. Their ability to precisely mimic human speech earned parrots a reputation for eloquence, and they were accordingly likened to poets. Often featured as protagonists in late medieval literature, their presence within the social landscape of the early modern court was underwritten by the intellectual achievements of the past.¹¹ Despite such romantic affiliations, a parrot can only faithfully repeat words that it has heard spoken. The implication of this skill is that the parrot can only speak honestly—no unspoken words or deceit will come from their mouths. Truthful often to a fault, the parrot and his dependable voice provided opportunity for social commentary and moral instruction.

The wonder of the parrot derives from its uncanny ability to proffer words, astounding its audience in the same way as excellent orators do through their uncanny use of words.¹² Its eloquence and honesty may explain the notion that God favored the parrot. The parrot, who comes to Earth from Heaven, speaks and speaks well by the grace of God.¹³ These desirable traits allowed it to be a compelling and dynamic messenger of God’s decrees. Because it was able to relay God’s message without altering it, the parrot was associated with the angelic salutation of Gabriel upon announcing God’s divine will to Mary. The “Ave” of the angelic salutation in Latin was supposed to be the natural greeting of the parrot, and on this account, the bird became a symbol of trustworthy prophecy and an allusion to the mystery of the Incarnation, in particular Mary’s virgin birth of the Messiah.¹⁴ The spoken word was a key element in the concept of the Incarnation. The Gospel of John explained, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” and “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth.”¹⁵ The

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¹² In his Iconologia (first published in 1593), Cesare Ripa assimilates the parrot with eloquence: “Il papagallo è simbolo dell’eloquenza, perché si rende meraviglioso con la lingua et con le parole imitando l’huomo, nella cui lingua solamente consiste l’essercito dell’eloquenza. Et si dipinge il papagallo fuora della gabbia, perché l’eloquenza non è ristretta a termine alcuno.” Cesare Ripa, Iconologia (1610; Milan: Neri Pozza, 2000), 116.

¹³ This notion is reflected in Conrad Gesner’s Historia animalium, published in five volumes between 1551 and 1558. The Swiss naturalist explains that the parrot came to India from heaven: “Psittacus inter aves ingenio sagacitateq[ue] praestat, quod grandi sit capite atq[ue] in India caelo syncero nascat.” Conrad Gesner, Historiae animalium libri III. Qui est de avium natura (Frankfurt am Main, 1604), 723.


¹⁵ John 1:1, 1:14 (Douay-Rheims Bible).
Virgin did conceive by the Word of God as acknowledged by the Gospel of Luke and understood in Mary’s response to the Archangel Gabriel: “Be it done to me according to thy Word.” Jan van Eyck’s *Madonna with the Canon van der Paele* (Groeningenmuseum, Bruges, 1434–36) refers to the complex symbolism associated with the parrot. The green parrot, more than likely the Green Indian parakeet, rests in the Virgin’s lap, where it is petted by the Christ Child. With its head facing the enthroned Virgin, the parrot, as the central point of the painting, represents the “Word made flesh,” reminding viewers and believers of the faithfulness and truth of God’s decrees.

The parrot as a religious motif and a prophet brings our discussion back to Clouet’s cryptic portrait and Francis I. At his birth, Francis I seemed unlikely to become king because he was only the cousin of Charles VIII, the reigning monarch, and Louis, Duc d’Orléans (later Louis XII) was next in line to the throne. However, in 1515, Francis succeeded his cousin and father-in-law, Louis XII, who died without a son. The early uncertainty of Francis I’s status as heir and the successive events that cleared his path to the French throne were attributed to destiny and God’s will and were most certainly wrapped up in the construction of his royal image. Clouet’s *Francis I as St. John the Baptist*, dated 1518–20, is an early portrait of the new king. Seated and dressed in fur, Francis points to the lamb in his lap. Iconographically, this portrait fits traditional depictions of St. John the Baptist. However, several modifications alert the viewer to the fact that this is not St. John, but Francis I. The king does not wear the typical camel skin of St. John the Baptist who lived in the wilderness; instead, he is clad in a wild cat or dark ermine fur—more befitting of his status. Furthermore, Francis makes direct eye contact with his viewer—the prerogative of a king.

St. John’s primary attribute, the lamb, sits in Francis I’s lap and carries a meaning similar to that of the parrot. St. John was the first to recognize Christ as the Son of God, exclaiming when Christ passed, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” This heralding of Christ is usually visualized by a pointing gesture. In the Clouet portrait, Francis I, like St. John the Baptist, points to the lamb. With his gesture towards the lamb while gazing at the viewer, Francis reminds us of St. John’s prophetic knowledge of Christ as the Savior. It is in light of this knowledge combined with the prophetic powers of the parrot that the viewer can now

18 Francis I had married Louis XII’s daughter Claude, a match that had been orchestrated by Louis before his death to ensure that his hereditary line remained in power. R.J. Knecht, *French Renaissance Monarchy: Francis I and Henry II* (London: Longman, 1984), 24–6.
20 While the meaning of the details are debated, the literature agrees that Clouet’s *Francis I as St. John the Baptist* is a portrait of Francis I in the guise of St. John and not an arbitrary depiction of St. John. See Mansfield, *Representations of Renaissance Monarchy*, 86–8; Lecoq, “Le François Ier en saint Jean-Baptiste,” 31–6; Scailliérez, *François Ier par Clouet*, 93–4; Walbe, “Studien zur Entwicklung des allegorischen Porträts,” 37.
21 Scailliérez suggests that the parrot was present because St. John was known to live among the animals. However, this conclusion downplays the specificity of the bird. Scailliérez, *François Ier par Clouet*, 94.
22 John 1:36 (Douay-Rheims Bible).
23 Lisa Mansfield thinks that the lamb refers to Francis I’s namesake Francis of Paola, whose attributes included a staff, a lamb, and the word *Charitas* or *Humilitas*. Mansfield, *Representations of Renaissance Monarchy*, 88.
24 This pose emulates Leonardo’s *St. John the Baptist* which the artist completed during his time in France.
make sense of the inclusion of this bird. Just as Francis I points to the lamb, so too does the parrot “point to” Francis I. Through its allusion to the Incarnation, the parrot, like St. John, confirms the veracity of the divine prophecy: the lamb is the Word. On the other hand, the parrot’s attention to and implicit recognition of Francis I is meant as a heralding action akin to its saluting, “Hail Caesar,” in recognition of Caesar Augustus. The parrot therefore seems to indicate Francis I’s expectation of receiving the title of emperor. This symbolism, paired with the dating of the portrait, creates a clear allusion to the imperial election of 1519. With the death of Maximilian I in January 1519, an imperial election was required to determine his successor, and the primary contenders were Francis I and Charles of Spain (the future Emperor Charles V). France’s wars in Italy had instigated an intense rivalry between Francis I and Charles, who ruled Spain, Austria, and a number of territories surrounding France, making him a constant threat to Francis I’s kingdom. The title of Holy Roman Emperor carried immense power and prestige; Francis particularly coveted this title since it had first been held by Charlemagne. Despite his initial potential, Francis could not garner German support, and he withdrew two days before the election, ensuring that Charles was elected Holy Roman Emperor.

While the Clouet painting features Francis I as St. John the Baptist, a later painting by an unidentified master (now in the Musée d’Art et Histoire, Cognac) depicts Francis I along with St. John himself. Dated to the late 1520s, St. John the Baptist Preaching in the Presence of Francis I speaks to the persistent imagery of the king as a divinely chosen monarch [Figure 3]. However, there is no parrot present to signal his imperial prerogatives; in this painting, the task of “announcing” the king is given to St. John. Rather than pointing to the symbolic Lamb of God at his feet, the saint gestures across the crowd to a figure portraying Francis I. The king looks knowingly at the viewer, fully aware of his heavenly duty as God’s chosen. Placed behind St. John’s legs, Marguerite d’Angoulême is also portrayed here and gazes at the viewer like her brother. She was crowned Queen of Navarre in 1527, due to her brother’s matchmaking work, around the same time that this work was completed. Here, she acknowledges Francis I’s power and divine anointment. The artist and the patron of this painting is unknown, but the message is unambiguous and reflects Francis I’s title as the “Most Christian King.” The title Rex Christianissimus or Roi Très-Chrétien was bestowed upon French kings in the thirteenth century by the papacy for their devotion to the Christian faith. It became recognized as a hereditary and exclusive title of the Kings of France. This allowed French kings to establish themselves as the inheritors of the Christian kingdom, as well as the divinely sanctioned rulers of France. Reminding the viewer of Francis I’s status as Roi Très-Chrétien, St. John the Baptist Preaching in the Presence of Francis I may be a timely allusion to the disarray of the papacy in the

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25 The most frequently agreed upon interpretation of the parrot in Francis I’s portrait is the parrot as a symbol of eloquence. Lecoq proposes the parrot as a symbol of eloquence, fitting for the patron saint of preachers and a Renaissance king. She uses Cesare Ripa’s discussion of “Eloquence” in his Iconologia to establish this connection. Lecoq, “Français ler en saint Jean-Baptiste,” 32–3; Scailliérez also points to the eloquent parrot as an appropriate symbol for both Francis I and Marguerite d’Angoulême. Scailliérez, François ler par Clouet, 91–4; Brigitte Walbe leans into the religious interpretation of the parrot as a symbol of redemption from original sin, citing Albrecht Dürer and Hans Burgkmair. Francis I points to the redeemer of mankind (Christ, the lamb of God) which is an indicator of the religious devotion of the young king as well as his worthiness. Walbe, “Studien zur Entwicklung des allegorischen Porträts,” 37–9.


27 This was an appropriate time to promote this type of imagery since Francis I had only been released from Spain in 1526. For Francis I’s defeat and capture at the Battle of Pavia as well as his subsequent imprisonment, see R.J. Knecht, Renaissance Warrior and Patron: The Reign of Francis I (Cambridge: New York, 1994), 216–48.

28 Mansfield, Representations of Renaissance Monarchy, 2.

aftermath of the 1527 Sack of Rome which was carried out by the mutinous troops of Charles V. This portrayal of Francis as divinely chosen presents him in stark contrast to the elected Holy Roman Emperor whose army had devastated the Eternal City.

The pope’s role and influence in the matters of Christian Europe are also evoked in the Clouet portrait, in particular through the presence of the parrot. Leo X (r. 1513–1521) was the pope at the time of the painting’s execution. Born Giovanni de’ Medici, Leo X was the second son of Lorenzo de’ Medici; he combined the wealth and might of the Medici family with the political and religious power of the papacy, which made him a necessary ally for the ambitious Francis I. Examining Clouet’s portrait, we can discern associations between the prince and the pope. The sixteenth-century French word for parrot was *papegay* or *perroquet*.

30 *Pape* is the French word for pope, creating a word association with *papegay*. In this interpretation, the parrot becomes a metaphor for the pope—a stand in for Pope Leo X. Taking this observation one step further, it can be said that the parrot evokes a strategic relationship between Francis I and *Pape* Leo X based on mutual favor and support, which was indeed the case.

Following the French victory at the Battle of Marignano in September 1515, which enabled France to capture Milan, Francis I needed the pope in order to maintain his position in Italy. The Concordat of Bologna, signed August 18, 1516, created a personal relationship between Francis I and Leo X and delineated their sphere of influence in a manner that benefited both parties. The pope was permitted to collect the income of the Catholic Church in France, while the king could tax French clergy. French bishops, abbots, and priors were appointed by Francis I, but the appointments could be vetoed by Leo X. Most notably for the papacy, the Concordat abolished the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges (1438), a document that asserted that the General Council of the Church in France was superior in authority to the pope. The Pragmatic Sanction was a largely symbolic document that offended the papacy. Nevertheless, the provisions of the Concordat allowed Francis I to maintain most of the privileges that he enjoyed under the Pragmatic Sanction.

To seal their alliance, Leo X gave the French king a reliquary cross containing a piece of the True Cross, the cross on which Christ was crucified. This gift validated Francis I as the Roi *Très-Chrétien* and was meant to encourage him to lead a crusade. In addition, the pope had a seal made for each party. The seals were an image of the cross with the three nails that included the motto “In hoc signo vincies;” or “In this sign you will conquer.” Through this evident reference to Emperor Constantine, Leo X

30 Sixteenth-century French naturalist Pierre Belon traveled widely in the 1540s, documenting animals and plants and then comparing his observations to descriptions by classical authors. The parrot appears in two of his publications, *L'histoire de la nature des oyseaux, avec leurs descriptions, & naïfs portraits retirez du naturel* (Paris: 1555) and *Portraits d'oyseaux, animaux, serpens, herbes, arbres, hommes et femmes d'Arabie et d'Égypte: le tout enrichy de quatrains, pour plus facile connaissance des oyseaux et autres portraits* (Paris: 1557). His commentary on parrots simply restates the tropes established by Aristotle and Pliny, perpetuating the association of the parrot with India, wine, and the ability to learn human speech. Belon refers to the bird as “Le Papegay est aussi nommé un Perroquet” (1555) and “Les Papegays, que Perroquets on nomme” (1557).

31 Gustave Loisel’s history of menageries details the papal preference for parrots. He explains that popes joined the “le mouvement général de grande lux” and acquired “animaux d'appartement, des oiseaux, surtout des perroquets.” Loisel, 1:202.

32 The parrot’s sacred associations directly related it to the Catholic belief and the papacy which was taken advantage of by Protestants. Martin Luther supposedly thought that parrots, like popes, were deceptive, remarking in *Table Talk* (*Tischreden*) “I believe the devil resides in parakeets and parrots...because they can imitate people.” Noble, “The Kind of Virgin That Keeps a Parrot,” 706. In his article, Boehner explains how the parrot evolved “into an emblem of mindless repetition at the hands of first-generation Protestant reformers, who use it to exemplify the alleged ignorance of Catholic priests and the alleged emptiness of Catholic rituals.” Boehner, “The Cardinal’s Parrot,” 1–37.

33 This victory was not lasting. By 1521 Francis I was forced to abandon Milan to Charles V’s forces, losing the ground he had gained in 1515. Knecht, *Francis I*, 33–50.

34 French subjects resented having to relinquish their symbolic sovereignty; however, Francis I saw an alliance with the pope as more advantageous. Knecht, *Francis I*, 52–6.
assimilated Francis I with the figure of the Holy Roman Emperor, exhorting him to undertake the crusade, but also suggesting his own support in any future imperial election. Furthermore, the Concordat of Bologna was commemorated in a fresco (1516–17) at the Vatican Palace by Raphael and his assistants. Instead of depicting the meeting in Bologna, the scene portrayed the coronation of Charlemagne; however, Leo III is a portrait of Leo X, and Charlemagne is a portrait of Francis I [Figure 4]. Layered with these allusions to the great Christian rulers of the past, Francis I’s portrait as Charlemagne compelled the viewers to recognize the French king as a divinely pre-ordained emperor. Francis I could therefore count on the pope’s approval. It is this harmony with the papacy that is alluded to in the Clouet portrait.

Although Francis I did not win the imperial election, Leo X was a stark supporter of Francis I and actively campaigned for him. This significant endorsement also relates to the presence of the parrot in the Clouet portrait. In Leo X’s calculations, Charles of Spain’s bid for the title of Holy Roman Emperor was a greater threat than Francis I’s. Charles already ruled Naples, and upon his appointment, he would gain territory in Northern Italy, causing the Empire to effectively surround the papal states. While the pope could not cast a vote, Leo X went to considerable lengths in order to secure votes for his candidate. He sent envoys to Germany to cast doubt on Charles’s ability and eligibility. In addition, Leo X authorized Francis I to promise archbishop seats and cardinal positions in return for votes. Clouet’s portrait conveys Leo X’s investment in and support of Francis I. The parrot, looking to Francis I, included a double meaning—the parrot as the herald of Roman emperors and the parrot not only as a symbol of God’s will, but as the representative of God’s authority on earth, the pope, thus sanctioning the French king’s bid for the title of Holy Roman Emperor. In addition, the parrot not only indicated Leo X’s privileging of Francis I, but it also exhibited Francis I’s faithfulness to Leo X. The Italian word for parrot—pappagallo—could be interpreted as “papa gallo,” or the French pope. The assimilation of Francis I with St. John the Baptist can be explained as the king’s support of Leo X’s papacy as the legitimate heir of the Holy Lamb, as well as his support of future Medici popes. This understanding was important to Leo X, who wanted his cousin, Giulio, who later became Pope Clement VII, as his successor. The Clouet painting displays the beneficial alliance between the king and the pope by identifying Leo X as a “French pope”—a pap(p)agallo.

Like his predecessors, Francis I had territorial ambitions in the Italian city-states, and citing dynastic claims through his great-grandmother Valentina Visconti, he invaded Italy in the first year of his reign. Francis I was proclaimed the new Julius Caesar after his early victory at Marignano, and he was poised to play a dominant role in European politics. Again, the parrot in Clouet’s portrait and his greeting of “Hail Caesar!” enters the conversation as a designation of Francis I’s status and ambition. Francis had extended

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35 Constantine, the first Christian Roman Emperor, had allegedly been told the words “In hoc signo vinces” at his conversion. Eusebius, Vita Constantini 1.28.
36 Lecoq discusses Francis I as the new Constantine at great length and includes The Coronation of Charlemagne in her analysis. Anne-Marie Lecoq, François Ier imaginaire: Symbolique et Politique à l’Aube de la Renaissance française (Paris: Macula, 1987), 259–323; For the details surrounding Francis I’s gifts, see Knecht, Renaissance Warrior and Patron, 103–04.
37 Buying votes was not uncommon in this process. Among other reasons, Charles V secured his win by buying the seven votes. Knecht, Francis I, 74–7.
38 “Papa” is the Italian term for “pope” and, “Gallo” refers to the ancient territory of Gaul, which comprised most of modern France. I would like to thank Dr. Lorenzo Pericolo for drawing my attention to this Italian pun.
39 In addition to the imperial election, the two allied themselves several times early in Francis I’s reign: Francis I appointed the pope’s brother, Giuliano de’ Medici, Duke of Nemours in 1515, and in 1518, Lorenzo II de’ Medici, the pope’s nephew, married Madeleine de La Tour d’Auvergne, a relative of Francis I.
40 Lecoq points to the declaration of Francis I as the new Julius Caesar after his victory at Marignano as the reason for the parrot in the Clouet portrait. The parrot was intended to mark this declaration since the parrot was linked to the greeting of emperors. However, she dates the Clouet portrait to 1520 which was five years after his victory and after he had lost the most important emperor title, Holy Roman Emperor. In addition, by late 1519, Charles V was closing in on Francis I’s territorial possession making his position much more precarious. Lecoq, “François Ier en saint Jean-Baptiste,” 34–5.
the borders of his kingdom, but there was still more that he desired—an implication of the portrait’s agenda conveyed by the verdant bird. The parrot, as symbolic compensation for a distant, but commodifiable physical space, embodies the intentions and might of the possessor. Its position in the upper left corner of the composition—just above the king but clearly still within his own spatial jurisdiction—signifies a capacity to expand into, and establish ownership of, a place beyond his kingdom’s current boundaries. Just as the green parrot symbolized the conquests made by Alexander the Great in enlarging his empire, so too does the parrot in the Clouet portrait convey Francis I’s desire to add unconquered lands to his kingdom in emulation of his Roman imperial predecessors.

The Clouet portrait is not the only work at this time to link Francis I’s to imperial predecessors. Thought to be a commemoration of Francis I’s triumph, the Commentaires de la guerre gallique is a manuscript in three volumes detailing a fictitious dialogue between the French king and Julius Caesar, in which the pair discuss military victories and the Gallic Wars. Volume one contains two portrait medallions of the French king and the Roman emperor, both attributed to Jean Clouet. Francis, depicted in the larger of the two illuminations, is situated above the profile portrait of Julius Caesar [Figure 5]. An inscription at the beginning of the volume reads, “Francis by the grace of God King of France, second Caesar.” These links to Julius Caesar conceivably point to the land that he primarily occupied—Italy. Leading the viewer to believe that Francis was the legitimate successor of Julius Caesar and justified in his military campaigns in Italy.

As the successor of Julius Caesar and the rightful ruler of Italy, Francis I pursued the ideal of a French universal monarchy. The title of Holy Roman Emperor was rooted in the concept of translatio imperii, the “translation of empire,” or the linear transfer of power from one supreme ruler to another. Maximilian I utilized this notion during his tenure as Holy Roman Emperor, claiming that the title and status of the appointment belonged to him and those with German heritage because of Charlemagne’s association with Germanic territories. However, for France, Charlemagne, the King of the Franks, the King of the Lombards, and the Emperor of the Romans, was the true precedent, and his legacy was destined to be followed by French kings. In the late fourteenth century, the hermit Telesphorus of Cosenza foretold the “Second Charlemagne” and spoke of a “roi aux trois couronnes.” Since the king was to be the second Charlemagne, the crowns were the two temporal crowns of France and Italy and then the spiritual crown of Christianity. This king would vanquish the Muslims, resulting in a universal Christian monarchy and a renewal of the world, renovatio mundi. While the original prophecy was meant to indicate King Charles VI

41 Boehrer applies this consideration to Alexander the Great, although it can also apply to Francis I and other Renaissance kings with imperial motives. Boehrer, Parrot Culture, 5. Using animals to convey possession and power is a tactic that Francis employed in other commissions. Most memorably at the Château Fontainebleau, the Galerie François Première’s decorative program includes a royal entry with an elephant. The elephant depicted in one of the frescos is understood to be a symbol of the king himself, magnificent and powerful. See Dora and Erwin Panofsky, “The Iconography of the Galerie François Ier at Fontainebleau,” Gazette des Beaux-Arts, vol. 52 (1958): 113–90.

42 The first two volumes of the Commentaires de la guerre gallique were completed in 1519 and the third in 1520. The third volume downplays Francis I’s imperial ambitions since he had lost the Holy Roman Emperor election. For detailed information about the Commentaires de la guerre gallique, see Anne-Marie Lecoq, François Ier Imaginaire, 229–44; Myra D. Orth, Renaissance Manuscripts: The Sixteenth Century (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2015); and François Rouget, François Ier et la vie littéraire de son temps (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2017) 167–82.

43 The medallion portrait, in addition to illuminating the established relationship between Francis and Julius Caesar, provides a likeness comparison to the face of Francis in Clouet’s portrait [Figure 1]. Both versions show the same faint beard—a helpful detail that argues for the portrait’s completion before the Imperial Election of 1519. This comparison would suggest that both portraits were done at a similar time. Since the Commentaires de la guerre gallique portrait was completed by 1519, the same could be said for Francis Ier as St. John the Baptist. Janet Cox-Rearick, The Collection of Francis I: Royal Treasures (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 5.


45 Jean-François Dubost, La France italienne: XVie–XVIIe (Mayenne: Aubier, 1997), 71.
of France (1380–1422) as the second Charlemagne, the text of this prophecy was published in 1516, the second year of Francis I’s reign, and continued to be published throughout the sixteenth century. With his victory at Marignano granting him a foothold in Italy, Francis I began to align his own titles with those of Charlemagne. Francis I was, therefore, the heir of Charlemagne and the “Second Charlemagne” that was prophesied.

The meaning of the green parrot in Clouet’s *Portrait of Marguerite d’Angoulême* becomes clearer once the symbolism of Francis I’s green parrot has been established [Figure 2]. Following the death of her first husband, Charles IV, Duc d’Alençon, Marguerite married Henri II of Navarre in 1527, making the Valois princess Queen of Navarre. The portrait most likely marked the occasion of her wedding, which had been arranged as a result of Francis I’s captivity in Madrid. Seated against a red damask background, Marguerite, like her brother in the Clouet portrait, gazes at the viewer. The ruffle of her sumptuous sleeves fills the lower half of the image and provides a material contrast to the green parrot that perches on her right hand. Marguerite’s portrait, a rather standard royal portrait aside from the parrot, is not a cryptic portrait like her brother’s. The eight-year gap between these two portraits indicates that the meaning of the parrot relies on the specific symbolism of Clouet’s *Portrait of Francis I as St. John the Baptist*. Marguerite’s parrot appears more passive. The parrot does not face her; instead, it gazes beyond the portrait, perhaps even looks to the viewer. This pose is very different from that of Francis I’s parrot, who cranes its neck and positions its body to face the king. Marguerite’s parrot is not a bold symbol of empire, but a nod to Francis I. As a subtle emblem of her brother, the parrot communicates the Valois family’s status and Francis I’s achievements. Marguerite acknowledges and honors her brother by including such a prominent green parrot in her portrait.

The parrot, a secular and religious symbol, served to visually communicate the ambitions of a king who claimed earthly and spiritual crowns. Although an exotic bird, the parrot embodied European imperial intentions. Alluding to past and future achievements, Jean Clouet’s *Portrait of Francis I as St. John the Baptist* alerts the viewer to Francis I’s aspirations to rule over Christendom. As the rightful successor of St. John the Baptist, Julius Caesar, and Charlemagne, Francis I and his green parrot signal, early in his reign, the coming glory of the Angoulême branch of the Valois dynasty.

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46 This prophecy gained the most popularity whenever a French king was planning a Crusade. Michael J. Heath, *Crusading Commonplaces: La Noue, Lucinge, and Rhetoric Against the Turks* (Genève: Droz, 1986), 51–3.


48 The association of the parrot with eloquence is the standard explanation of Marguerite’s parrot. Scailhiérez cites Marguerite’s distinction as a woman of letters. Scailliérez, *François Ier par Clouet*, 93.; However, Marguerite’s writings were published anonymously in 1531 and then under her name in 1547—both publications are after the 1527 portrait of Marguerite and the parrot. Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley, “Introduction” in *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*, eds. Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley (Boston: Brill, 2013), 7–16.

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Figure 1. Jean Clouet, *Portrait of Francis I as St. John the Baptist*, 1518-1520, oil on panel, 96 x 79 cm, Louvre. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.
Figure 2. Jean Clouet, Marguerite d'Angoulême, duchess d'Angoulême, Queen of Navarre, c. 1527, oil on panel, 59.8 x 51.4 cm, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.
Figure 3. Unknown (French), *Saint John the Baptist Preaching in the Presence of Francis Ier*, 1525-1530, oil on panel, 83.5 x 66.5 cm, Musée d'Art et Histoire, Cognac. © Musées de Cognac.
Figure 5. Jean Clouet, Portrait of Francis I, 1519, black chalk and gouache on parchment 48 mm; Jean Clouet, Portrait of Julius Caesar, 1519, from Commentaires de la guerre galique vol. 1, British Library, London, MS Harley 6205, fol. 3. Courtesy of the British Library Board.
Fragmented Hours: The Biography of a Printed Devotional Book by Thielman Kerver

Stephanie Haas

Abstract: As the most richly illustrated and widely-owned texts of the late medieval and early modern eras, books of hours are essential to the study of art, religion, and the history of the book. Fragmented and altered books, while perhaps less coveted, are of particular value for what they may reveal of book owners and the changing meanings and uses of devotional texts and images over more than five centuries. This paper explores the compelling biography of a book of hours in the University of Florida Library that has undergone such extensive alteration prior to its acquisition in 1989 that cataloguers could not identify the printer and edition, leaving the book’s many dislocations, redactions, and annotations unexplored. Engaging with scholarship on the social history of books of hours, I identify the fragmented book as possibly the sole surviving copy of an edition produced by Thielman Kerver in Paris around 1510 and reconstruct its missing contents through comparison with relevant editions. Next, I examine the book’s complex web of redactions, erasures, and annotations in the context of sixteenth-century religious reform before turning to the book’s dislocations and the spoliation of images in the context of nineteenth and twentieth-century collecting trends.

Key words: medieval texts, Smathers Hours, provenance, Thelman Kerver

The subject of this article is a heavily damaged early sixteenth-century printed devotional book acquired by the University of Florida George A. Smathers Library in 1989. The prayerbook, which I refer to hereafter as the Smathers Hours, is an elegant example of the highly sought-after books of hours printed in Paris at the turn of the sixteenth century. Contemporary readers appreciated these books for their intricate wood- and metal-cut illustrations, as well as for their collection of devotional offices honoring the Virgin Mary and intercessory prayers appealing to saints. The Smathers Hours has sustained a dizzying array of damage over the past five centuries, including the loss or intentional removal of approximately half of its pages, mutilations where readers have carved hand-painted initials from the vellum leaves, the addition of handwritten annotations, and erasure and redaction of the book’s body text and border frames [Figures 1–2]. Also lost from the book are the standard details that would help to identify the edition of a book of hours, the title page, the printer’s colophon, and illustrations opening the prayerbook’s core texts. This loss of pages, combined with age and poor care and handling, has made an investigation of the book so challenging that cataloguers have thus far been unable to identify the publisher, printing date, and edition. While this damaged prayerbook is perhaps more challenging to study and less valuable to collectors than a more intact volume, the physical changes enacted upon the book by its users are invaluable to

1 This article is based on research of the Smathers Hours featured in my Master of Arts in Art History Thesis from the University of South Florida, published April 2023. Stephanie Haas, ‘Fragmented Hours: The Biography of a Devotional Book Printed by Thielman Kerver’ (Thesis, Tampa, University of South Florida, 2023).

understanding its biography as an object and its readers' social, religious, and cultural attitudes.\textsuperscript{2} By closely examining the origins, materials, and physical changes made to the Smathers Hours by its readers, I identify the University of Florida's book of hours as an edition produced in Paris by early printer Thielman Kerver, most likely on April 5, 1511. With the book's origin established, I argue that prior to its fragmentation as an art object, the Smathers Hours readers conformed the prayerbook to changing Protestant attitudes.

The book's fragile structure, dislocations in pages and text, and the lack of information on provenance prior to its acquisition by the University of Florida have complicated the investigation of the Smathers Hours. In its current condition, the prayerbook contains sixty-four vellum leaves loosely attached to a once intricately embossed, though now cracked, and likely not original, leather cover.\textsuperscript{3} The loss of nearly half of the book's pages has rendered the binding compromised and in danger of coming undone. Of the remaining leaves, more than half contain deletions to the body text of the offices, prayers, and areas of the framed commentary in the illustrative border cycles, resulting in interruptions in the book's structure [Figure 1]. The deletions made to the pages of the Smathers Hours appear in two forms: first, erasure by the physical scraping away of text from the vellum page, and second, redaction by crossing through text with lines of ink. In certain areas of the book, entire prayers are deleted; in others, the deletions are fragmented and inconsistent. Further adding to this complexity are lacunae from the removal of painted details and handwritten annotations in the page margins and body text [Figure 2]. The only evidence of the prayerbook's prior life is an apparent early 20th-century sales catalogue entry, printed in German and adhered to the book's back inner cover.\textsuperscript{4} This lack of prior knowledge of the book's origin and provenance, combined with the complications caused by layers of extensive damage, has made studying this prayerbook challenging, requiring an approach that considers these complexities.

As a damaged devotional object that has spent much of its existence in the hands of readers, the Smathers Hours is a specific “thing” with unique religious, social, and cultural contexts and purposes requiring methodologies tailored to books of hours. "Biographies of things can make salient what might otherwise remain obscure."\textsuperscript{5} The layers of disfigurement contained within the prayerbook make it an ideal case study for the biography of the book as an object which considers the creation, life, and afterlife of an object, recognizing that much like living beings, objects have inherent biographical possibilities.\textsuperscript{6} In this study, I draw upon Virginia Reinburg's research on the social history of French books of hours—that of "the book of hours as an artifact—a material object which, if carefully interpreted, can shed light on its makers and users."\textsuperscript{7} As the most widely-owned and richly illustrated devotional texts of the late medieval and early modern eras, books of hours provide a unique opportunity to study book owners' changing attitudes towards religion and art over the ensuing centuries. For over two hundred years, no singular entity controlled its content and production, while numerous hands contributed to crafting the devotional book—commercially, spiritually, and personally. The contents of books of hours are as varied as their owners, with the central feature of each prayerbook being the Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a


\textsuperscript{3} The truncated design on the binding suggests that it was constructed from covers that were cut down and repurposed.

\textsuperscript{4} See note 45 for a translation of the description.


\textsuperscript{7} Reinburg, \textit{French Books of Hours}, 8.
collection of psalms, hymns, and prayers honoring Mary as the Virgin Mother of God. Accompanying the Hours are essential secondary and accessory elements that were often unique to the reader, including elaborate illustrations and embellishments to mark the openings of the book’s essential text and invite visual contemplation of the book’s message. Through an investigation of the origins and materials of books of hours and carefully considering the traces of evidence that readers left of their use on the printed page, a portrait of the book’s owners begins to emerge. In the case of the Smathers Hours, these traces of use are apparent in the addition of handwritten prayers, the deletion of text, and the intentional removal of the opening illustrations from the book. As a book appreciated for its devotional text and images, the attitudes of its readers toward religion and art are intrinsic to uncovering the life history of the Smathers Hours.

In this analysis, I approach the Smathers Hours at three pivotal moments in its biography. First, I examine its origins as an edition of a book of hours created by Thielman Kerver in Paris and propose a printing date of April 5, 1511. By utilizing the tools of analytical bibliography, a method ideally suited to understanding early print shop practices and identifying damaged editions, I reconstruct the essence of what is missing through comparisons of the damaged copy with similar French printed books of hours described and analyzed by rare book scholars Ina Nemekoven and Thierry Claerr. I next examine the nature and location of the erasures and annotations made to the book through Eamon Duffy’s scholarship on the additions, removals, and erasures English laity made to Catholic prayerbooks, such as the Smathers Hours, in response to the political upheaval and changing sixteenth-century Protestant devotional norms. Finally, after isolating and contextualizing these deletions, I discuss the fragmentation of the book as an object of art in the later phases of the book’s life by the removal of the book’s illustrations and initials vis-à-vis nineteenth- and twentieth-century art attitudes and collecting trends discussed in research by Sandra Hindman and Christopher de Hamel.

**Identification of the Smathers Hours as an edition printed by Thielman Kerver**

The Smathers Hours was created during a time of tremendous growth in the ownership of books of hours. The printing press made ownership of books of hours accessible to broader swaths of the population and Paris was at the center of this trade, with shops catering to demand in France and abroad. In the first two decades of the sixteenth century, more editions of books of hours were printed in Paris than in all remaining

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years combined. Thielman Kerver, an emigree from the area of Koblenz, leveraged typesetting skills honed in German printshops and a later partnership in Paris with fellow German George Wolff to become a sworn bookseller of the University of Paris in 1501. By his death in 1522, he was fully enveloped in the Parisian print trade with an oeuvre that included over three hundred editions of liturgical books, legal tracts, classical authors, and prayerbooks. Though with over one hundred and twenty-four known individual editions and variants printed, books of hours were clearly where Kerver concentrated his efforts as a printer and publisher. In this competitive environment, Kerver distinguished his books of hours by leveraging unique materials, typography, and border illustrations to bring a semi-custom product to a growing middle-class audience.

The Smathers Hours is an example of a printed book of hours created for a growing audience of affluent middle-class laity eager to own devotional books with elegant materials. Kerver’s prayerbooks appealed to lawyers, merchants, doctors, government officials, and others who coveted the rich hand-illuminated manuscripts made famous by the nobility, but perhaps with more “modest means.” These books of hours featured a wide variety of printed devotional texts and images for the reader to contemplate and enjoy, along with the opportunity to appreciate custom details and decorations. A comparison of folio G3 verso of the Smathers Hours and Wing MS ZW 5351, a known Kerver edition printed in 1510 and held in the Newberry Library, Chicago, shows that while the Smathers Hours has yellowed with age and exhibits evidence of wear and water damage, elements of the book’s previous refinement remain visible in the smooth vellum folio pages, the liquid gold illuminated initials painted on backgrounds of red and blue, and the variety of intricate wood and metal cut illustrations featuring the Apocalypse Cycle framing the printed text of the Advent Office of the Virgin [Figures 3–4]. Adding to this luxurious effect are light red ink lines, scoring the page, and imitating the ruling of manuscript books. The reader would have pored over the book’s Antiqua and Gothic typesets printed in dual ink colors, an effect achieved by running the vellum pages through the hand-press twice, first with red ink and then again with black ink. The Smathers Hours and the Newberry Library edition display the array of bespoke details that a reader could request to adorn the pages of their printed books of hours.

The typography, illustrations, page layout of the Smathers Hours, and its contents, closely align with editions printed by Thielman Kerver between 1506 and 1512, but especially those of April 5, 1511. In addition to luxury copies such as the Smathers Hours, Kerver offered copies at lower price points printed on less expensive paper without the delicate bespoke details, although no less visually appealing. An example of such a book is a copy of an edition printed on paper by Thielman Kerver on April 5, 1511, the only known exemplar is owned by

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17 Claerr, *Kerver Tome I*, Annexes XIV.
the Antiquariat Bibermühle AG in Switzerland [Figure 5].


Claerr, *Imprimerie et Réussite Sociale á Paris á La Fin Du Moyen Âge,* Annexes XIV.; Claerr, "Le rôle de Thielman Kerver dans l’évolution de la typographie à Paris à la fin du xve siècle et au début du xvie siècle."

By the time of the Smathers Hours printing, the manuscript painter’s designs were decreasing in favor of a new round of designs from the workshop of Jean Pichore. In Pichore’s Dance of Death, the cycle featured on folio L2 verso, Death personified as a skeleton, visits the witch and the fool in the outer border frame [Figure 7]. In contrast to the outer border frames are the upper, lower, and inner frames, where Kerver has rearranged a variety of ornamental and vanitas motifs to frame the text, complement the scenes, and suit design needs. For Kerver, this area existed outside of the text of the divine offices and constituted a unique place for extra-liturgical viewing experiences.

The Smathers Hours and Kerver’s Bibermühle 60.2 are both octavos organized into thirteen sections of eight vellum leaves, creating gatherings of sixteen printed pages as well as an additional single gathering of four vellum leaves collated as A–I,8 k,8 L–N,8 O4. Both contain the essential and secondary texts of traditional books of hours and additional accessory appeals that Kerver included in his books of hours at an increasing rate. Bibermühle 60.2 is composed of the Almanac and Calendar (A1v–A8v), the Gospel Sequence and Passion of John (B1–B8v), Office of the Virgin (C1–F3v), Penitential Psalms (G4–G8), Litanies (G8v–H4), Office of the Dead (H4v–K4), Hours of the Cross and Holy Spirit (K4v–K6v; K6v–L3), Marian Mass (L3–L4), Hours of Barbara (L4v–L6), Suffrages (L6v–N1), and additional Prayers, Suffrages, and Indulgences (N1v–O4). Based on comparison with Bibermühle 60.2, sixty-four vellum leaves remain of 108 leaves initially printed with the Smathers Hours: six leaves remain of gatherings A and B, the Calendar and Gospel sequences; sixteen pages remain of gatherings C through H, featuring the Office of the Virgin, the Penitential Psalms, and Litanies; thirteen pages of gatherings H–K, housing the Office of the Dead; five pages of gathering L featuring the Hours of the Holy Spirit, Hours of Barbara, and Marian Mass; and sixteen leaves of gatherings L–N housing the Suffrages and prayers. Gathering O is also lost from the book, which featured additional accessory prayers and indulgences. In addition to missing pages in the Smathers Hours, some leaves were likely misplaced when the book was rebound.

Based on the size of the book’s leather cover and truncated design, the Smathers Hours was likely rebound at an unknown point in the book’s early life. In Thielman Kerver’s books of hours, prayers to Saints Stephen, Lawrence, and Christopher are traditionally featured in the Suffrages to the Saints on folio M5. However, in the Smathers Hours this folio is situated on the book’s last page next to the back flyleaves. On the verso side is an image of St. Christopher as the Christ-bearer next to an appeal to the saint that has been rubbed away from the vellum. This would place the prayer in the O gathering, an unusual location for the prayer that I have been unable to confirm against my examinations of comparable Kerver editions. Though erased, the last two lines of this prayer appear at the top of folio M6 recto, confirming that the pages were intended to be next to one another, with the Prayer to Sebastian following the prayer to St. Christopher.

Kerver carefully matched border typologies and text, using the ornamental frame as a space where decorative elements were rearranged. Kerver included additional prayers, meditations, and indulgences in his tracts and consistently altered the placement of metal and woodcuts, producing a wide range of editions with slight variations; folios G3 verso from the Smathers Hours, Bibermühle’s 60.2, and Wing MS ZW 5351.1 demonstrate that Kerver’s interplay of type and image in the text and borders is consistent and allows for

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25 Nettekoven, Der Meister der Apokalypsenrose, 289.
26 Nettekoven, Der Meister Der Apokalypsenrose, 91.; Zöhl, Jean Pichore: 137.
27 Nettekoven and Zöhl, Horae B.M.V, 2406.; Zöhl, Jean Pichore, 338.
28 Nettekoven, Horae B.M.V, 2399.; It seems that originally Bibermühle 60.2 contained 108 leaves, however folios B8 and K8 are noted missing from the book by Nettekoven.
29 Nettekoven, Horae B.M.V, 2385–86. Further confirming that the collation of Bibermühle 60.2 and the Smathers Hours align are comparisons between the damaged book and editions printed by Kerver between 1506 and 1511 held in the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Newberry Library. Thielman Kerver, Hore Intemerate Virginis Marie Secundum Usum Romanum. Velins 1510, Velins 1513 Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1506, 1510. Thielman Kerver, Hore Intemerate Virginis Marie Secundum Usum Romanum Wing MS ZW 5351.1, Newberry Library, 1510.
30 Claerr, "Imprimerie et Réussite Sociale á Paris á La Fin Du Moyen Âge," Annex XVIII.
comparison with intact exemplars to reconstruct the damaged sections of the Smathers Hours [Figure 3–5].

In this example, Apocalypse scenes occupy the outer borders. At the same time, the upper, lower, and inner frames, Kerver has rearranged a variety of ornamental and vanitas motifs to frame the text of the Office of the Virgin, therefore distinguishing the 1511 editions from the 1510 edition by their distinctive borders. While this produced a range of copies with slight variations in border design, Kerver was conscious of consistency in textual content, which is essential when investigating areas that have been erased and removed from the book.

**Conformity to Protestant Attitudes in the Early Life of the Smathers Hours**

The next stage in the biography of the Smathers Hours—created less than a decade before the first waves of Protestant religious reform spread throughout sixteenth-century Europe—is inherently marked by the changing confessional attitudes of devotional book owners. Thielman Kerver printed his books of hours for domestic and international audiences and as an edition printed for the liturgical use of Rome, the readers could have used the Smathers Hours anywhere in Europe the Roman rite was celebrated. The question of where precisely readers used the Smathers Hours is beyond this project’s scope. Instead, I turn to the question of how readers used it at this moment in time. To answer this question, I draw upon Eamon Duffy’s research on the "vandalism" enacted upon Catholic prayerbooks by their Tudor Protestant readers during the sixteenth century.

English reform shared with other reform movements the disdain for indulgences, the authority of the pope, and the role of Mary and saints as intercessors. Duffy’s observations provide a material point of reference for my examination of readers’ deletions to the Smathers Hours. Readers altered their Catholic devotional books differently during this tumultuous political and doctrinal transformation period. Texts and images were crossed out, erased, and sliced away from books to conform to changing confessional identities and state edicts. Other times the editing was unsystematic, indiscriminate, and heavy-handed. The Smathers Hours seems to have been subjected to both forms of editing.

The nature of the erasures and redactions of prayers in the Marian Mass in particular suggest changing attitudes toward the veneration of Mary. Catholicism’s elevation of Mary, in both the story of Jesus and in the relationship between the individual and God, was a major point of contention during the Protestant Reformation and as a devotional book honoring Mary as the Mother of God, the contents of books of hours fell under obvious scrutiny. In the Smathers Hours, this controversy is materialized in the deletion of prayers in the votive mass to Mary, where nearly every line of the special celebration was rubbed from the vellum or redacted with black ink [Figure 2]. On folio L3, the entirety of the prayer honoring Mary as the ‘holy mother who brought forth in childbirth a king,’ the Salve sancta parens, was roughly scraped from the vellum leaving a block of unreadable smudged ink on the page. This was one of the many prayers venerating the Virgin that was contested by Protestant reformers. In primers printed in the years shortly after England’s break with Rome in 1534, these appeals were increasingly excluded from devotionals or were rewritten to shift the invocation from Mary to Christ. In the Smathers Hours, the reader chose to erase the prayer instead of annotating the language to invoke Christ.

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33 Duffy, *Marking the Hours*, ix–x.


When examining the extensive deletions of prayers venerating Mary in the Smathers Hours, it is notable that the reader left some appeals untouched. The reader chose to omit from modification a short salutation in the Marian Mass containing the printed instructional rubric, “Specialis salutatio ad beatā virginē mariā.” Also left untouched is one of the first, and likely earliest, handwritten additions to the book that likely predate Protestant conforming edits: an appeal to Mary as intercessor located in the outer margins of in the Office of the Virgin. The handwritten appeal “pia virgo [vir]ginum [inter]cedar pro nobis ad d[omi]num. Am[e]n,” petitions Mary and seeks her aid and advancement with God on behalf of the reader [Figure 6]. The reader of the Smathers Hours did not apply a wholesale deletion of appeals to Mary, instead, they chose to carefully fragment the text to remove the most Catholic elements to conform the book to Protestant devotion.

In contrast to the careful removal of prayers from the Smathers Hours are the deletions and loss of text associated with papal authority and controversial marginalia. The Reformation challenged the Catholic Church, the pope as leader of that Church, and the wide-ranging authority granted with the papal position. In England, Henry VIII handed down two proclamations, one in 1535 and one in 1538, abolishing papal authority and controversial marginalia in public services books. Underlying these edicts are Henry VIII’s challenges to papal authority as a sovereign leader and the rampant corruption that stemmed from the pope’s ability to grant indulgences. The text associated with indulgences is erased from the pages of the Smathers Hours, while their associated images are carefully left intact. The Salve sancta facies is scraped from the vellum, leaving the image of St. Veronica and the holy face of Jesus on the page [Figure 8]. The popular prayer to the holy face was traditionally accompanied by an indulgence when devotees recited the appeal while gazing upon the image of Veronica and her holy veil. A debate on indulgences was at the crux of the Reformation, so it is natural that the prayer is erased to adhere to Protestant thought. That the image was untouched, especially one with the connotations of idolatry that Veronica’s Veil has as an image of Christ, underscores how precious the images in the book were to users as opposed to its textual contents. With the prayer now erased, the indulgence is deactivated, and the image may be freely gazed upon. Around 1510, Kerver began to introduce an additional gathering, O, to his books of hours, including prayers to St. Augustine, the Ave cuius conceptio, Deus qui nos conceptionis, and an indulgence from Pope Sixtus IV. This indulgence was a relatively new addition to Kerver’s books of hours but would soon be banned. Because the relevant pages are lost, it is not known if the text of this indulgence was redacted or erased from the Smathers Hours. However, carefully examining the book's binding does not reveal the intentional removal of the gathering with scissors or knives; instead, the glue in the page gutters suggests that the gathering likely separated from the book over time.

The Dance of Death illustration border cycles may have been altered at varying points in the life of the Smathers Hours in relation to such Protestant bans on references to the pope and controversial marginal images. The Office of the Dead—controversial in Reform thought for its offering of intercessory prayer for the souls of the dead in purgatory—is left alone in the Smathers Hours while the text of the non-liturgical Dance of Death border cycle is deleted. This cycle of images designed by Jean Pichore features Death, personified as a skeleton, appearing to men and women of all ages and stations of society. The text in all fifty frames has been removed in one of two ways. The first method, seen in most frames, is a simple scraping away of red and black ink from the vellum [Figure 7]. In contrast, the text in ten frames of the Dance of Death appears to have been scraped away, followed by a liquid solution applied over the erasure that has stained the vellum. The pope, dressed in the accouterments of his station and carrying the scepter, is visited by Death. Just as in the frame below, the King, accompanied by his symbol of authority, comes face to face with Death [Figure 9]. This treatment has resulted in

36 Translated as “Devout Virgin of Virgins, may she advance the way for us to God. Amen.”
37 Duffy, Marking the Hours, 148–50.
large ink smears throughout the ten frames, leaving the text unreadable. One possible explanation for the varying types of edits to the Dance of Death border frame text is that the top frame featuring the pope visited by Death was edited after the 1535 proclamation, removing reference to the pope.\textsuperscript{40} It was then later re-edited after the 1538 proclamation banning controversial marginalia.\textsuperscript{41} In this situation, edits to the text of the Office make sense. However, the erasure of the text of a non-liturgical border seems more fitting in light of state edicts than any doctrinal implication.\textsuperscript{42}

When viewing the types of censorship of appeals to Mary in the Smathers Hours, it is interesting to consider what they mean individually and in tandem. Regardless of the forms of censorship that the reader applied at this point or the extent of that censorship, the changes to the Smathers Hours as a whole signal that the book was still in use by its readers. Most of the deletions in the Smathers Hours constitute the erasure of ink from the vellum resulting in the permanent physical removal of prayers from the book.\textsuperscript{43} On the other hand, redactions, or the simple crossing through of lines of text in ink, do not permanently rid the book of the prayer. The text redacted in the Marian Mass can still be read and recited out loud, making it, in this case, a less severe form of deletion of the text.\textsuperscript{44}

\textbf{Fragmentation in the Later Life of the Smathers Hours}

As an example of an early sixteenth-century prayerbook prized by readers for its many full-page prints and hand-painted details, it is notable that the Smathers Hours is now missing these images. A catalogue entry, printed in German and adhered to the book's back inner cover mentions the border cycles but is silent on the printer and the book's core illustrations, leading to the conclusion that these details were lost well before coming into the dealer's hands. Books have been broken apart at many points in history, but the quantity and quality of illustrations in books of hours, in particular, invited their fragmentation. The separation of pages from their bindings allowed users to admire their single leaves as objects of art appreciated outside of the original context of the devotional book.\textsuperscript{45} Antiquarians and connoisseurs of art alike collected fragments of the medieval past and appreciated the same refined elements of the luxury printed books of hours that appealed to Kerver's middle-class clientele centuries earlier: intricate illustrations printed on soft vellum decorated with petite hand-painted details, such as those initials missing from the pages of the Smathers Hours [Figure 2].\textsuperscript{46}

Multiple remaining folios of the Smathers Hours show evidence of the systematic removal of hand-painted initials, and the haphazard nature of the cuts indicates that they were likely made with scissors rather than the careful cuts of a pen knife.\textsuperscript{47} Victorian collectors appreciated these petite details, and they were often isolated from the page and used to embellish mixed media art pieces like albums and scrapbooks.\textsuperscript{48} The popularity of images in books of hours as collectibles in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is inherent in the biography of books of hours.\textsuperscript{49} In the Smathers Hours, this is defined by the mutilation and fragmentation of the book for its hand-painted initials and large illustrations.

Closely examining the book's page gutters reveals evidence of the intentional removal of ten vellum folios featuring illustrations commissioned by Kerver from the manuscript workshops of the Master of the Apocalypse Rose

\textsuperscript{40} Hughes and Larkin, eds., \textit{Tudor Royal Proclamations}, vol. 1, no. 158 (New Haven: Yale Univ. 1967), 231.
\textsuperscript{41} Hughes and Larkin, \textit{Tudor Royal Proclamations}, vol. 1, no. 186, 270–76.
\textsuperscript{42} Duffy, \textit{Marking the Hours}, 150.
\textsuperscript{43} Duffy, \textit{Marking the Hours}, 152–53.
\textsuperscript{44} Duffy, \textit{Marking the Hours}, 155.
\textsuperscript{45} Hindman, \textit{Manuscript Illumination in the Modern Age}, xxiv–xxv; 69.
\textsuperscript{46} de Hamel, \textit{Cutting up Manuscripts for Pleasure and Profit}, 2; Netzer, "Collecting, Re/Collecting, Contextualizing and Recontextualizing," 17–30.
\textsuperscript{47} See Haas, \textit{Fragmented Hours}, Appendix C for initial removal details.
\textsuperscript{48} Hindman, \textit{Manuscript Illumination}, 73–4.
\textsuperscript{49} de Hamel, \textit{Cutting up Manuscripts for Pleasure and Profit}. 
and Jean Pichore. Most of the book's large illustrations were located in the Office of the Blessed Virgin and once bookmarked the opening of each of the eight canonical hours. The intentional removal of the leaves in this section is so extensive that their absence has compromised the structure of the binding, causing additional pages to be separated from the book. An examination could not confirm if the first five illustrations were separated from the book or purposely removed. Ten vellum folios have been deliberately separated from the Smathers Hours. Half of the metal-cut illustrations removed from the book consisted of Jean Pichore's designs of 1504—Annunciation to the Shepherds, Adoration of the Magi, Presentation in the Temple, Flight to Egypt, and the Coronation of Mary—and were once part of the Office of the Blessed Virgin. The five remaining illustrations marking the openings of the Penitential Psalms, Office of the Dead, Hours of the Cross, Hours of the Holy Spirit, and Suffrages are intentionally sliced from the book. Jean Pichore's 1504 Anointing of David, Raising of Lazarus, Crucifixion, and Pentecost are removed from the book and the Master of the Apocalypse Rose's 1497 Emblematic Trinity. An examination of folio G4, where an illustration of the Anointing of David would have opened the Penitential Psalms, reveals only a thin sliver of vellum where the page has been crudely sliced away from the book [Figure 10].

The illustrations in the Smathers Hours have been removed from the original context of the devotional book. To readers of the prayerbook, these illustrations served multiple purposes. From a practical standpoint, they bookmarked primary texts of a book printed in Latin. When a reader comes upon the image of the Anointing of David, they know they have reached the Penitential Psalms, whether they read Latin or possess no literacy skills. From a devotional standpoint, the illustration served as a space of visual delight that invited further contemplation of the story of David as King of Israel and the parallels between the Old Testament King and the New Testament Savior. As a didactic aid, the Anointing of David introduced young learners and readers to the fundamental concepts of a religion steeped in interactions between image and text. At first, the young or novice user is guided through an image illustrating the story of David and the trials and tribulations the shepherd encountered on his way to becoming king. Next, when the reader has matured in their literacy and religious education, the now-familiar illustrations support and enrich the Penitential Psalms, the text written by David that emerged from these early obstacles.

Though removed from the book's original context, the illustrations may have served similar functions. Sliced from the book, they may have been displayed like any two-dimensional image would be today, perhaps framed or pinned to a wall. In this case, the illustrations removed from the Smathers Hours still acted as a place of spiritual contemplation and visual delight that taught the stories of a young shepherd who became King of Israel. However, its combined contemplative and didactic function extends to the sense of nostalgia and admiration of the single leaf as a token of the medieval past. When showcased outside the devotional book, the isolated illustration assumes the primary dimension of a fragment of an artistic past, a piece contemplated, studied, and admired within the confines of the framed art object. form of deletion of the text.

Conclusion

The Smathers Hours was printed during a potent moment in the history of the book, print, and religion, and therefore requires equally robust methodologies to identify, reconstruct, and interpret the prayerbook. As a prayerbook printed in the handful of decades spanning the largescale transition of book production from manuscript to print, the Smathers Hours retains elements of both mediums, complicating how the book is approached. The first section of this article alone leverages methodologies from anthropology, the history of the book, the analytical bibliography, and the social history of books of hours, making the Smathers Hours a compelling subject for the study of the social, cultural, and religious attitudes of book owners. An artifact of early print culture and the audience that clamored for books of hours, the Smathers Hours holds much evidence of printshop practices and the many hands

50 See Haas, Fragmented Hours, Appendix E for a full list of missing illustrations and corresponding designer.
51 Haas, Fragmented Hours, Appendix E; Claerr, Annex XVIII–XIX; Nettekoven, Horae B.M.V.365, 2386–90.
52 de Hamel, Cutting up Manuscripts for Pleasure and Profit, 8.
53 Hindman, Manuscript Illumination, 52.
54 Duffy, Marking the Hours, 155.
that crafted the physical book in the early decades of a pivotal moment in the history of Europe. As an artifact of how readers used their devotional books when Christianity in Europe was undergoing seismic transformation, the book reflects the personal challenges of erasing a central figure from veneration. Finally, as an artifact of art, the Smathers Hours reflects collecting trends that privilege the illustrations outside of their devotional contexts.
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Figure 1. *The Smathers Hours*, folio(s) D8 verso and E2. BX2080 .A2 1500z, University of Florida, 1500. Photo Credit: author.

Figure 2. *The Smathers Hours*, folio(s) L3 verso and L4. BX2080 .A2 1500z, University of Florida, 1500. Photo Credit: author.
Figure 3. *The Smathers Hours*, folio G3 verso. BX2080 .A2 1500z, University of Florida, 1500. Photo Credit: author.

Figure 4. *Wing MS ZW 5351.1*, folio G3 verso. Newberry Library, 1510. Photo Credit: author.
Figure 5. Bibermühle 60.2, folio G3 verso. Antiquariat Bibermühle AG, 1511. Photo Credit: Antiquariat Bibermühle AG.

Figure 6. The Smathers Hours, folio C7. BX2080 .A2 1500z, University of Florida, 1500. Photo Credit: author.
Figure 7. *The Smathers Hours, folio(s) L2 verso and L3.* BX2080 .A2 1500z, University of Florida, 1500. Photo Credit: author.

Figure 8. *The Smathers Hours, folio L8.* BX2080 .A2 1500z, University of Florida, 1500. Photo Credit: author.
Figure 9. The Smathers Hours, folio li. BX2080.A2 1500z, University of Florida, 1500. Photo Credit: author.

Figure 10. The Smathers Hours, folio G5. BX2080 .A2 1500z, University of Florida, 1500. Photo Credit: author.
Memory Preservation in Cambodian Graphic Narratives

Anneliese Hardman

Abstract: Since the Cambodian genocide (1975–79), first-and-second generation survivors have developed new ways of processing personal and national trauma, including through the mode of graphic arts. This paper first extrapolates how graphic narratives differ from comics and cartoons. Then the paper will focus on how graphic narratives have become a mode for second-generation survivors to engage with the past through Bui Long’s “refugee repertoire” and Marianne Hirsch’s concept of “postmemory.” Within this context, Tian Veasna’s Year of the Rabbit will be analyzed. Aspects considered include illustration and dialogue. Finally, this paper will look at how graphic narratives contribute to the concept of the memory archive and “memory citizenship” within Cambodia. Specific questions that prompt my research include: What is a graphic narrative? Can graphic narratives be sources of memoir and postmemory? How do graphic narratives function as a tool for remembering and working through trauma for artists and readers?

Key words: Cambodia, graphic narrative, postmemory

The Cambodian genocide (1975–1979) is marked as one of the most traumatic experiences in the country’s history.1 The Khmer Rouge’s takeover catalyzed the deaths of “almost two million of the country’s estimated seven million people, [who] perished from hard labor, disease, starvation, execution, and ‘disappearances’.”2 The regime restructured Cambodian society by “evacuating urban populations, enslaving people on rural farm communes and abolishing private property and all educational, religious, and cultural institutions.”3 These goals were carried out through eight points that were announced by Saloth Sar, also known as Pol Pot or Brother Number 1.4 In the words of Um Khatharya, “[t]he ‘oasis of peace’ that was Cambodia in the 1960s became the killing fields of the 1970s.”5 Even before the Khmer

1 Note: The Khmer Rouge genocide lasted for three years and eight months. The term translates to ‘Red Khmer’—Khmer referring specifically to the largest ethnic group in Cambodia—also located in time the Communist takeover of the country. During this time, the major city of Phnom Penh was emptied of people and all Cambodians went to work in labor camps around the country. Besides decimating the population, derailing the economy, and creating political instability in the country, the Khmer Rouge also devastated cultural development and religious practice. Every Cambodian has been affected in some way by this horrific event, whether by directly living through the event or by knowing someone who died or disappeared. An estimated one million Cambodians also fled the country and were forced to resettled around the world as refugees; the family of Tian Veasna, the graphic narrative author of focus in this paper, was part of this diasporic movement and ultimately settled in Canada. This information is shared as context into the background and long-term realities caused because of the genocide in Cambodia.


Saloth Sar, also known as Pol Pot or Brother Number 1. In the words of Um Khatharya, “[t]he ‘oasis of peace’ that was Cambodia in the 1960s became the killing fields of the 1970s.” Even before the Khmer Rouge’s notorious takeover of Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, the people of Cambodia had survived tremendous hardship during the ninety years (1863–1953) that the country was a French Colony. Horrors were also prolonged during the late 1960s, which witnessed the United States’ “Secret Bombings” and the installation of Prime Minister Lon Nol. These pathologies of power have left deep and enduring traces on the Cambodian individual, community, and nation.

In the years following the genocide period, cultural and national revitalization were two priorities of the United Nations’ Transitional Action Committee (UNTAC), which governed the country from February 1992 to September 1993. To promote human rights and civic education, “creative use was made of traditional Khmer cultural media-singers, puppets, comics, and local artists.” Since the genocide period, these oft-overlooked outlets of processing and conveying experiences have emerged, including through graphic narratives and comics, both of which have a long history in Cambodia. Political cartoons were very prominent in the 1960s under King Sihanouk, who used them to assert Cambodia’s cultural sophistication following its Independence in 1953. Even before this time, though, “the first comics were seen in the country shortly after the birth of the first Khmer language newspaper, Nagara Va2a in 1936.” However, under the Khmer Rouge regime, cartoons ceased to exist in part due to the regime disbanding most newspapers and targeting most visual artists and musicians. Despite this near eradication, the graphic arts were rediscovered when Im Sokha became an illustrator for the newspaper Kampuchea in 1987. Sokha helped to make the newspaper a haven for producing and disseminating satirical cartoons. Sokha described himself “as an illustrator for others’ thoughts for hire.” Most cartoons in 1989 “stressed the disparity of the haves and have-nots, the uneven development of the cities and the rural towns, the indifference of government officials toward public problems, and chronic red tape in government offices.” Cambodian comic artist, Uth Rouen, who is credited with producing the first comic book in the country in 1963, once said that he first started writing comic books simply because he wanted Cambodians to experience the medium as he had earlier experienced it when he first read French bandes dessinées. Rouen, who is also a genocide survivor, argues that it is crucial for Cambodian cartoonists to “write from [their] heart with emotion about what they know.”

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10 Lent, Asian Comics, 119.
11 Lent, Asian Comics, 119.
15 Lent, Asian Comics, 122.
By drawing and writing comics and graphic narratives, artists can help the country continue to recover from past atrocities emotionally, mentally, and physically. Moreover, the graphic narrative has taken a new role in aiding first-and-second-generation survivors in processing their traumatic experiences. This article extrapolates first how graphic narratives differ from comics and cartoons. Then the article focuses on how graphic narratives have become a mode for second-generation survivors to engage with the past through Bui Long’s “refugee repertoire,” defined as engagement with the ways that children of refugees and survivors of trauma have produced texts and scripts representational of post-war trauma. The article also invokes “Marianne Hirsch’s concept of the ‘postmemory generation,’ which traces the affective and aesthetic dimensions of trauma and loss felt by those who came of age after war.” Within this section of the paper, I analyze aspects of illustration and dialogue in Tian Vesa’s *Year of the Rabbit,* demonstrating how graphic narratives contribute to the concept of the memory archive and “memory citizenship” within Cambodia.

### Defining the Graphic Narrative as Distinct from Cartoons

Scott McCloud defines the comic as “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer.” The graphic novel builds on this concept by extending the length of the comic so that the story becomes more developed. In contrast, Hillary Chute describes the graphic narrative as being separate from both formats but still utilizing the medium of comics to convey a narrative. Chute writes that the graphic narrative “calls a reader’s attention visually and spatially to the act, process, and duration of interpretative narrative work in the medium of comic.”

The graphic narrative is also noteworthy for its capacity to be used as a “representational mode capable of addressing complex political and historical issues with an explicit, formal degree of self-awareness.” It can take the form of both fiction and non-fiction, but grounds itself in making a commentary on ‘real’ life. To this point, Nicole Stamant writes that the graphic narrative proves itself to be “invested in the fraught nature of representation, in the interplay of the visual and of the visible, in questions of archivization and ephemerality, in the artistry itself, and in the dissemination of stories—whether [through] bookstores, through testimonies, or online.” Consequently, the graphic narrative, by effectively transmitting narratives through visual forms, can be recognized as a valuable literary form in its own right.

### *Year of the Rabbit* as an Example of Refugee Repertoire and Postmemory

As Cambodians have engaged in processes of trauma recovery since the genocide, non-fiction graphic narratives have been created with increased frequency. This is true for both Cambodians who survived the genocide, but also those who did not live through it, yet are still grappling with long lasting effects of it. For example, over the last thirty years, Cambodian artists have created several graphic narratives about the historic events that led up to the genocide, the genocide period itself, and recovery since the late 1990s. These accounts record memories belonging to the author of the narrative, as well as that of their friends or family members.

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Many of these narratives can be read as a representation of a shared Cambodian collective memory. Consequently, graphic narratives are not only useful to genocide survivors looking for ways to share their stories, process their grief, and bear witness to atrocity done to them, but they are also helpful to second-generation survivors seeking to understand their inherited pasts. Vietnamese American author Long Bui includes the graphic narrative within a framework he calls the “refugee repertoire.” This is a theoretical model of Southeast Asian American literary and cultural studies that helps to facilitate scholarly engagement with the ways that children of refugees and survivors of trauma have produced texts and scripts representational of post-war trauma. This theory addresses the tension between the desire to give voice to such groups and the denial of their voice. It also “builds from Marianne Hirsch’s concept of the ‘postmemory generation,’ which traces the affective and aesthetic dimensions of trauma and loss felt by those who came of age after war.” Bui explains that survivors of trauma can use creative projects specifically to absorb and articulate aftershocks. Art provides a different kind of history lesson that “asks viewers to reflect on those who have been ignored in space and time but whose frames of postmemory endure as a permanent reminder that refugee-ness is not a temporary condition of being.” Tian Veasna’s graphic narrative, Year of the Rabbit, is an embodiment of Bui’s “refugee repertoire” and Hirsch’s “postmemory.” Veasna’s Year of the Rabbit not only works to give voice to the second generation survivor as Bui suggests but also process elements of Veasna’s postmemory legacy that he does not necessarily remember from his own experiences with the genocide but is still haunted by. Year of the Rabbit acts as both a conduit of processing memory and preserving memory for future generation, by thereby creating a legacy of refugee-ness for third and fourth generations who will also one day grapple with their own personal, familial, or communal memory.

Marianne Hirsch describes postmemory as “the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births.” Although second-generation survivors may not have lived through an experience, “memories were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right.” Hirsch centers this type of memory work within the context of the family, which serves to transmit memories. The concept of postmemory explores memory as “belated” or occurring “after” something else. Other scholars have characterized this type of memory as “absent,” “inherited,” “prosthetic,” “received,” or like a “vicarious witnessing.” However, postmemory differs from these concepts because of its focus on the transmission of traumatic memories. Memory cannot be literally transferred into another’s body. However, it can be received as a distinct version from that of the original experience through the modes of stories, images, and witnessed behaviors that one grew up with. Therefore, these memories are:

Mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation.

To grow up with such overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one’s birth or one’s consciousness, is to risk having one’s own stories and experiences displaced, even evacuated, by those of a previous generation.

While taking place in the past, the effects of these memories continue into the present via the process of generational transmission that leads to a deep internalization of a past that predates subsequent generations. Graphic narrative artist and author of *Year of the Rabbit*, Tian Veasna was born just three days after the Khmer Rouge takeover. Although Veasna technically lived through the atrocities of the genocide, he was only three and a half years old when they ended—too young to have formed complex memories. As a result, his graphic novel, *Year of the Rabbit*, falls into the category of postmemory literature because of its heavy reliance upon the input of Veasna’s parents and other close relatives who lived through the genocide while at an age of remembering. This personal account told from the perspective of Veasna’s parents and other close relatives tells of their evacuation from Phnom Penh to the labor camps in the province, displacement from each other, harrowing escape over the Thai border, and resettlement in France as refugees. Along with recounting the genocide through a postmemorial lens, *Year of the Rabbit* also provides readers with a prime example of displaced participation. This term refers to an individual’s participation in second generational trauma while engaging in the “memory citizenship” of family. Postmemory’s “citizenship” specifically reveals itself in *Year of the Rabbit* through transmission of trauma, conveyed through Veasna’s experimentation with illustration and dialogue. By revivifying certain memories in the embodied subjects of memory in *Year of the Rabbit*, Veasna is empowered as an active post-rememberer of his personal past and that of the collective memory of his family.

**Veasna’s Illustrative Techniques**

Veasna’s illustrations play a particularly important role in recording the Cambodian experience. Figure 1 exemplifies the way that narrative panels are printed on white paper and bordered in black. This formatting decision enhances a contrast of colors, while also introducing a visually accessible format. However, Hillary Chute also interprets this black on white format “as a technique that lends the book a dark tone and suggests the suffocating omnipresence of the Khmer Rouge.” In Figure 1, three of the panels are shaded darkly using a cross-hatching technique. The shading covers everything in the image, including illustrated tents, people, and campfires. Crosshatching overlays these objects, creating the effect of dark color oppressing the yellow of campsites or green of tents. In the same way that black overtakes brighter colors, the Khmer Rouge overtook Cambodia. Consequently, Veasna represents metaphorical oppression of actual events through the intentional incorporation, absence, and overlap of colors.

The primary colors of black and white in Figure 1 are only interrupted by a muted palette of earthier tones. Browns, pale greens, and murky yellows are the only other pigments present. Such colors do not add vibrancy to the graphic narrative but according to Chute cause pages to feel “waterlogged.” Veasna’s choices of colors correlate to the mood of scenes in his narrative. For example, in Figure 1, characters discuss Khmer Rouge officials killing Cambodians caught wearing Western styles. This is a serious topic that is made more so by an overwhelming presence of cool tones. There are no warm tones to imply hope, but rather just feelings of concern. Consequently, how the reader feels while reading the graphic narrative is also affected by the colors used. The muted palette of browns and greens in two of the panels correspond with the ominous words spoken in them about a Khmer Rouge official holding a head up. As a result, Veasna’s graphic narrative is emotionally accessible to readers who can feel what Veasna and his family felt throughout the Khmer Rouge.

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36 Chute, “Comics that State into the Face of Terror and Loneliness,” para. 5.
Along with an appropriate use of color that engages with viewers emotionally, Veasna’s style of caricature illustrates the reality of Cambodians under the Khmer Rouge without overwhelming readers with too much violence. Veasna’s illustrations strike a balance between clearly conveying the difficulty of the period, while also being sensitive to viewers and their potential triggers.\textsuperscript{37} John Seven writes that one of Veasna’s storytelling strengths is his ability to illustrate in a way that does not oppress the reader.\textsuperscript{38} This is in part accomplished by the way that the artwork never overpowers the reader even in the grimmest moments.\textsuperscript{39} Even in scenes that Veasna depicts killing or murder, it is done in a way that avoids excessive gore.

For example, Figure 1 references Khmer Rouge officials’ treatment of Cambodians who dressed in a Western style or conformed to Western tastes. The second panel of the page depicts three Cambodian men who had their hair cut like the Beatles. In punishment, they were beheaded, and their heads were put on stakes as an example to deter other Cambodians considering Western fashions or ideals. Although this second panel does capture the gruesome nature of Khmer Rouge officials and their punishments, the drawing does not overwhelm readers with the details of the violence. The drawings do not show how the men were murdered or the process of their capture, including gory details of their beheadings. Instead, Veasna shows the heads but in tactful ways; one head is positioned facing away from the viewer, while another wears sunglasses that cover his potentially rolled up eyes. Finally, the last head takes on the appearance more of a rubber mask than of a real human face. The cartoonish treatment of the three head works effectively to relay meaning to the reader while also not being unsensitive to who reads his work. Although the content is factual, it is not portrayed as realistically as it could be—which if it was, could cause the reader not to be able to finish reading the story. Through Veasna’s choice of color, drawing style, and other visual elements, an accessible document about the Cambodian experience is recorded for future generations.

**Interventions and Absences of Dialogue within *Year of the Rabbit***

Vexsa and his family’s experiences are also conveyed through the intentional insertion and omission of dialogue throughout *Year of the Rabbit*. One example that portrays key moments of dialogue being included and left out occurs early on in the work when Vexsa, known as “Chan,” is born.\textsuperscript{40} The family has walked to the province of Chrouy Ta Prom after their evacuation from Phnom Penh, and Lina, Chan’s mother, is about to give birth. The panels leading up to Chan’s arrival are drawn in shades of gray, ripe with an ominous mood [Figure 2]. Khim, Chan’s father, has prepared his medical equipment despite knowing that if a Khmer Rouge official walks into their hut and sees the tools, he will likely be deemed educated and possibly “disappeared.”\textsuperscript{41} As a result, the scene is full of tension that is heightened by a lack of dialogue. This silence is broken only when Lina worriedly tells Khim that somebody is walking their way.\textsuperscript{42} Her statement is the first moment of dialogue on the page, and it conveys the vulnerability of her and Khim’s position; they do not know if the person coming their way will aid in the birth, or if they will report Khim’s medical background to authorities who will then take Chan to be raised.

\textsuperscript{37} Overly violent or gory images depicting the Khmer Rouge period could especially be triggering for other Cambodians who lived through this time and still have post-traumatic stress disorder as a result.


\textsuperscript{39} Seven, “‘Year of the Rabbit’ Offers Hope Amidst the Terror of the Khmer Rouge,” para. 2

\textsuperscript{40} Tian Vexsa, *Year of the Rabbit* (Quebec, Canada: Drawn and Quarterly, 2019), 52.

\textsuperscript{41} Note: The term “disappeared” is used to describe those who seemingly vanished by Khmer Rouge officials from the years of 1975–79. These individuals were generally taken away in the dead of night, leaving no trace of where they were taken. Often, the disappeared were killed, sent to prison or labor camp, or taken to an undisclosed location. Families would not be told where their loved one was taken and to this day still wonder about what happened to the disappeared.

\textsuperscript{42} Vexsa, *Year of the Rabbit*, 52.
away from his parents and educated in the way of the Khmer Rouge’s values.\textsuperscript{43} Thankfully, the person who appears is someone who Khim medically helped in the past and is at the hut to help the family.\textsuperscript{44}

As in this scene and in many others throughout the graphic narrative, deep silences in dialogue allow for an immersive viewing experience.\textsuperscript{45} The audience starts the graphic narrative as a reader, but during a silence of dialogue becomes a viewer instead. At this moment, the viewer is forced to pause reading and instead search the panels of imagery for meaning. John Lamothe writes that the immersive experience of reading a graphic narrative can be heightened through omission of dialogue because “[s]ilence is part of life.”\textsuperscript{46} As a result, silences in a visual retelling are necessary for a reader to feel as though they have had a realistic experience.\textsuperscript{47} The pause in dialogue matches that of the reader who ceases to read during a ‘silence’ and becomes a viewer instead. An embodied experience is implied because difficult events from the past are often remembered in fragments, which are frequently full of intentional and unintentional ‘silences’ or holes in memory. This technique also can be used to “communicate various features of plot or character development, establish[ing] different moods or impact[ing] tone.”\textsuperscript{48} For example, in the scene of Chan’s birth, silence preceding the birth conveys fear and nervousness. However, the panel that shows Chan’s moment of entering the world also does not have any dialogue and allows for a moment of joyful expectation to be felt [Figure 3]. Characters feel empowered with hope in this moment at the entrance of new life. Consequently, these two moments reveal the paradoxical nature of silences and their ability to “repress” and “empower” characters connected to the silences.

\textbf{Long Lasting Impact of Graphic Narratives in Cambodia and on Cambodians}

As memory travels across time and space, it takes on different forms, “manifesting traces of transgenerational haunting in the silence that continues to envelop” individual Cambodians and the nexus of the Cambodian family.\textsuperscript{49} Within the complexity of diasporic lives, trauma remains neither fully present nor fully absent, yet still a painful force that needs to be reckoned with by both first-and-second-generation Cambodian genocide survivors.\textsuperscript{50} The graphic narrative has become a mode of visual reckoning with past trauma as it has adapted into forms of graphic memoir, self-expression, and exploration.

For second-generation genocide survivors, the graphic novel is not only a useful medium for exploring the collective memory of one’s family, but also for exploring postmemory and the Cambodian memory citizenship. Tian Veesna explores these concepts and more through his graphic narrative, \textit{The Year of the Rabbit}; even though \textit{Year of the Rabbit} focuses primarily upon Veesna and his family’s memories from the Khmer Rouge period, it can also be interpreted as a retelling of the Cambodian experience at large. The specific devices of illustration and dialogue help Veesna and his readers to understand the collective stories or “macro-stories” of first-generation survivors. The graphic narrative also helps to locate individual anguish, distress, and sadness felt by those who lived through the crisis and those who did not live through the crisis but have inherited trauma left over from the event.

\textsuperscript{43} Note: The Khmer Rouge would generally separate children from their parents to indoctrinate children early on of the teaching of “Angka” or the education. An example of what this might have looked like is discussed on page 170 of \textit{Year of the Rabbit}.
\textsuperscript{44} Tian Veesna, \textit{Year of the Rabbit}, 53.
\textsuperscript{46} Lamothe, “Speaking Silently: Comics’ Silent Narratives as Immersive Experiences,” 74.
\textsuperscript{47} Lamothe, “Speaking Silently: Comics’ Silent Narratives as Immersive Experiences,” 74.
\textsuperscript{48} Nancy Pedir, “What’s the Matter of Seeing in Graphic Memoir?,” \textit{South Central Review} 32, no. 3 (Fall 2015): 9.
\textsuperscript{50} Um, \textit{From the Land of Shadows: War, Revolution, and the Making of the Cambodian Diaspora}, 7.
Visual-verbal mediums like the graphic narrative is “an emergent body of refugee art produced by [first- and-]second generation Southeast Asian[s].”\textsuperscript{51} It foregrounds aspects of being a child of refuge and highlights often subverted viewpoints. Bui writes that what is at stake when recognizing graphic narratives as a form of postmemory is “a forceful recognition of the different forms and styles of storytelling that are able to retract the multiple viewpoints of stateless people.”\textsuperscript{52} Therefore, graphic narratives that speak to both the pain and resilience of then and now can act as a lasting vehicle that displays the creativity of those born after the war to preserve the memories of themselves and their family.

\textsuperscript{51} Bui, “The Refugee Repertoire: Performing and Staging the Postmemories of Violence,” 129.
\textsuperscript{52} Bui, “The Refugee Repertoire: Performing and Staging the Postmemories of Violence,” 129.
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Figure 1. Veasna, Tian. Year of the Rabbit, 44. From Year of the Rabbit. Copyright Tian Veasna, translation copyright Helge Dascher. Used with permission from Drawn & Quarterly.
Figure 2. Veasna, Tian. *Year of the Rabbit*, 52. From *Year of the Rabbit*. Copyright Tian Veasna, translation copyright Helge Dascher. Used with permission from Drawn & Quarterly.
Figure 3. Veasna, Tian. Year of the Rabbit, 53. From Year of the Rabbit. Copyright Tian Veasna, translation copyright Helge Dascher. Used with permission from Drawn & Quarterly.
Death – (Re)Birth, Image – Setting: Symbiotic Relationships in a Byzantine Rock-Cut Church

Sarah Mathiesen

Abstract: Dated to the late ninth century, the rock-cut church Yılanlı Kilise is considered by scholars an idiosyncratic outlier, representative of non-Byzantine influence within Byzantine Cappadocia. Scholars, however, have overemphasized Yılanlı’s oddities while neglecting the complexity of the programmatic and liturgical conception behind Yılanlı and its relation to eleventh-century, Constantinopolitan-influenced Cappadocian churches. This essay presents a case study centered on the interaction between the Koimesis of the Theotokos and a carved water basin that demonstrates that the church’s furniture and images constitute a symbiotic relationship that amplifies and extends their function and meaning. The Yılanlı Koimesis notably includes the Jew Jephonias. Located below the Theotokos’s bed, Jephonias raises arms with severed hands in an orant-like gesture while his body breaches the image border to touch the water basin below. By representing Jephonias without hands, the Yılanlı program purposefully displays the moment after Jephonias is punished for attempting to upset the bier of the Theotokos but before the subsequent recovery of his hands and “rebirth” as a Christian. The presence of Jephonias both creates a narrative image with a supersessionist conversion message and identifies the basin’s baptismal function; simultaneously, the completion of the Jephonias episode is only activated due to his proximity to the baptismal basin.

Key words: Byzantine, Cappadocia, Koimesis, Yılanlı

The single greatest source of painting from the Middle Byzantine period (843–1204) is found in the ancient region of Kapadokya (“Cappadocia”) in modern-day central Türkiye [Figure 1a]. Between the seventh and the eleventh centuries, Cappadocia was a strategic province along the eastern margins of the Byzantine Empire, bordered by the neighboring powers of Georgia, Armenia, and the Islamic Caliphates. The Byzantine defeat by the ascendant Seljuq Turks at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 marked the permanent loss of the province and a period of upheaval through the following twelfth century. The instability of this period, however, gave way to remarkable prosperity and cultural development under Seljuq rule in the thirteenth century. The history of Cappadocia is spectacularly preserved in the more than seven hundred extant spaces cut from the soft volcanic stone of the Anatolian plateau. Secular settlements and religious sites alike dot the rocky landscape; today, roughly three hundred of these spaces—many of which can be identified as churches—retain painted decoration.¹

No textual evidence connected with any individual site or group of the rock-cut churches survives to help explain their original function or meaning. Only a limited number possess dedicatory inscriptions that record valuable information regarding donors or dates. Around these few, art historians have created a

relative chronology of the churches, one based primarily on stylistic and iconographic analysis. These rock-cut spaces—their forms and visual programs—are therefore critical evidence for the study of Anatolian and Byzantine history, and are our primary means of understanding the creation, function, and meaning of the churches themselves as well as the construction and maintenance of Byzantine identity in a province outside of the capital, Constantinople.

The majority of the rock-cut churches are found in three valleys across Cappadocia at Göreme, Soğanlı, and Ihlara. Located in the southwest of the region at the foot of the double-peaked volcano Hasan Dağı near ancient Koloniea (modern Aksaray), the lush canyon of the Ihlara Valley is host to over one hundred rock-cut structures, sixteen of which are open to the public (Figure 1b). The churches of this valley are divided into two stylistic, and roughly geographic, groups: the first, located around the villages of Belisırma and Selime, exhibits a more identifiably conventional—or Constantinopolitan and elite—Byzantine style, while the second—a cluster of five churches near the village of Ihlara collectively known as the “Ihlara Group”—is known for its distinctive “eastern” style and iconographic peculiarities. This article, based on my dissertation, re-examines one of the churches from this second group known by its modern Turkish name as the Yılanlı Kilise, or “Snake Church.”

The small opening in the cliff-face which marks the entrance to Yılanlı belies the openness of the multi-room space and the expansiveness of its painted program. One enters the church through an exonarthex into a tall, barrel-vaulted narthex; turning right leads through an archway into the naos set on the eastern end of the narthex; or, heading straight leads into a funerary chamber furnished with its own apse connected to the north end of the narthex [Figure 2]. The size of the monument and presence of two altars indicates that this was an active, congregational church; the number of burials (two arcosolia and five floor graves total across the exonarthex and burial chamber) adds a funerary function—a use reflected in the decorative scheme, which features powerful intercessors and themes of judgment, death, and salvation.

Yılanlı is best known for its distinctive afterlife imagery that expands across its narthex, including the Weighing of Souls and Punishments of Hell on the lower part of the narthex west wall, with the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste and the Twenty-Four Elders of the Apocalypse looming above on the barrel-vaulted ceiling. Two critical intertwined issues affect scholarship on Yılanlı. First, it is frequently cited as secondary evidence within topic studies that narrowly focus on a single element (most often the afterlife imagery), yet

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3 The “Ihlara Group” churches are Yılanlı, Ağac altı, Pürenli seki, Kokar, and Eğri taş. Nicole and Michel Thierry first set the stage for grouping several of the churches located near the village of Ihlara on the basis of style and iconography in 1960, linking together Yılanlı, Pürenli seki, and Kokar. Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne is the first to formally associate all five of the churches; the Thierrys simultaneously comment on characteristics shared by these churches but, though they do not draw all five together explicitly at any point, refer to them as “the Ihlara group.” Marcell Restle further entrenches the group status using the metaphor of familial relationships.


often neglect to contextualize that element within its immediate and programmatic context. Second, Yilanlı is repeatedly characterized as an outlier in Byzantine Cappadocia due to its style and idiosyncratic iconographies, both of which are cited as evidence of foreign, non-Byzantine influence, such as Syriac and Coptic, or Armenian. As a result, the church is inconsistently dated, with dates ranging from the late ninth century to the late eleventh, and presented as an exceptional case of provincial iconographies. The surface treatments and the academic othering of Yilanlı—and the Ihlara Group as a whole—obscure the ways in which the church reflects a Byzantine cultural and Orthodox religious identity particular to its Cappadocian context at the nexus of Byzantium and neighboring cultures of the eastern medieval world. When Yilanlı’s idiosyncrasies are instead judged as purposeful variables on a “standard,” a new range of meaning and constellation of interconnections become possible.

The core of the church, its naos, compPELLingly articulates the value of using the notions of “standards and variables” and “interconnections” as guiding principles to better understand this monument both as an individual entity and within the cultural landscape of Byzantine Cappadocia. This short case study focuses on the south wall of the Yilanlı naos, with specific consideration given to the Koimesis (or Dormitio Mariae, that is, Death of the Virgin) which has received only limited attention. Following a formalist methodology, I first argue that the south wall acts as a self-contained programmatic unit which hinges on a symbiotic interaction between the wall paintings and carved furniture that amplifies and extends their individual functions and meanings. An iconographic approach to the Koimesis then raises new suggestions as to Yilanlı’s possible interconnections across the eastern medieval world and how this image complicates the church’s current positioning within Byzantine Cappadocia and Byzantine art history, especially regarding its dating.

Painted decoration covers all three walls and the ceiling of the free-cross form naos: a carved cross adorns the flat ceiling; and standing saints and archangels fill the spandrels and soffits of the arches on each cross arm. The north and south walls feature large figural scenes and carved niches [Figure 3]. A knotted circle-in-square design decorates the peak of the south arch soffit, with the archangel Michael and Saint Nicholas on the east side and Gabriel and Saint Athenogenes to the west. The wall is divided into three painted zones via thick painted borders: the top two registers are figural, while the lowest is comprised of painted green, white, and yellow curtains [Figure 4].

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6 The Thierrys propose a Syriac influence from refugees fleeing the Arab invasions of the 7th century and settling in Cappadocia; Lafontaine-Dosogne and Restle support an Armenian connection. A notable aspect of the Yilanlı historiography is the citational practices of scholars dealing indirectly with Yilanlı. Often enough only the Thierrys or Restle is cited as influencing the given date for the church in the study; most scholarship tends to follow the Thierrys and the earlier, 9th and 10th century date range. Thierry and Thierry, Nouvelles églises; Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Nouvelles notes;” Restle, Byzantine Wall Painting.

7 The Thierrys, M. Yanagi, and Ousterhout suggest a date in the second half or end of the 9th century; Nicole Thierry now draws the line at c. 900. Catherine Jolivet- Lévy and, most recently, Niamh Bhalla prefer a 10th century date, while Lafontaine-Dosogne and Restle prefer a later dating to the 10th-11th and second half of the 11th century, respectively. Dating is one of the core questions of my forthcoming dissertation. I do not offer a more specific dating here other than to affirm Yilanlı’s date within the Middle Byzantine period (periodized as following the end of Iconoclasm in 843 and the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders in 1204) simply because, as I argue in my dissertation, a date for the monument cannot be based on a single iconography or partial programmatic aspect of the church’s visual program. For a succinct list of proposed dates see: Jolivet- Lévy, Les églises byzantines, 310. For the sources proper see: Thierry and Thierry, Nouvelles églises; Thierry, La Cappadoce, carte 32; M. Yanagi and Yasushi Nagatsuka, Toruko Chusei Hekiga-ten [Turkey Paintings Exhibition in the Middle Ages] (Tokyo: Otsuka-kogeisha, 1971); Ousterhout, Visualizing Community, 213; Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Nouvelles notes”; Restle, Byzantine Wall Painting, vol. 3, LVII; Bhalla, Experiencing the Last Judgment, 80.

8 For plans and line drawings of the church see: Restle, Byzantine Wall Painting, vol. 3, LVII; Thierry and Thierry, Nouvelles églises, 90 (reproduced below, Figure 2).
In the upper, lunette-shaped register, Saints Constantine and Helena reach toward a jeweled cross placed above the carved window that pierces the center of the register. The Koimesis occupies the middle register. In the lowest register, in line with the window above, a carved niche decorated with a lobed cross and wheels interrupts the row of fictive curtains.

Natalia Teteriatnikov valuably identifies the carved niche as a water basin and determines a reciprocal relationship between the basin and painted images citing the compositional and thematic relationship of the basin cross with the True Cross held by Constantine and Helena above. In Teteriatnikov’s reading, the image of Constantine and Helena relates to both the discovery of the True Cross by Helena and to the Baptism of Constantine; the Yılanlı True Cross imagery and the basin's cross are further linked to the rite of the benediction of the water on the feast of the Epiphany, in which the ceremony itself symbolically recalls the Baptism of Christ. The Yılanlı basin’s use then is limited to the ablution role of Byzantine phiale rather than a baptismal font, as Teteriatnikov notes that the small size of the Yılanlı basin precludes a baptismal function. However, at no point does Teteriatnikov address the Koimesis, which is formally the center of the wall and, I argue, central to the creation of the self-contained programmatic unit.

The Koimesis (κοίμησις), or “falling asleep,” of the Theotokos—the Virgin Mary—is an apocryphal story not recorded in the Gospels or any canonical historical account of the final days of the Theotokos’s life. Narrative traditions of this event appear as early as the late fifth century; by the seventh, it is an official celebration in the Empire, celebrated every August fifteenth as one of the twelve Great Feasts (dodekaorton) of the Byzantine Orthodox liturgical calendar. Stephen J. Shoemaker identifies three main “textual families” of the legend, which include the so-called “Palm of the Tree of Life” redactions, the distinguishing characteristic of which is an emphasis on a mystical palm; the “Bethlehem” group which locates events in Bethlehem instead of Jerusalem; a “Coptic” family; as well as several “atypical” versions.

Here I provide a simplified narrative.

The final days of the Theotokos’s life begin with the appearance of an angel who informs her that she will soon die. At this announcement, the angel gifts her with mystical things, including a palm from the Tree of Life in Paradise. She returns home to tell friends and family of her imminent death, and the apostles are miraculously transported from the ends of the earth to attend her. The Theotokos prepares for death; the next day the group is witness to Christ descending with a company of angels to receive his mother’s soul, which he entrusts to an angel. A funeral procession then begins, the sights and sounds of which draws the ire of the Jews in the city, who plot to destroy the Theotokos’s body. The Jews are struck with divine punishment for their disbelief; one has the gall to carry out his attack. The moment he touches the funerary bier, an angel cuts his hands off in divine retribution. Only by an acknowledgment of the power of the Theotokos and his conversion to Christianity are his hands restored. This healed Jew then re-enters the city and heals others willing to convert. Once the apostles place the Theotokos’s body in her tomb, they await

12 This paper focuses its analysis on the lower half of the Yılanlı naos south wall. Teteriatnikov’s conclusions regarding the connection between the basin cross and Constantine and Helena with the True Cross above are valid and I leave further consideration of that imagery as beyond the scope of this paper. My dissertation includes an in-depth discussion of the lunette register and the window, following Lynn Jones’s argument that the iconography conveys specifically the visionary True Cross rather than the historical True Cross. I then consider the implications of this iconography as it interacts with the rest of the south wall program and other naos elements, specifically the carved ceiling cross. Lynn Jones, “Deconstructing an Iconography: depictions of Constantine and Helena in Middle Byzantine Cappadocia,” Valonia (forthcoming).
the return of Christ. Christ later reappears to take his mother’s body to Paradise, where the Theotokos’s soul and body are rejoined.¹⁴

The earliest surviving visual representation of the Koimesis is found on a sixth-century eulogia, or pilgrim’s token (“Token H”), recovered from Bet She’an, the capital of the Byzantine province Palaestina Secunda, which displays a succinct composition of the apostles gathered at the Theotokos’s death bed; examples from the period following this are rare.¹⁵ Long considered to be the first depictions of the Koimesis, a group of Constantinopolitan ivories from the tenth century present the “standard” Byzantine iconography already fully developed [Figure 5].¹⁶ The basic visual structure of the Koimesis is remarkably consistent, with only minor variations. Christ stands in the middle, attending his mother who lies on the bed that forms the horizontal axis of the image, and holds her nimbed and swaddled, child-like soul, while an angel or two swoop down from above to receive it. The apostles stand in two groups to either side; Peter, sometimes swinging a censer, and John stand toward the Theotokos’s head, while Paul leans forward at the foot of the bed.¹⁷

Elaborations on this base formula, usually associated with later compositions of the eleventh-twelfth centuries and into the Late and post-Byzantine periods, add bishops, an increasing number of attendant angels, buildings with mourning women, the apostles’ miraculous arrival on clouds, and the Jew and punishing angel, as at the Mavriotissa Monastery in Kastoria, Greece [Figure 6]. In monumental art, by the twelfth century at least, the Koimesis takes a conventional placement within Byzantine church programs on the west wall of the church narthex, often above a doorway, and usually paired as an antithesis with the Nativity or the Theotokos and Child on the eastern end in the apse.¹⁸

The Yılanlı composition differs fundamentally from conventional Byzantine iconography.¹⁹ Instead of a vertical emphasis, the Yılanlı Koimesis reflects the horizontal shape of the register. Against a backdrop of blue sky and yellow ground at the far right of the image field, a large angel—labeled ΑΝΤΙΓΕΛΟΣ ΚΥ (aggelos kyrion, “Angel of the Lord”— holds a scepter in their left hand, while reaching to cover their mouth with the right and bowing their head toward Christ and the Theotokos. The angel’s right wing stretches out to cover Christ as he grasps the small, nimbed, and naked soul of his mother.²⁰ The Theotokos’s funerary bier, around which the apostles gather in mourning, fills the remaining two-thirds of the register. Though damaged due to rainwater from the window, the outline of the Theotokos’s yellow halo and the lines of her face are visible against the red patterned backdrop of the large rectangular bed. The apostles John

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¹⁴ Some Koimesis narratives, such as those from the Palm of Life family, conclude with an apocalyptic tour through Paradise and Hell. Shoemaker, Ancient Traditions, 33–46.


¹⁹ I have digitally edited the photograph of the Yılanlı south wall by increasing the clarity and saturation in order to aid legibility of the fresco, especially in areas damaged by water or by post-Byzantine graffiti. All the visual elements discussed in this paper are still visible in-person but can be difficult to see in un-edited photographs.

²⁰ Multiple scholars note that an exceptional element of the Yılanlı Koimesis is the manner in which the Theotokos’s soul is rendered as nude, rather than swaddled. The nudity of the Theotokos’s soul is indisputable and will be examined further in the dissertation. The Theotokos’s halo, noted as missing in early scholarship, is present, but difficult to see. Thierry and Thierry, Nouvelles églises, 106; Thierry, La Cappadoce, 157 and carte 32; Maria Parani, “A Monument of His Own? An Iconographic Study of the Wall Paintings of the Holy Trinity Parekklesion at the Monastery of St. John Chrysostom, Koutsovendis (Cyprus),” Studies in Iconography 39 (2018): 47; Ana Palanciuc, “L’iconographie byzantine de la Dormition de la Vierge: Une controverse balkanique sur l’ascension de l’âme,” in Renaissance et ascensions de l’âme: de la lanterne à la lune, de la lune au soleil, ed. Evelien Chayes (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019), 42.
Paul, recognizable by their beardlessness and receding hairline, respectively, stand at the foot, while the other nine line the back side. Unlike the rest of the yellow background, the background to the bed is green, thereby offsetting this part of the composition. Though the gold background appears again on the far left behind Paul, this shift to green creates a clear demarcation between this side of the image field and that with Christ and the great angel, implying a combination of earthly and heavenly settings. This color shift also highlights the final figure in the composition, located below the bed at the lower edge of the register, dressed in yellow, and noticeably smaller than the rest of the figures. This is the disbelieving Jew, the one punished for daring to attack the Theotokos; in Yılanlı, the absence of hands removed at the wrists makes his identity apparent. For the sake of clarity, I refer to this figure throughout the rest of this article as Jephonias, though he is not always so named in the narrative accounts.21 It is Jephonias that I propose is the key to the self-contained program of the naos south wall [Figure 7].

A major theme of the Koimesis story is the Jewish hatred of all things Christian; nevertheless, it allows that Jews are capable of conversion, and so also of salvation.22 In her study on the image of the Jew in Byzantine art, Elisabeth Revel-Neher notes that, in the development of the Jephonias theme, these images emphasize either Jephonias’s attempt desecration or his punishment, but never the third stage of the story: his repentance and conversion. Consequently, Jephonias images are a clear negative invocation of the disbelieving Jew.23 I agree with Revel-Neher, to an extent; the Yılanlı Koimesis is focused on the violent bodily harm done to Jephonias, as he raises arms missing severed hands in a disfigured orant-like gesture.24 Exceptionally, however, the Yılanlı Koimesis does, in fact, also tell the third stage of the story by omitting the figure of the punishing angel and via the interaction of image and liturgical furniture.

In Yılanlı, Jephonias’s lower body breaks through not only the thick red border line of the register, but also the braided-rope motif that creates an additional boundary between the curtains below. Crucially,

24 Jephonias’s particular posture—arms raised upwards rather than outstretched in front of his body as they are in many other instances such as the Kirk dam altı or the St. Nicholas in Başköy Koimesis—is partly a function of image clarity; composition-wise, he is centered directly below the funerary bed rather than off to a side, and his yellow sleeves and stumps of his arms are further emphasized against the green background. I suggest that Jephonias’s posture is also meant to evoke that of an orant. Jephonias is, however, meant more specifically to be an antithesis of an orant in which his bodily disfigurement inverts the sacrality conveyed by the gesture and acts as another visual indicator of his heresy. The viewer is subtly prepared to understand this inversion by interacting with another—proper—orant earlier in their path through Yılanlı. Three standing, frontal female figures fill the right wall of the short passageway between the Yılanlı exonarthex and narthex. The middle figure, haloed, dressed in pinkish robes, and visibly larger than the two haloed women in green flanking her, holds her arms upwards in the classic orant gesture of prayer. Her hands are a focal point of the composition: they are proportionate but large, offset against a similarly colored background by a black outline. Jephonias iconography generally includes the punishing angel and the severed hands, showing them clinging to the Theotokos’s bed, following the textual traditions in which it is noted that Jephonias’s hands are “left hanging...in the air at the sides of the coffin;” the streamlined iconography of the Yılanlı Koimesis jettisons the angel as well as, seemingly, Jephonias’s hands. The absence of the hands aids the comparative understanding of Jephonias as an anti-orant. With this position I diverge marginally from Revel-Neher’s conclusion that Byzantine art does not visually identify Jephonias (and in other cases, Judas and Caiaphas) as a specific negative Jewish figure through “morally-motivated caricature,” in this case physical deformity. However, the deformity in Yılanlı is purposefully temporary; a heresy and moral transgression cleansed by the sanctified waters from the basin below. The interaction between Jephonias and the water basin cues the eventuality that Jephonias will have his hands restored—thus making him a proper orant like the female one in the Yılanlı doorway—an interaction explored in the following section of this article. Revel-Neher, The Image of the Jew, 83.
Jephonias’s legs touch the top edge of the water basin below, breaking the otherwise neatly maintained separation between registers seen throughout the church. What has gone unremarked is the significance of this compositional choice, which must be contextualized within the larger Jephonias narrative and the immediate church space. This compositional transgression reflects the social transgression of Jephonias and directs the viewer beyond the image proper to the water basin, expanding the narrative and symbolic potential of the Yılanlı Koimesis.

The small size of the Yılanlı basin has been used to argue against a baptismal function, but Jephonias serves as a visual indication of just such a function. If taken alone, the Koimesis register, like other Koimesis images, emphasizes the narrative moment after Jephonias is punished but before the subsequent recovery of his hands, his conversion, and “rebirth” as a Christian. Unlike other Byzantine images, though, the Yılanlı composition clearly signals that it is inclusive of more than the image alone, for it also necessitates the basin below, creating not just a reciprocal relationship between carved furniture and image but a symbiotic one. The explicit, formal connection between the Koimesis and water basin created by Jephonias’s body confirms the cleansing symbolism of the ablution water and the basin cross, extending that function to also encompass a baptismal use. Simultaneously, the completion of the Jephonias episode is only activated due to his proximity to the basin; the basin thus not only amplifies the power of the cross conveyed by the rest of the naos south wall program, as argued by Teteriatnikov, but also completes the story with its Christian supersessionist conversion message.

The variable nature of the Yılanlı Koimesis as compared to other Byzantine images is therefore purposeful; it is designed to fit the spatial requirements of the horizontal register and is part of a self-contained programmatic unit. The overarching meaning of the miniature program of the naos south wall is one of salvation, entirely appropriate within the larger funerary function of the church itself.

In what follows, I suggest ways in which to advance the iconographic reading of Jephonias in the Yılanlı Koimesis. Though this section ultimately raises more questions than it answers, these questions provide potentially meaningful points of interconnection between Yılanlı and the wider eastern Christian world.

Some scholars point to Yılanlı’s idiosyncrasies as evidence of iconographic prototypes that indicate that the church should thus be dated to an earlier period. The narratively significant figure of the disbelieving Jew appears in the earliest Koimesis literary traditions. Revel-Nehér finds that the earliest Byzantine visual depictions of the Jephonias episode appear around the ninth-tenth century in Cappadocia. Following the earliest dates for Yılanlı to the same period, then the earliest Koimesis-Jephonias occurrence would be Yılanlı. Subsequent examples are dated much later to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; the late eleventh–early twelfth century-Mavriotissa Monastery Koimesis marks the only other pre-twelfth century depiction of Jephonias (Figure 6). Any of the suggested dates for Yılanlı—late ninth century through even the late eleventh century—would support Revel-Nehér’s assertion that the

25 In his “Epistle to Titus,” Paul describes the Mystery of Baptism as a “cleansing water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” (Tit. 3:5)
27 However, she mistakenly describes the Yılanlı Koimesis, stating that the angel appears on the left holding a raised sword. The angelos kyrios in the Yılanlı Koimesis does hold a silver staff of some type close to their body, but this object should not be interpreted as the sword, nor should this angel be understood as the punishing angel. Revel-Nehér, The Image of the Jew, 81 and note 131.
earliest artistic representations of Jephonias hail from Cappadocia. Yilanli’s significance thus extends beyond its distinctive iconography and composition to include its date and context.

Twenty-six Koimesis representations are documented across the region. Raw data on these sites reveals no telling patterns. They range in date from the ninth through the thirteenth centuries, with an expected break in the twelfth century, and are geographically rather evenly dispersed. There is no consistent association between the Koimesis and funerary spaces, or funerary elements, such as an arcosolium burial. The Cappadocian programs generally follow the wider Byzantine trend of placing the Koimesis on the west wall and/or in relation to the Nativity or the Theotokos and Child, though this relationship is not established in six of the overall twenty-six occurrences.

Iconographically, the Cappadocian rock-cut churches trend toward Byzantine convention for the Koimesis, as at Ayvali Kilise, dated between 913–920, which shares a basic composition with the Constantinopolitan ivories of splitting the apostles into two groups, with a centered Christ and angel over the Theotokos’s bed. The clearest variables upon the Constantinopolitan “standard” then are Yilanli and Agac alti, another member of the so-called “Ihlara Group,” whose distinctive two-part continuous narrative Koimesis shows Christ twice, seemingly moving in reverse as he collects his mother’s soul, and which lacks the apostles except John.

The most potentially consequential iconographic observation, however, is that of the twenty-six images only three include Jephonias: Yilanli and Kirk dam alti Kilise in the Ihlara Valley, and St. Nicholas (Çukur Kilise) in Başköy, south of Ürgüp. This data point—albeit limited—reveals two further patterns regarding the Jephonias episode in Cappadocia. Like the Koimesis without Jephonias, these images occur across the region. Regarding dating, Kirk dam alti, grouped with the more stylistically “Byzantine” churches located at the other end of the Ihlara Valley from Yilanli, is securely dated by dedicatory

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31 Though no additional interpretative statements can be deduced at this point, it is interesting to note that the single largest geographic concentration occurs in the Ihlara Valley span, with six total (see note above).

32 See Ferda Barut’s dissertation on Koimesis imagery in Byzantine Cappadocia. Barut, “Bizans Dönemi Kapadokya;” Maguire, Art and eloquence, 59–68. The Yilanli Koimesis is not directly related to the Theotokos and Child, located in the apse, though they are not far from one another. The positioning of the Koimesis in Yilanli should not be taken as possible ignorance of this established antithetical relationship in Byzantine church programs but rather instead a preference for a different stress on the meaning of the Koimesis that serves the salvific and funerary needs of Yilanli.

33 For images of the Ayvali and Agac altı Koimesis, see Takeda, “On the compositions,” figures 11.1 and 12.6; on the Agac altı Koimesis, see Thierry and Thierry, Nouvelles églises, 79.

34 Catherine Jolivet-Lévy and Tolga Uyar, “Peintures de XIIIle siècle en Cappadoce: Saint-Nicolas de Bašköy,” ΔΧΑΕ 27 (2006): 152. For images of the Kirk dam altı Koimesis, see Takeda, “On the compositions,” figure 11.12. While the painting is heavily damaged and overrun with graffiti, Jephonias and the angel are still visible directly below the Theotokos’s horizontal bed; Jephonias is located immediately to the left of the large hole in the wall.

35 As with the Koimesis more generally, it is notable that a cluster of Jephonias-Koimesis images is found in the immediate area of the Ihlara Valley (see note 31).
inscription to the period between 1282–1328. St. Nicholas in Başköy is similarly dated to the thirteenth century by style and iconography. With the exception of Yılanlı, then, the conventional association of Jephonias with later Byzantine art would hold true for Cappadocia. While a single iconography is inconclusive dating evidence, it certainly recommends a re-examination of the church’s date, which could be significantly later than the ninth or tenth century as is commonly stated.

Turning to the literary traditions of the Koimesis may provide clues as to the wider cultural connections of Yılanlı and further prompt a reevaluation of the church’s date.

The iconography of the Yılanlı Koimesis points to a certain affinity with the “Palm of the Tree of Life” literary family. The use of a palm branch from Paradise is a prominent feature throughout these redactions: first, with the delivery of the palm to Mary by an angel, then gifted to John along with other secret things, followed by an appearance in the funerary procession and its use by Jephonias to heal the Jews who agree to convert.

Scholarship has yet to comment on the object between Christ and the aggelos kyrio in Yılanlı. It is the palm. A formal comparison with painted and carved palms from other Cappadocian rock-cut churches would seem to confirm this. The inclusion of the palm deepens the salvific and mystical power of both the Koimesis and south wall program and, with its specific paradisical connotations, fits within the overall funerary function of the church and its emphasis on salvific and afterlife imagery.

The net around a specific literary tradition may be drawn even tighter. Some early scholarship on Yılanlı, including the seminal publication on churches of the Ihlara Valley by Nicole and Michel Thierry, noted that the Koimesis was missing the body of the Theotokos, a theory long since disproven because this was caused by environmental damage to the paint. Scholars advanced this supposed iconographic feature in two distinct directions—Syriac or Armenian—based on their rationale for the supposedly non-Byzantine stylistic and cultural influence on Yılanlı.

It is the Armenian connection that is most intriguing. Textual accounts do place Armenians in Cappadocia from at least the eleventh century. This century saw three instances of dispossessed Armenian

38 The question of the aggelos kyrioty—its identity, the meaning of its gesture, and its role in the narrative action of the Yilanlı Koimesis—is more involved than the space in this article allows. The aggelos kyrioty is a complicated figure, occurring three times throughout Yilanlı: twice in the naos, in the Koimesis and directly across on the naos north wall as part of the Last Supper, and as part of the afterlife imagery on the western wall of the church’s narthex in the Weighing of Souls. See Mathiesen, “Yılanlı Kilise,” for discussion of the aggelos kyrioty.
39 Palms that exhibit a similar umbrella-like branch structure are prominent on the ceiling of Üç Haçlı Kilise (“Three Crosses Church,” also known as Güllü dere Chapel 3), in which they appear under the horizontal arms of two of the three eponymous carved ceiling crosses. They also appear in St. Sergios Chapel near Göreme, in the Church at Durmuş, and in Balkan Deresi no. 3. Both the Thierrys and Jolivet-Lévy tentatively suggest that the “curious instrument” by John in the Ağacı alt Koimesis is the palm; I think it can be more confidently identified as such. The occurrence of similar umbrella-like objects and the additional shared connections between Yılanlı and Ağacı alt as members of the “Ihlara Group” suggest that Jolivet-Lévy is correct. This would mark the occurrence of two Koimesis images with iconographic connections to the Palm of the Tree of Life literary family in churches closely related by style, iconography, and geography. Alice Lynn McMichael, “Rising Above the Faithful: Monumental Ceiling Crosses in Byzantine Cappadocia” (PhD diss., The Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY), 2018), 323 and fig. 4.12; Restle, Byzantine Wall Painting, vol. 3, XXVII, vol 3., XXVII; Catherine Jolivet-Lévy, La Cappadoce médiévale: images et spiritualité (Saint-Légér-Vauban: Zodiacie, 2001), 306, plate 97; Thierry, La Cappadoce, 96; Thierry and Thierry, Nouvelles églises, 79.
41 Thierry and Thierry, Nouvelles églises; Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Nouvelles Notes Cappadoiciennes.”
princes ceding control of their Armenian territories to Byzantium; in return, they were gifted land in Cappadocia. First, in 1021–1022, the last ruler of Vaspurakan, Senek’erim Artsruni, exchanged his kingdom to the Byzantine emperor Basil II in return for the city of Sebasteia (modern Sivas). Additional land and population exchanges between the Byzantines and Armenians occurred in 1045, under Gagik II, ruler of Ani, and in 1063, under Gagik-Abbas of Kars.42

Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne proposes a connection between the Yilanlı Koimesis and the earliest Koimesis narrative composed in Armenian as it is preserved in a series of manuscripts from the twelfth-nineteenth centuries.43 This account, the so-called “Armenian Transitus,” recounts that the Theotokos’s body “made itself impossible to see and dazzled [the Jews]” who sought to steal it.44 While Lafontaine-Dosogne’s point of connection between image and text erroneously hinges on the “missing body” theory, the Armenian legend as a potential source, or shared tradition, deserves further consideration. The Armenian Transitus appears to be a very heavily revised version of the early Palm of the Tree of Life traditions, the same narrative branch to which I have suggested the Yilanlı Koimesis belongs, and is best understood as an original Armenian composition rather than a translation from Greek or Syriac.45 This Transitus is attributed alternately to the sixth century or as a “legend” originating in the Middle Ages; in any case, it is datable prior to the early twelfth century and likely to have emerged at least by the ninth, placing it solidly within the range of possible dates both for Yilanlı and for the known presence of Armenian settlements in the region.46 The compelling iconographic connection is found at the conclusion: “the company of apostles and the believers who were with them established prayer, and then they baptized the healed man.”47 This is, to my knowledge, the only redaction outside of the West to explicitly mention baptism.48 Following the Palm of the Tree of Life narrative structure, the healed man should be identified with Jephonias—a textual implication made visually overt in Yilanlı.

The Yilanlı Koimesis is an idiosyncratic image to be sure, but it becomes less eccentric once it is contextualized within the rest of its environment on the naos south wall. The interconnections between painted images and carved furniture inform and amplify each other; each can be understood individually but become more meaningful when combined. So too is the self-contained program of the naos south wall, which is informed by, and then in turn amplifies, the funerary nature of Yilanlı. Previous studies on the church draw attention to it as a significant site for Cappadocian and Byzantine art history; however, many are limited in their scope, focusing on pieces alone. This case study demonstrates the necessity for careful scrutiny of individual Cappadocian rock-cut churches in their entirety and to fully contextualize each church within its environment. Just as the Koimesis is to the naos south wall, and the naos south wall is to the entirety of Yilanlı, each rock-cut church can be seen as a dynamic self-contained—but by no means isolated—unit within the larger cultural landscape of Byzantine Cappadocia. Yilanlı may be transgressive, but an implied aspect of a transgression is also an understanding of the supposed “standard.” Yilanlı may draw on visual and textual traditions from outside of Byzantium to create its image, but it is an image that

43 Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Nouvelles Notes Cappadoiciennes,” 164.
44 Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Nouvelles Notes Cappadoiciennes,” 164.
nevertheless operates within a Byzantine Orthodox setting, expressing and maintaining such an identity. As Kathleen Corrigan argues in connection with the Byzantine marginal psalters produced in the period following Iconoclasm, the polemical images are not simply anti-Iconoclast but defend against many different opponents of Orthodoxy, including Muslims and Jews. The Yılanlı Koimesis is similarly an evocative statement of Orthodoxy and Orthodox identity. Yılanlı as a whole, then, is both a sophisticated expression of the flexibility of Byzantine Orthodox art in which variables are significant carriers of meaning and is an important testament to visualized identity as formed in a complex border region.

Bibliography


Figure 1a. Map of Cappadocia, Asia Minor, modern-day central Türkiye. After Restle, Byzantine Wall Painting in Asia Minor.
Figure 1b. Map of Ihlara Valley in the southwestern part of the region of Cappadocia, with location of Yılanlı Kilise marked. After Thierry and Thierry, *Nouvelles églises rupestres de Cappadoce*, 32, fig. 6.
Figure 2. Plan of Yılanlı Kilise. Red outline indicates location of Koimesis and water basin on the south wall of the free-cross form naos. After Thierry and Thierry, *Nouvelles églises rupestres de Cappadoce*, 90.
Figure 3. View of Yılanlı naos, facing east. Straight ahead is the apse and altar; above on the ceiling of the naos is a carved cross. The north wall, to the left, features the highly damaged Crucifixion, with the Last Supper and a carved niche with a painted cross in the middle of the wall above the register of painted curtains. To the right is the south wall, with saints Constantine and Helena with the True Cross around the carved window, and the Koimesis and water basin directly below. Photo credit: author.
Figure 4. The south arm of the Yılanlı free-cross form naos. In the arch of the south arm, starting at the bottom and moving to the top of the arch, left to right, are saint Nicholas and the archangel Michael, and saint Athenogenes and the archangel Gabriel; a circle-in-square design sits at the apex of the south arm arch. The south wall is composed of three registers. From bottom to top: painted curtains interrupted by a carved water basin; in the middle, the Koimesis; and in the lunette-shaped register at the top, a carved window topped by a painted cross and flanked by saints Helena and Constantine. Photo credit: author.
Figure 5. The fully developed “standard” Byzantine Koimesis as represented by a group of 10th century ivory icons. *Icon with the Koimesis*, likely made in Constantinople, late 900s, ivory, overall: 7 5/16 x 5 13/16 x 7/16 in. (18.6 x 14.8 x 1.1 cm). Public domain; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917, www.metmuseum.org.
Figure 6. Koimesis iconography with additional attendant angels, buildings with mourning women, and the Jew and punishing angel. Detail inset: the angel has cut the Jew’s hands from his body, which remain stuck to the lower edge of the Theotokos’s funerary bed. *Koimesis* of the Panagia Mavriotissa Monastery, Kastoria, Greece, 11th century, fresco. Source: public domain – Wikipedia.
Figure 7. Yılanlı Koimesis. Detail outline in red: the disbelieving Jew, with raised arms and missing hands, at the register border, Yılanlı Kilise, naos south wall, fresco. Image edited with Photoshop to increase clarity. Photo credit: author.
Invisible Infrastructure: Reinforcing Postwar Gender Inequality in Tokyo’s Nakagin Capsule Tower

Kelsea Whaley

Abstract: 1970s Japan saw major changes in the way society lived and worked. A changing family structure, one led by the patriarchal “salaryman,” created new demands for housing. The Nakagin Capsule Tower, completed by architect Kisho Kurokawa in 1972, formerly located in the business district of Shimbashi, Tokyo, Japan, was Kurokawa’s utopian model for Japan’s salarymen. This presentation investigates how the Nakagin Capsule Tower inscribed gendered institutional thought in its construction, restricting women’s access to the home and maintaining male power in the public sphere. Moreover, I explore the relationship between the construction of masculinity and urban space in postwar Japan and discuss the ways in which a housewife is unable to fulfill societal expectations within the Nakagin Capsule Tower. While Kurokawa believed the Nakagin Capsule Tower was a utopian architecture that would improve society, it maintained the salaryman/housewife relationship that prevented Japan from socially evolving to include women in their workforce and reinforced the city as a place only for men in service to the economy. This assessment investigates how the built environment has the power to detract from women’s opportunities outside of the home and the ways architecture met the social demands of men in postwar Japan.

Key words: Postwar Japan, Metabolist architecture, salarymen, gender

1970s Japan saw major changes in the way society lived and worked. A changing family structure, one centered around the salaryman, created new demands for urban housing. Prior to the 1970s, the Meiji Restoration of 1853 impacted the production of traditional Japanese architecture and by 1945, when World War II ended, Japan sought an architecture, both residential and public, that better suited their newly defined post-war social roles. From 1950–1953, the Korean War greatly stimulated Japan’s economy, so by the 1970s, Japan developed the world’s second largest economy and were financially stable enough to pursue housing as a national goal.¹ The Japanese salaryman supported and led this economy. His lifestyle and the patriarchal familial structure that defined him initiated the conception of one defining architectural structure that dominated Tokyo’s skyline from 1972 to 2022.

The Nakagin Capsule Tower (NCT), completed by Japanese modernist architect Kisho Kurokawa in 1972, was formerly located in the business district of Shimbashi, Tokyo, until April 202,² when workers disassembled and demolished the structure, a devastating event for Japan’s modern architectural heritage [Figure 1]. Prior to its demolition, the NCT stood as a reflection of the 1970s Japanese Metabolist Movement that sought to re-think and revolutionize the mass housing units of high density urban environments. Kurokawa built the NCT to house the salaryman, a middle-class working male who developed as the attainable, ideal model in post-war Japan.

¹ Barbara Molony, Janet M. Theiss, and Hyaeweol Choi, Gender In Modern East Asia: An Integrated History (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2016), 415.

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In this paper, I argue that the NCT inscribed gendered institutional thought in its construction which maintained male power in the public sphere. Through this construction, men reached an economic power unattainable to women who remained in the home in a prescribed domestic role. I investigate the relationship between men, women, and urban space in post-war Japan, exploring how a gender-segregated environment developed, and the ways in which the NCT maintained normative gender roles of the period. In order to show how the NCT became an unapologetically male space that relegated women to the home, I explore the relationship between the construction of masculinity and urban space in post-war Japan which did not accommodate women and their domestic labor.

The NCT is composed of 140 interlocking modular capsules which plug-in to two core concrete shafts [Figure 1]. These vertical shafts extend above the capsules in a rusted brown color and create a striking diagonal line that dramatically differs from surrounding buildings. The capsules are asymmetrically stacked on one another with each unit containing only one circular window. While Kurokawa oriented some units towards each side overlooking neighboring buildings, most units face the public street. The NCT adopts modernist aesthetics of the International Style in its use of pilottis, clean lines, mass-produced materials, and minimal ornamentation.

Most prominently, the interior pace emphasized efficiency in its arrangement [Figure 2]. Each capsule, modeled after a storage unit and measuring 108 total sq. ft., contained a corner bathroom, full-sized bed, desk, kitchenette, and built-in storage compartments. At the time, its color television, air conditioning unit, and Sony entertainment center made it a somewhat technologically advanced dwelling. Kurokawa's design is not at all nostalgic, traditionally Japanese, or completely modernist. Its capsule form is brand new and radical.

Architectural scholars view the NCT as an exemplary structure integrating Metabolist ideas with post-war modernist thought of the 1970s, but little attention has been given to the structure outside of its formal, modular design. While scholarship has not currently responded to its April 2022 destruction, international media outlets have focused on the structure's status as a cultural heritage object. The Tower has yet to be explored in its relationship to the male/female dynamics that shaped its initial conception. The NCT is an important structure following the Metabolist philosophy laid out in the 1960 manifesto Metabolism: The Proposals for New Urbanism produced by the Metabolism Movement to which Kurokawa belonged. Scholarship on the Metabolist Movement is often in conversation with International and Global Modernism and analyzed in comparison to Western architecture rather than as a unique cultural product of Japan’s post-war period. Architects belonging to the Metabolism Movement are not often explored individually and, instead, figures like Kenzo Tange are largely discussed to represent the entire group. This paper challenges these established notions by centering gender in the creation of the NCT and Kurokawa as an architect and arbiter of architectural thought.

The “salaryman” has gained significant scholarly attention since the 1970s as feminist theory has been integrated and popularized in the overall field of art and architectural history. However, architectural analysis incorporating a feminist or gender focus has been largely ignored in scholarship, especially when analyzing Modern Architecture. Feminist urban scholars have largely led the charge in discussing the

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3 Oscar Holland and Junko Ogura, “Tokyo’s Iconic Nakagin Capsule Tower to be Demolished,” CNN, April 4, 2022.
gendered aspects of the built environment and called attention to the ways public and domestic spaces restrict female participation. Early discussions of the salaryman are dependent upon the role of the housewife as she is necessary in shaping this male identity, yet architectural analysis has failed in examining the spatial relationship between the housewife and urban architecture in maintaining the salaryman dynamic.

**Japanese Metabolism**

In 1960, Japanese architect Kenzo Tange revealed his *Plan for Tokyo, 1960—Toward a Structural Reorganization* at the World Design Congress in Tokyo which sought to regulate urban growth, traffic, and land shortages. Tange’s radical plan featured a linear series of interlocking loops expanding Tokyo across the bay and introduced the Metabolist idea of the “city as process” to the international architectural world [Figure 3]. International architects reacted overwhelmingly positively to Tange’s plan at the World Design Congress, which they saw as a radical architecture that “impose[d] a new physical order” challenging previous spatial models. European and North American modern architects had largely accepted and experimented with the idea of the building as a machine after Le Corbusier’s infamous claim in 1923 that “a house is a machine for living,” which guided modern architectural design for most of the twentieth century. Tange, along with a group of Japanese architects who called themselves the Metabolists, rejected Le Corbusier’s idea of likening a house to a machine and instead, likened the city to an organic process epitomized in their claim of the “city as process.”

Before Tange revealed his 1960 Tokyo Plan, the Metabolists published their design manifesto *Metabolism 1960—the Proposals for New Urbanism*, which laid out the “city as process” philosophy that cities, like biological processes, were unstable and dynamic, and needed to be reflected in the architecture.

Although Tange was never named as a member of the group, he served as a mentor to the Metabolists, legitimized the group through his national standing in Japan, and implemented Metabolist philosophy in his *Tokyo Plan*. Japanese architects Kiyonori Kikutake, Masato Otaka, Fumihiko Maki, Noriaki Kurokawa, Kisho Kurokawa, and architectural critic Noboru Kawazoe were among those professionals who belonged to the Metabolist movement and promoted Metabolist philosophy and design principles in their architecture and writings.

Beyond experimenting with form and urban plans, the Metabolists used modern architecture as a tool for nation-building to communicate with local and international audiences that Japan was prosperous, innovative, and modern. In this sense, “modern” can be understood as meaning industrially, technologically, and economically advanced. A desire to rebuild Japan emerged after the war with Europe, North America, and Egypt utilizing variations of modern architecture to achieve modernity status. For instance, Japan experimented with modern architecture as a nation-building tool in Tange’s Hiroshima Peace Memorial built after the war to honor Japanese history, promote nationalism, and serve as a symbol of modernity [Figure 3]. The NCT can be understood within this context—as a nation-building project that sought to celebrate Japan as a center of industry and modernity.

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Very few Metabolist projects were realized, but Kurokawa’s NCT was one of the few that manifested Metabolist ideas in its modular form, materials, and verticality. Kurokawa considered the modular boxes that makeup the living quarters as following the “city as process” philosophy, because he designed them to be replaced every twenty-five years to suit the growing, transformative nature of society and urban space. While modernists like Le Corbusier, Adolf Loos, and Walter Gropius explored the modular form in their architecture, they did not recognize architecture’s capacity to become obsolete due to the changing nature of society like the Metabolists foresaw.

The NCT used materials such as metal and reinforced concrete which were being used by global modernists during the 1970s as efficient, low-cost materials that produced strong buildings. The Metabolists used the same materials as other global modernists but appropriated them differently. Materials became one way to address the impermanence of structures. The Metabolists were extremely interested in the concepts of time and renewal, arguing for the replacement of capsules and their materials every twenty-five years to extend the capsule’s use. Impermanence, renewal, and adaptation are all concepts found in traditional Shinto and Buddhist philosophy widely practiced across Japan. Metabolists recognized the traditional element of time within structures like the NCT, but showcased it through a new, modernist form like the capsule.

Additionally, the verticality of the Tower is also very much in line with modernist skyscrapers appearing throughout the United States in the twentieth century. However, Metabolists saw the vertical structure as a tool primarily for urban growth. While skyscrapers like Daniel Burnham’s Fuller Building (1902) and William van Alen’s Chrysler Building (1931) were more interested in becoming a monument and defying heights through modern materials, the NCT was vertical so it could grow upwards to accommodate future capsules if needed. Together, the NCT’s modular form, materials, and verticality reflected the “city as process” thought and allowed the Metabolists to evolve modernist design principles for a major city like Tokyo. While Tange’s 1960 Plan put the Metabolists on the map with international modernist architects and critics, Kurokawa’s NCT cemented the group’s importance in the field by the mid-1970s.

### Housing the Salaryman and the Housewife

Nam Utopian architecture developed as a post-war response across the world and sought to accommodate idealistic living conditions that created a sense of social, economic, and political equality. Mostly envisioned through suburban town planning, projects like Sayed Karim’s Nasr City in Cairo, Egypt (1960s) and Le Corbusier’s Unité d’Habitation in Marseilles, France (1952) were among two utopian models designed under a vision of urban renewal that uplifted communities through housing. Major projects took on a socialist tone, but many developed to suit a specific economic class and their material and social needs. While utopian architecture seeks to create nearly perfect conditions for its inhabitants, recent scholarship adopting a Marxist angle has addressed the ways it excludes lower socio-economic classes and promotes racial segregation.

Utopian architecture is characterized by its vision and ability to transgress a society through the building and its amenities, which Kurokawa practiced in his design of the NCT. However, rather than designing a utopian model that accommodated a general urban population in need of post-war housing, Torizō Watanabe, manager

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14 Kurokawa, *Metabolism In Architecture*, 105.
16 Kurokawa, *Metabolism In Architecture*, 105.
of the real estate company Nakagin Mansion Corporation, hired Kurokawa to create residential apartments that appealed to the growing “salaryman” role that, by the 1970s, became an aspirational model for Japanese society. Kurokawa, a master of functional design, used Watanabe’s commission to create a utopian model for Japan’s salarymen which he expected to act as a prototype for future housing developments.

The *sarar man* or the “salaryman” is a male Japanese white-collar worker; this figure developed in the mid-twentieth century, and the “salaryman” acted as the main financial support for his family. The post-war idea that a citizen should be useful to one’s economic society in service to the country manifested itself in the role of the salaryman, which allowed men to feel they were serving both their family and Japan. Kurokawa envisioned the NCT as a utopian space that accommodated the salaryman lifestyle. Corporations expected the salaryman to work long days to advance Japan’s economy—one considered to be thriving—and extend that motivation to the evening by meeting with coworkers and potential businessmen. These expectations resulted in the demand for structures like the NCT that sought to be a second home to the salaryman. Rather than commuting back into the suburbs after a long working day, he could instead own a convenient second home in the city, only a few blocks away from his office. The small, single living space of the NCT was convenient to the salaryman, providing an accessible place for him within the business district—where salarymen were overwhelmingly concentrated—to sleep and recharge for another day of supporting both Japan’s economy and his family.

The salaryman was strictly relegated to both urban space and a male body. Scholars have historically characterized the urban environment as “masculine” due to the concentration of men in power in its space. Shimbashi, the center of industry in the 1970s, fell into this masculine categorization. According to Tomoko Hidaka, the salaryman became the dominant paradigm of masculinity from the late 1960s until the bursting of the economic bubble in the 1990s, which shifted Japan’s societal constructs. Although women in various social classes—especially those occupying lower classes—worked throughout and after the war, stepping into roles previously occupied by men, women were ultimately dismissed as participants in Japan’s corporate work force in favor of relegating them to the home.

The “suburban housewife” developed in conjunction with the salaryman identity and served as the harmonious companion to the husband. In fact, Sociologist Daphne Spain argues that the housewife made the salaryman/breadwinner imagery possible, because it rendered women invisible in the home and made women reliant on men for economic stability. The salaryman was dependent on his wife for domestic responsibilities such as cleaning, childcare, cooking, and general home maintenance which prevented her from working outside of the home. Responsibilities in the home were not only restricted to housework but expanded into keeping the family’s budget and maintaining an understanding of general pricing to distribute income appropriately.

Marxist feminist scholars point out that the division of household labor by which men produce and women reproduce is at the center of the patriarchal capitalist city. While men’s labor is public, visible, and paid, women’s labor is private, invisible, and unpaid.

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21. The Nakagin Mansion Corporation is now known as the Nakagin Integration Co. and continues to operate as a real estate company based in Japan.
23. Molony, Theiss, and Choi, *Gender in Modern East Asia*, 421.
28. Molony, Theiss, & Choi, *Gender in Modern East Asia*, 422.
women’s household labor is private, invisible, and unpaid which reinforces gender inequalities in and out of home. Keeping the housewife restricted to the home through the salaryman/housewife relationship was socially and economically necessary to maintain men in power. By chasing a vision of utopian society that served men and capitalism, Kurokawa participated in the erasure of women from the urban space and reinforced the city as a place only for men in service to the economy.

The salaryman identity was also tied to the “nuclear family” model that developed as a hegemonic post-war response to familial structure across the world. The nuclear family framed the male as the “breadwinner” and dominant patriarch who had a wife and several children. In this way, men controlled both public (corporate work life) and private (domestic) spheres. Film, literature, television, and newspapers advertised the nuclear family model to lower and middle-classes as an aspirational family structure that mitigated post-war social and financial anxieties. Men and women turned to marriage and the ideal of the nuclear family for stability which society saw as moral and in line with contemporary societal norms.

Architects inscribed these gendered expectations associated with the salaryman and housewife on the urban and suburban landscape. With the salaryman in the urban environment and the housewife contained within the domestic environment, a gender-segregated society solidified. Molony, Theiss, and Choi argue that this gender-segregated environment that resulted from the separation of men in the public sphere from women relegated to the domestic sphere, transmitted the idea that “men were more productive than women in the workplace and that it was wasteful to squander men’s time in the home.” Such ideas did not emerge in the 1970s, but had their roots in Japanese history.

With the salaryman in the urban public sphere and the wife in the suburban domestic sphere, a gender-segregated society solidified that mirrored earlier societal structures of Japan’s Edo (1603–1867) and Meiji Periods (1868–1912). The two periods placed men in urban environments as leaders of the economy while women remained at home, framed as subordinate, supportive, and distant. Thus, the male/female dynamics in the salaryman/housewife relationship did not move away from former societal structures in a dramatic way and, instead, patriarchal relations in the private realm of the family remained a barrier to women’s public participation.

In the Edo Period (1615–1868), the city of Edo housed imperial men and their male entourage, while the Shogun displaced his wife and their children as a mode of control and a way to maintain servitude and obedience [Figure 5]. Through this familial separation, Edo became a “city of men” which very much echoes 1970s Tokyo and its abundance of salarymen. The Edo Period also saw the introduction of Confucian social order which favored ideals of women in service to their husband, created a social hierarchy, and–above all–fostered loyalty and obedience to Japan.

A similar relationship of women in service to men continued to solidify during the Meiji Period (1868–1912) when the monarchy rebranded the female empress and the male emperor as the dominant example of a male/female relationship. Displayed on the national scale, this relationship sought to frame the wife as subordinate, supportive, distant, and as the ultimate counterpart to the husband. Inspired by the model of the imperial household, Japan embraced this idealized vision of a male/female relationship which was later solidified in the 1970s salaryman/housewife relationship and spatialized in modernist structures like the NCT.

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Brinton, Women and the Economic Miracle, 107.

Molony, Theiss, & Choi, Gender in Modern East Asia, 418.


Rejecting Women in the Nakagin Capsule Tower

Societal norms, as previously discussed, dictated that wives of salarymen were to be in the home and responsible for domestic labor. Middle-class women, especially the wives of salarymen, were not expected to work. Transferring the role of the housewife to a capsule within the NCT, the wife was unable to fulfill societal expectations. While early and contemporary feminist scholars continue to agree that gender is socially constructed, feminist urban scholars and sociologists also agree that space is socially constructed. According to Henri Lefebvre, spaces reflect social norms and embody gender relations. The NCT’s compact design did not functionally accommodate the housewife’s childcare expectations. Middle-class societal norms dictated that salarymen’s wives perform daily childcare in the home. Children who were not at school age were also confined to the household with the mother during the day, and their activities were dependent on what she had access to. Utopian housing models throughout the twentieth century considered this arrangement, adding various facilities to housing models that allowed women to both stimulate their children through physical activity and remain close to home. For instance, Le Corbusier’s Unité d’Habitation in Marseilles, France (1952), was an early example of a utopian living model that suited middle-class families and prioritized an in-house childcare facility, playground, swimming pool, and roof terrace.

The NCT contained no social spaces or childcare facilities, suggesting that the space only wished to accommodate men. Earlier utopian housing models considered the need for childcare facilities. In-house childcare, playgrounds, swimming pools, communal spaces, and roof terraces allowed women to provide childcare outside of the home while remaining nearby. Because no such facilities existed in the NCT, the housewife may be tempted to seek childcare or social facilities within the city. However, the NCT’s location in the business district limited access to public parks, museums, and social spaces. While the housewife may be tempted to seek childcare or social facilities within the city, the location of the NCT in the business district limits access to public parks, museums, and social spaces. The NCT failed to provide facilities and women who sought equivalent accommodations were often held back by the threats of urban life.

Sociologist Anne Imamura discusses the challenges and anxieties middle-class housewives faced while living in Tokyo’s urban apartment complexes with children during 1977–1978. While urban modes of transportation were a particularly common challenge with children, the housewives mainly expressed fear over the perceived “dangers” of urban life due to the dominating male population. In particular, a fear of one’s physical safety and the threat of sexual violence kept women from not only pursuing employment, but visiting urban areas.

Pay inequality further discouraged women from joining the workforce. The few women who did occupy positions within the corporate world remained limited to supporting administrative roles with no real path to a higher position. Women gained economic power and public presence through these roles, but nowhere near enough to challenge the male-dominated environment. Together, this multitude of fears inhibited how women interacted with the city and prevented them from pursuing employment and outside social activities.

An initial sketch of the capsule’s design may suggest how Kurokawa understood women’s role within the space [Figure 6]. This image, produced at the beginning stages of the NCT’s design, shows an interior sketch of a

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35 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 68.


capsule and the inner hallway leading to the capsule’s entrance. A man is pictured reclining on the bed, his bare feet stretched outward and his hands behind his head as it rests upon a pillow. In the hallway, a woman walks up a set of stairs to presumably enter the capsule while wearing a dress fully covering her body and carrying a purse.

Both figures likely exist as tools to scale the viewer’s perception, but the woman’s behavior and location is markedly different from the man’s, showing a clear gender division. The woman is not enjoying the space like the man whose hands rest behind his head and spread out across the bed in a relaxed position. She is not even occupying the capsule and is depicted climbing the stairs rather than as present in the living space. It is unlikely that Kurokawa, under the gendered expectations of the 1970s, would have represented the woman lying in bed, avoidant of any domestic duties, in the way the male is depicted.

Conclusion

The salaryman/housewife relationship persisted as a perceived attainable middle-class dynamic in Japan until the 1990s when Japan’s economic crash changed social standards around who could work and caused Kurokawa, Metabolists, and Japanese modern architects to once again rethink urban housing. The NCT in the 1990s economy became obsolete and impractical as a place solely for salarymen which led to it being marketed for other uses beyond domestic space. It took a financial disaster for the NCT to advertise its space to other populations outside of the salaryman. When new residents did appear in the 1990s and 2000s, many of whom were female visual artists and musicians, they drastically changed the space’s defining elements, removing built-in cabinets and outdated technology. In many cases, residents removed the bed to accommodate dedicated studio spaces.

Kurokawa believed the NCT, as a utopian architecture, possessed the capacity to improve urban life. However, it preserved the salaryman/housewife relationship that maintained normative gender roles and prevented Japan from socially evolving to include women in their workforce. Thus, institutionalizing the legitimacy of gender inequality on a new modern architecture expected to rebuild Japan.

Metabolist philosophy adhered so closely to biological, mathematical, and scientific theories that gender went largely ignored as an element to consider by architects chiefly interested in challenging modernist theories, forms, and concepts. Too often modern utopian architectural projects respond to formal elements like material accessibility, mass production, and efficiency. Yet, they fail to anticipate changing societal relationships. The NCT complies with decades of institutional thought that restricts women to the home and maintains male power in the public sphere. The Nakagin Capsule Tower reveals how the built environment possessed the power to detract from women’s opportunities outside of the home during the 1970s, affecting how women lived their lives and the range of choices and possibilities open to them.

INVISIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE: REINFORCING POST-WAR GENDER INEQUALITY IN TOKYO’S NAKAGIN CAPSULE TOWER

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Figure 1: Kisho Kurokawa, Nakagin Capsule Tower, Tokyo, Japan, 1970-1972. Courtesy of Wiki Commons.
Figure 2: Kisho Kurokawa Architect & Associates, Interior design of capsule, Tokyo, Japan, 1970. Courtesy of Zhongjie Lin.

Figure 3: Kenzo Tange, Plan for Tokyo, 1960—Toward a Structural Reorganization, Tokyo, Japan, 1960. Courtesy of ArchEyes.
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Figure 4: Kenzo Tange, Hiroshima Peace Memorial, Tokyo, Japan, 1945, photo by Yasuhiro Ishimoto. Courtesy of The Museum of Fine Arts Houston.

Figure 5: Folding Screen Depicting Only a Male Population at Edo Castle, Edo, Japan, 1847. Courtesy of National Museum of Natural History.
Figure 6: Kisho Kurokawa Architect & Associates, Original sketch by Kurokawa of the interior capsule design, Tokyo, Japan, 1970. Courtesy of Zhongjie Lin.