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Wendy Salmond, Editor



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Editor's Greeting

We dedicate this third issue of the *Journal of Icon Studies* to the memory of Gordon B. Lankton (1931–2021). Through the Museum of Russian Icons, which he founded in Clinton, MA in 2006, Gordon generously shared his deep love of icons with an ever-expanding audience and did much to further the appreciation and study of Russian culture.

Fittingly in this year of a global pandemic, the current issue opens with Kirstin Noreen's examination of cult images in Rome during occurrences of disease and their association with miraculous healing and intercessory power. Mateusz J. Ferens explores the theological meaning and function of decorative shaped text in Byzantine manuscripts and other media. Drawing on Alexei Lidov's concept of the "spatial icon," Kathleen Scollins reexamines the final chapters of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* within the context of the Palm Sunday Donkey Walk ritual. Finally, Marcus C. Levitt analyzes two key pairs of scenes in *War and Peace* in which Tolstoy explicitly invokes Napoleonic visual images and undercuts them by juxtaposing them to Russian icons. *JIS* employs a double-blind peer-review process that relies on the expertise of numerous reviewers. We thank each of these anonymous readers for their generosity. We also thank our book reviewers for taking on the important task of evaluating new publications in the field.

Once again, Mary Delaney deserves unstinting praise for her expertise in designing *JIS* as an open-access, born-digital resource. Thanks are also due to Melanie Trottier for skillfully attending to the work of copyediting. *JIS*'s distinguished Editorial Board has continued to provide support and guidance, as have Kent Russell, Executive Director of the Museum of Russian Icons, and the Museum's Board of Trustees. We are delighted to announce that Dr. Lana Sloutsky, the Museum's Curator of Collections and Exhibitions, has joined the *JIS* as its Executive Editor.

We invite you to consider *JIS* as a venue for your own publications. In addition to longer scholarly articles, we welcome translations of primary sources and seminal texts of interest to a wider readership; shorter pieces on museum and private collections and on individual icons; and book and exhibition reviews.

We are now accepting submissions for Volume 4, to appear in Winter 2021. Guidelines may be found here. [<https://www.museumofrussianicons.org/publication-guidelines-2/>]

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Salus populi: Icons and the Protection of the People

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Kirstin Noreen

Salus populi: Icons and the Protection of the People

Abstract

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 global pandemic, Pope Francis prayed before an icon of the Virgin and Child in Santa Maria Maggiore and a crucifix in San Marcello, two images associated with miraculous healing and intercessory power. He subsequently had the icon and crucifix moved to St. Peter's where they flanked the pope as he offered a special *Urbi et Orbi* blessing on March 27, 2020. To contextualize Francis's use of an icon during the coronavirus outbreak, this article will trace the role of cult images in Rome during occurrences of disease and will briefly discuss the specific importance of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon for the early Jesuit order.

Keywords: Rome, Icon, Gregory, Plague, *Salus Populi Romani*, Jesuits, Pope Francis

On Sunday, March 15, 2020, Pope Francis defied the imposed coronavirus lockdown in Italy and left the Vatican to make a private visit to two holy images in Rome: an icon of the Virgin and Child in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore and a large wooden crucifix in the church of San Marcello (fig. 1, fig. 2).¹ These images have been associated with the protection of the Roman people during times of war, plague, and famine. The Marian icon was credited with saving the city from plague during the late sixth-century pontificate of Gregory I, while the crucifix was miraculously preserved during a fire in 1519 and was associated with eradicating the plague from Rome in 1522.² Announced not only in local newspapers, but also around the world, the pope's prayers for a "coronavirus miracle" were timely and a comfort to many during the uncertain early days of the worldwide COVID-19 outbreak. According to the Vatican, Francis "prayed for an end to the pandemic and also for the sick, their families and health providers and workers keeping pharmacies and food stores open amid a national lockdown."³



Fig. 1 Pope Francis praying before the Icon of the Virgin and Child in Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, Italy, March 15, 2020 (photo: Getty Images) Pope Francis praying.jpg



Fig. 2 Pope Francis on the Via del Corso approaching the church of San Marcello, Rome, Italy, March 15, 2020

Francis's willingness to venture outside the confines of the Vatican and break with the national Italian lockdown to pray before the venerable icon and crucifix illustrates the power of cult images during times of distress. In the medieval and early modern periods, icons were particularly associated with apotropaic powers because of their perceived success during earlier, difficult times, as detailed in legendary accounts. This article will discuss how specific images in Rome came to be associated with the power to protect and heal; although icons were used in a variety of ways—to gain protection from invaders, to celebrate annual liturgical feasts such as that of the Assumption, or to demonstrate personal devotion—this article will focus on times of illness as a way to understand Francis's noteworthy visits to Santa Maria Maggiore and San Marcello.⁴ Francis's special devotion to the Marian icon in Santa Maria Maggiore will further be considered in relation to the particular role that the image has played for the Jesuit order, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such an examination of icons in Rome will illustrate the long-standing tradition of invoking those cult images during times of suffering or uncertainty, the hoped-for deliverance from outbreaks of disease that the Virgin Mary was believed to offer, and the continuing relevance of icons during the contemporary global pandemic.

The Queen of Heaven: Protecting Rome in the Time of Plague

While it is unknown when icons were first used in penitential processions meant to solicit God's mercy during times of contagion, legends developed that describe Pope Gregory's (590–604) processional use of Marian icons during a late sixth-century plague in Rome. By early 590 the city had been devastated by floods, Pope Pelagius II (579–590) had succumbed to the plague, and citizens were fearful for their own lives. To solicit the intercession of the Virgin Mary, the newly elected pope, Gregory I (later known as Gregory the Great), organized a seven-part procession—the *letania septiformis*.⁵ Residents of the entire city, regardless of economic, social, or political standing, gathered in seven groups to depart from seven churches and process simultaneously to meet at the church of Santa Maria Maggiore. By the ninth century, Gregory's *letania septiformis* was conflated with the *letania maior*, a procession that went from San Lorenzo in Lucina to the church of St. Peter.⁶ In the first half of the thirteenth century, the legend of Gregory the Great's

procession was modified further, as detailed in the *Liber Epilogorum* (c. 1236) of Bartholomew of Trent: as the procession approached the ancient tomb of Hadrian on the way to St. Peter's, the archangel Michael appeared atop the mausoleum; sheathing his blood-stained sword, he indicated the end of the plague that had taken the lives of many Romans.⁷ In his description of the procession in the *Legenda aurea* (c. 1270), Jacobus de Voragine mentions for the first time the inclusion of a Marian image: as it was carried towards Hadrian's mausoleum, the turbulent air of the city was purified, angels appeared singing the hymn of *Regina Coeli*, and the archangel sheathed his sword above the ancient tomb, which was thereafter known as Castel Sant'Angelo, the Castle of the Angel.⁸ The *Legenda aurea* further associates the Marian image with the hand of the Evangelist St. Luke, who was believed to have painted the portrait directly from life. Icons associated with St. Luke, often completed through miraculous means, were considered authentic and true portraits of the Virgin and Christ.⁹ The venerable association with Luke as well as the prestige associated with helping to protect and heal the city of Rome during contagion encouraged a competition among Marian icons – and the communities that supported them.



Fig. 3 Icon of the Virgin and Child following the 2018 restoration, Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, Italy (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons; licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0)

An icon's association with Gregory's legendary procession was important both spiritually and economically, for that image had potential thaumaturgic power for future contagions, thus increasing pilgrim traffic and donations through the icon's perceived ability to heal. The proliferation of icon copies, especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, led to a further competition among cult images; the promotion of an icon's divine origin and legendary history helped to proclaim and substantiate that representation's power. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the late Middle Ages several icons in Rome were associated with stopping the sixth-century plague.¹⁰ The most important of these images was the Marian icon from Santa Maria Maggiore (fig. 3), an icon that had a special status through its association with the Esquiline basilica, the first Roman church dedicated to Mary. According to legend, the Virgin caused snow to miraculously fall on the Esquiline Hill on August 5, leading to the foundation of the basilica at that site under Pope Liberius (352–366).¹¹ The Santa Maria Maggiore icon also appeared in the yearly Assumption festivities (August 15), during which the miraculous icon of Christ,

contained in the Sancta Sanctorum of the Lateran Palace, was processed through the city streets to arrive at dawn at Santa Maria Maggiore, where the Son encountered his Mother.¹² In relation to the icon's believed intercessory power, Guillaume Durand indicated that the cult image had been carried in Gregory's procession and was responsible for clearing the infected and turbulent air; according to *Durand's Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* (c. 1286), three angels sang *Regina coeli laetare alleluia*, and following a prayer by the pope, the archangel appeared above Hadrian's tomb and indicated the cessation of the plague.¹³



Fig. 4. Icon of the Virgin and Child, Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome, Italy (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons; licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike)

Even if an icon was not directly associated with Gregory's famous procession, its power could still be validated through its use in subsequent plague outbreaks, as was the case with the Marian icon in Santa Maria del Popolo (fig. 4). In 1231, Gregory IX (1227–1241), along with cardinals and the Roman people, conducted a public procession with that icon in order to request God's intervention during a great pestilence that had ravaged the city.¹⁴ Following the Virgin's intercession and the elimination of the plague, the icon was placed on the high altar of Santa Maria del Popolo where it continued to perform miracles and was increasingly associated with indulgences.¹⁵

The increasing importance of the mendicant orders in the thirteenth century may have inspired revisions in the Gregory plague legend, as other Marian icons laid claim to the apotropaic powers associated with that pope's procession.¹⁶ In his early fourteenth-century *Historia ecclesiastica nova*, Ptolemy of Lucca credits the image known as the San Sisto icon (fig. 5) with helping to purify Rome's poor air quality and, following its arrival at Hadrian's tomb, with ending the sixth-century pestilence in the city.¹⁷ The San Sisto icon, a representation of the intercessory Virgin or Madonna advocata, had a venerable history in Rome stemming back to at least the ninth century. The location of the image within the cloistered space of a Dominican female religious community on the Via Appia from 1221 on likely limited its circulation; the more controlled access to the icon may have caused other cult images in Rome to increase in popularity.¹⁸ For example, a copy of the San Sisto icon housed in the Franciscan



Fig. 5 Icon of San Sisto, Santa Maria del Rosario, Rome, Italy (photo: author)



Fig. 6 Icon of the Virgin, Santa Maria in Aracoeli, Rome, Italy (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons; licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0)

church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli on the Capitoline Hill in the center of Rome quickly began to eclipse the fame of its model (fig. 6). The Aracoeli icon was also associated with the Gregory procession, perhaps already by the late thirteenth century, when the Franciscan pope, Nicholas III (1277–1280), is credited with sponsoring the construction and decoration of a chapel at Castel Sant’Angelo to honor the archangel. There, according to an anonymous source in the fifteenth century, frescoes illustrated the events of Gregory’s procession and included an inscription naming the icon as that from Santa Maria in Aracoeli.¹⁹

While early textual sources related to the Aracoeli icon date primarily to the second half of the fourteenth century, its power as an advocate for the Roman people was recognized by Cola di Rienzo in 1347 and reconfirmed during the plague of 1348.²⁰ Cola di Rienzo, crowned as Tribune in Santa Maria Maggiore in November 1347 after a victory over the Colonna family, went to the Capitoline basilica where he offered his staff, crown, and olive branches to the church’s icon in recognition of the Virgin’s power to protect the Roman citizens.²¹ In the following year, when the Black Death ravaged Rome, the Marian icon was taken through the city streets in a ceremony that would have recalled Pope Gregory’s procession. The perceived thaumaturgic power of the Aracoeli icon had an immediate economic effect for the Capitoline basilica. Five thousand florins offered as alms to the image by the Roman people financed the construction of the staircase leading to the west facade of the church. That staircase, started on October 25, 1348 as indicated in an inscription on the building’s facade, served as a monumental ex-voto and provided a grand entrance to the church, which had previously been accessed primarily from the Piazza del Campidoglio through a southern door.²²

Although the ex-voto staircase leading to Santa Maria in Aracoeli would have been a visible reminder of the efficacious protection of that church’s icon during the fourteenth-century plague outbreak, the competition among Marian cult images in Rome did not diminish. An icon’s association with healing—most frequently linked to the Gregory legend—would have potentially offered financial and spiritual benefits for the community caring for that image. In this way, it is not surprising that the Marian image used by Gregory continued to be a point of debate. For example, Fra Mariano of Florence summarized the conflicting opinions related to the specific image that participated in Gregory’s procession in his *Itinerarium urbis Romae* (1517) and offered evidence to support the icon of the Virgin found in Santa Maria in Aracoeli. Mariano noted that the canons of Santa Maria Maggiore and the Dominicans of San Sisto similarly claimed that their icons of the Virgin had been taken in procession by Pope Gregory.²³ Although Mariano, as a Brother Minor who stayed with the Franciscans at Santa Maria in Aracoeli during his time in Rome, demonstrates a bias towards the Capitoline basilica and its holy image, he states that “God alone knows which is the true icon.”²⁴ A marble disc contained in Santa Maria in Aracoeli, however, was believed to display the footprints of the archangel Michael, which miraculously were impressed by the ethereal being at the time of his appearance to Pope Gregory.²⁵ The presence of that miraculous relic in the Franciscan basilica offered indisputable proof for Mariano that the Santa Maria in Aracoeli icon was crucial in protecting the city during the sixth-century plague.

The Italian peninsula continued to be assailed by various contagions in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and, as before, various icons in the city were associated with the power to heal.²⁶ As evidence of the continued faith placed in an icon's potential for miraculous intervention, Sixtus IV (1471–1484) celebrated the Mass and offered supplications and prayers before the Marian icon in Santa Maria del Popolo when deadly fevers caused the deaths of many in Rome; following the pope's visit, the city's air quality immediately improved and the sick were healed.²⁷ During a particularly bad outbreak of the plague in Rome in 1485, Innocent VIII (1484–1492) took an icon from the church of Sant'Agostino to the church of San Pietro in Vincoli on August 1. Over the next three days, the icon passed from San Pietro to Santi Dodici Apostoli, San Silvestro in Capite, San Lorenzo in Lucina, and Santi Celso e Giuliano.²⁸ Following those stops, the icon continued its journey, passing from church to church throughout the various *rioni* (districts) of Rome with the devotion, fervor, and number of the faithful increasing daily. By the time of the feast of the Assumption on August 15, the icon had arrived at St. Peter's, where solemn celebrations continued to bestow great honor on the Virgin. On August 21, the image left Saint Peter's to be taken to the Pigna neighborhood and was accompanied with great reverence by clerics, confraternities, magistrates, and the *caporioni*, the official leaders of Rome's districts. Stopping in Santa Maria ad Martyres (the Pantheon), the Virgin was proclaimed the "Liberatrice di Roma, Maria Vergine delle Vergini, e Madre di tutti" (Liberator of Rome, Mary Virgin of Virgins, and Mother of all) and the icon was subsequently returned to its home in Sant'Agostino.²⁹ In thanks for the Virgin's intercession and the halting of the plague, the icon was placed in a new, marble relief frame.³⁰

In the context of the Catholic Reformation in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a proliferation of guides to Rome, catalogues of Marian images, and focused histories of specific icons reinforced the sacred topography of the city and documented the use and continuing relevance of cult images.³¹ In these texts, the venerable origins of icons, which were often associated with the hand of St. Luke and miraculous intervention, as well as the power of miracle-working images to heal and protect helped to establish Mary as the pre-eminent intercessor while responding to Protestant criticism of the cult of images and the cult of the Virgin. For example, the Jesuit Peter Canisius (1521–1597) in his *De Maria Virgine incomparabili* (1577) recorded that the icon of Santa Maria Maggiore had, in the past, answered prayers and conquered pestilence, such as the plague during the pontificate of Gregory the Great.³² In the context of the Catholic Reformation, when Mary's efficacy as an intercessor and the value of icons were challenged by Protestants, such an account traced the long-standing history of the image in Rome, provided evidence for its apotropaic power, and supported its devotional use in the present, for the icon's previous miraculous performance was a manifestation of its divine power.³³

Sources dating to the post-Tridentine period continued to suggest that multiple Marian icons were carried during Gregory's sixth-century procession, allowing the credit for saving the city to be shared among various images and their respective communities. For example, according to Ottavio Panciroli (1554–1624) and Andrea Vittorelli (1580–1653), in addition to the icon of

Santa Maria Maggiore, other Marian images such as those from Santa Maria in Aracoeli and Santa Maria in Portico had also accompanied the procession.³⁴ Texts written by Fioravante Martinelli (1599–1677) and Francesco Maria Torrigio (1580–1649) on the history of the San Sisto icon instead claim that image’s participation in helping to save Rome from the sixth-century plague.³⁵ Although demonstrating the historic and cult significance of Marian images in Rome, the texts by Panciroli, Vittorelli, Martinelli, and Torrigio served various purposes. The antiquarian Panciroli provided general descriptions of the “sacred treasures” of the city in his devotional guidebook to Rome.³⁶ The theologian Vittorelli instead focused on the Pauline Chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore, which was completed three years prior to the publication of his text and housed the church’s Marian icon at its ritual center.³⁷ The texts by Martinelli and Torrigio, monographs on the San Sisto icon, demonstrate an interest in documenting that cult image through a careful analysis of historical texts.³⁸ All the texts, nonetheless, reinforced the sacred nature of Rome and the prestige of the religious communities and churches that housed and cared for miracle-working cult images.

Although the often competing narratives related to the miracle-working activities of Marian images reaffirmed that various Roman icons had the potential to defend against contagion, the promotion of those cult images during periods of outbreak could also increase the risk of further spreading disease. Crowded displays of devotion developed a tension between the protective and healing power of the cult image and the inherent risks to public health that communal displays of popular piety might create. In the seventeenth century, such gatherings defied contemporary quarantines and plague-time city ordinances and necessitated restrictions on processions, the display of miracle-working cult images, and church access, as was the case during the devastating plague that ravaged Rome in 1656–1657 under Pope Alexander VII (1655–1667).³⁹ Church authorities were clearly aware of these competing imperatives: out of an attempt to reduce the mixing of the healthy and the sick, the pope placed limitations on visits to a Marian icon conserved in the church of San Gregorio. He additionally had a private cult image that was controlled by the Boncompagni family moved to San Paolo fuori le Mura, where the number of visitors was lower due to the more remote location outside the city walls.⁴⁰

Even with these attempts to suppress the crowds that cult images attracted, and to manage the related possible danger to public health, the perceived power of icons to potentially heal the city nonetheless continued in 1656, as seen with the propagandistic promotion of a *champlevé* image of the Virgin and Child from Santa Maria in Portico. According to Vittorelli, the image not only had been carried during the procession of Gregory, but also had been taken through the city during other contagions at the time of Popes Callistus III (1455–1458) and Hadrian VI (1522–1523); piously processed through Rome, the image was able to liberate the city from the “fatal scourge” and “deadly contagion.”⁴¹ In 1656, the Clerics Regular of Santa Maria in Portico promoted the church’s feast day celebration on July 17 by circulating leaflets that described earlier miracles performed by the image as a way of demonstrating its ability to protect the city from the contemporary plague.⁴² The increasing popularity of the icon inspired great crowds of pious visi-

tors, which necessitated an armed guard to maintain order, and eventually led to the enforced closure of the church to stem the further spread of disease. The Roman Senate strategically requested permission from Alexander VII to offer a vow for the construction of a new church to honor the image and provide thanks for the Virgin's intercession and the end of the plague.⁴³ That new church, Santa Maria in Campitelli, was designed by Carlo Rainaldi (1611-1691) with a high altar by Giovanni Antonio de Rossi (1616-1695) (fig. 7); as suggested by Sheila Barker, the architecture of the ecclesiastical space and the display of the reframed Marian image directly addressed concerns related to "social distancing" and sanitization that would help to neutralize the air-borne plague.⁴⁴ Specifically, the light-filled sanctuary, the white plaster walls and ceilings, and the particular display of the Marian icon—best appreciated close to the entrance to the church—were believed to help diminish the spread of disease and limit crowding around the cult image.



Fig. 7 Santa Maria in Campitelli, interior, Rome, Italy (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons; licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0)

***Urbi et Orbi:* The Santa Maria Maggiore Icon, the Jesuits, and COVID-19**

Although numerous icons and cult images in Rome have historically been associated with the power to heal, Pope Francis has shown special devotion to the icon of the Virgin and Child currently contained in the Pauline Chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore. In this way, Francis has not only followed in a tradition of popes like Gregory the Great, but has also reflected the longstanding Jesuit dedication to this particular Marian image. By reproducing and distributing copies of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon, the Jesuits helped to disseminate an image that had been associated with propitiatory processions in Rome and had played an important role in the Assumption procession.

The Assumption procession, the most significant Roman civic-religious celebration, took place annually from the ninth century until 1566.⁴⁵ From the late medieval period, the Assumption procession was overseen primarily by civic officials, the Confraternity of the Salvatore, the Con-

fraternity of the *Raccomandati* (later *Gonfalone*), and private citizens; the pope, when he participated in the ceremony, would celebrate Mass in Santa Maria Maggiore. After the all-night procession and the arrival of the Lateran icon of Christ at the Esquiline basilica, the Marian icon was transported from its tabernacle in Santa Maria Maggiore to the piazza in front of the church where Mother and Son greeted one another as the images ceremonially “bowed.”⁴⁶ By the mid-sixteenth century, the nocturnal Assumption celebration was increasingly characterized by violent incidents and disagreements between the Confraternity of the Salvatore and the Lateran canons, which likely contributed to Pius V’s (1566–1572) decision to cancel the annual procession in 1566. By the end of the sixteenth century, further restrictions were placed on the Santa Maria Maggiore icon, as demonstrated in 1597 when Clement VIII confirmed that “the icon cannot be removed from, and must always remain in, S. Maria Maggiore, in the care of the canons and the Confraternity of the *Gonfalone*.”⁴⁷ By 1613, however, the icon was transferred to a tabernacle in Paul V’s newly constructed funerary chapel, where its access was controlled by papal keys, rather than the confraternal brothers or the Roman people.⁴⁸

Although the Santa Maria Maggiore icon’s movement was increasingly restricted from the second half of the sixteenth century, copies—frequently sponsored by the Jesuits—helped to circulate the Marian image far beyond the confines of Rome to a more global context. Francis Borgia (1510–72), the third general of the Jesuit order from 1565 to 1572, initiated a campaign to reproduce the icon with the purpose of using those copies as missionary tools and as instruments of propaganda in the fight against the Protestants.⁴⁹ With Pius V’s permission in 1569, the icon was copied and had a widespread and immediate distribution to Jesuit educational institutions; to missionaries traveling as far as South America, Africa, and China; and to numerous crowned heads and high-ranking ecclesiastics across Europe who received the reproductions as diplomatic gifts.⁵⁰ Based on the Roman original in Santa Maria Maggiore that was believed to have been painted by the Evangelist Luke, the reproductions were valued as true portraits of the Virgin and sometimes became images worthy of special honor and veneration, as was the case with a copy sent to the first Jesuit college in Germany located in Ingolstadt.⁵¹ While copies of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon were distributed globally, the original in Rome only infrequently left its chapel in the Esquiline basilica. The extensive copying and global dispersion of reproductions of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon, especially by the Jesuits, spread the international fame of the Marian image at the same time that the original in Rome was hidden from public view.

The fact that the rare public appearances of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon were linked to the earlier tradition of plague processions is, therefore, significant. In the context of the modern period and the advent of a rational scientific age, such displays demonstrate the survival of religious beliefs, popular piety, and the tradition of propitiatory processions. More than two centuries after the icon had been transferred to and enclosed within the Pauline Chapel, the cult image was removed from the basilica to take part in processions related to the outbreaks of cholera in 1835, when the disease entered the Italian peninsula, and in 1837, when it arrived in Rome.⁵² The cholera processions not only mark the first time in over two hundred years that the

icon had been removed from Santa Maria Maggiore, but also demonstrate a new negotiation of technology, public health, and devotional practice. This can be seen by comparing how the 1835 and 1837 processions were handled. In 1835, Pope Gregory XVI (1831–1846) ordered a processional itinerary intended to evoke the sixth-century procession of his papal namesake, Gregory the Great: the Marian icon was taken from the Esquiline basilica through the streets of Rome until a torrential downpour necessitated a stop at the Chiesa Nuova, where the icon remained for seven days prior to proceeding towards Castel Sant'Angelo and St. Peter's.⁵³ The path of the procession linked various sites of Marian devotion in the city and led to reports of numerous miracles performed by other images of the Virgin. When cases of cholera appeared in Rome in 1837, especially in the Borgo and Trastevere, the icon was again borne in procession, but this time followed a route that avoided the more afflicted regions of the city by the Tiber River in favor of less densely populated neighborhoods. In this way, a concern for public health and contemporary theories of disease transmission prompted adjustments to the traditional processional path to St. Peter's that had been used in 1835. The celebration of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon, as well as smaller processions of other Marian images through well-illuminated streets, nonetheless reaffirmed the salvific power of the Virgin Mary while also asserting the authority of the pope.⁵⁴ Although alterations in the two propitiatory processions of 1835 and 1837 took into account the changing conditions of the cholera outbreak in Rome, the presence of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon on both occasions would have evoked devotional displays associated with the medieval Church. Gregory XVI's appeal to the thaumaturgic power of the Marian cult image is characteristic of the more conservative and traditionalist approach of his pontificate and reflects the continuing significance of popular piety in the modern period. The direct participation of Gregory XVI in the processions would have additionally reinforced the spiritual and political authority of the papacy in relation to devotional practice.⁵⁵

Following the cholera procession of 1837, the Santa Maria Maggiore icon remained within the Pauline Chapel for nearly the next one hundred years, a period when the Church in Rome strove for a careful balance of scholarship, ecclesiastical authority, and rationalist thought. In the nineteenth century, devotional images, street shrines, and other objects of popular devotion were sometimes sacrificed in favor of civic modernization.⁵⁶ Discrepancies between Christian theology and new advances in science and philosophy furthermore led to an increased questioning of Church doctrine. The response of the papacy, as demonstrated in encyclicals like Leo XIII's *Providentissimus Deus* (1893), was to defend the infallibility of scripture.⁵⁷ At the same time, the papacy encouraged critical investigation and the documentation of early Christianity and medieval history by opening the Vatican Archives in 1881; through archaeological research, such as the catacomb exploration of Giovanni de Rossi (1822–1894); and in the documentation of relics and holy objects, like those in the Sancta Sanctorum.⁵⁸ In this environment characterized by a historical analysis of the Christian past coupled with fears of modernism, images like the Santa Maria Maggiore icon continued to offer solace, as demonstrated in the title granted to the image in 1870: *Salus Populi Romani*, the Salvation [or Health] of the Roman People.⁵⁹ Underscoring both the historic and continuing communal significance of the image, the *Salus Populi Romani*

title associates the image with the security, safety, and wellbeing of the city and its citizens from both a religious and a political perspective.⁶⁰ With the formation of the Italian state in 1870 and the withdrawal of the pope to the Vatican, the promise of safety and security would have certainly been sought by the papacy, especially as the rights of the pope and the ownership of cultural patrimony in Italy were questioned.

Following the Lateran Treaty of 1929, which established papal sovereignty over the Vatican and papal control of extraterritorial property including Santa Maria Maggiore, the icon of the Esquiline basilica received renewed attention, primarily as part of Marian celebrations. The image was restored in 1931 and processed on May 10 of the same year in honor of the fifteenth centenary of the Council of Ephesus.⁶¹ The image was again taken in procession from Santa Maria Maggiore to St. Peter's at the conclusion of the "Crusade for a Better World" on December 8, 1949 and at the proclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption on November 1, 1950, both under Pius XII (1939–1958).⁶² The icon also played an important role during the papally proclaimed international Marian years of 1953–1954 and 1987–1988; it was during these celebrations that popular devotion was shown to the Virgin through religious processions and pilgrimage to Marian sanctuaries.⁶³ At the conclusion of the Marian year in 1954, the Santa Maria Maggiore icon was taken in procession to St. Peter's where Pius XII added crowns to the heads of Christ and the Virgin as part of the celebration of the Queenship of Mary, as expressed in the encyclical *Ad caeli reginam*, To the Queen of Heaven, issued on October 11, 1954.⁶⁴ In the Marian Year 1987–1988, the Santa Maria Maggiore image joined other Marian icons from the city as part of an exhibition, *De vera effigie Mariae*, that was held in the Esquiline basilica.⁶⁵

In more recent years, Francis, like many previous popes, has promoted Marian devotion through feast day celebrations, pilgrimage, Apostolic Blessings, and special Masses in honor of the Virgin.⁶⁶ The first Jesuit pope has, however, shown particular devotion to the Santa Maria Maggiore icon since the start of his pontificate, reflecting his order's longstanding veneration for that image. Francis has visited and prayed before the icon in Santa Maria Maggiore on numerous occasions, including his first public excursion as pontiff on March 14, 2013, a day after his election as pope.⁶⁷ On September 7, 2013, Francis had the icon brought to St. Peter's and processed by four Swiss guards through the square as part of a prayer vigil for the safeguarding of the people of Syria and those threatened by violence throughout the world.⁶⁸ Before and after international apostolic visits, Francis has prayed before the icon in Santa Maria Maggiore, as he has done prior to traveling to Georgia, Mozambique, Madagascar, and Mauritius and following trips to destinations such as Morocco and Romania. According to the Holy See Press Office, Francis prays before the Marian icon to "[invoke] the Virgin Mary's protection on his travels and upon the people he will visit in the country."⁶⁹ In 2017, the Vatican Museums restored the icon, returning the image to the Pauline Chapel where Francis celebrated Mass on January 28, 2018, a day that marked the feast celebration of the icon's translation to the chapel in 1613.⁷⁰ While crediting the Vatican restorers, Father Raymond J. de Souza noted that, "in truth, it is the Holy Father himself who has restored *Salus Populi Romani* to prominence in Rome. Its artistic restoration followed a

devotional resurgence led by Pope Francis, beginning on his first full day as pope.”⁷¹

Given Francis’s special interest in the image combined with its historic association with healing during times of contagion, it is not surprising that the pope would turn to the Santa Maria Maggiore icon at the outbreak of COVID-19. With the increasing threat of the coronavirus and the limitations of movement placed on 60 million Italians announced by Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte on March 8, 2020, the icon in Santa Maria Maggiore, along with the miraculous crucifix in San Marcello, was invoked by Francis for its propitiatory power. On March 15, Francis conducted a “mini-pilgrimage,” traveling by car from the Vatican to Santa Maria Maggiore, where he spent twenty minutes in prayer before the basilica’s Marian icon (see fig. 1).⁷² From the Esquiline Hill, Francis then went to San Marcello where he prayed in front of the miraculous wooden crucifix that was credited with saving Rome from a plague in 1522. A photo, showing the pope before the icon of the Virgin and Child with the accompanying hashtag “#praytogether,” publicized Francis’s visit to Santa Maria Maggiore on his papal Instagram account to 6.6 million followers. Other photographs, released by Vatican Media and widely distributed on Twitter, capture Francis’s solitary approach to San Marcello, depicting the pope walking along the empty Via del Corso at the heart of a locked-down city center (see fig. 2).⁷³



Fig. 8 Pope Francis, *Urbi et Orbi* Blessing, St. Peter's, Rome, Italy, March 27, 2020 (photo: Getty Images)

flanked the pope as he offered prayers outside the basilica and a blessing *Urbi et Orbi* —“to the city and the world” (fig. 8).⁷⁵ A plenary indulgence was “granted to the faithful suffering from COVID-19 disease . . . as well as to health care workers, family members, and all those who in any capacity, including through prayer, care for them.”⁷⁶ Given the conditions of quarantine, the faithful could “unite spiritually through the media” in order to fulfill the specific conditions for the granting of the plenary indulgence.

The outbreak of COVID-19 has necessitated a widespread adoption of social network platforms

Less than two weeks later, on March 27, Francis delivered a special *Urbi et Orbi* blessing to an empty piazza in front of St. Peter's basilica; broadcast via Facebook, YouTube, television, and radio, the blessing normally reserved for Christmas Day and Easter Sunday directly addressed concerns over the spread of COVID-19.⁷⁴ The icon of Santa Maria Maggiore and the crucifix from San Marcello, removed from their chapels and brought to St. Peter's for that service,

and new media resources to connect with the faithful who have been isolated through social distancing, lockdowns, and quarantine. The Vatican has adjusted to the circumstances of the coronavirus: through live-streamed Easter Triduum liturgies offered inside an empty St. Peter's basilica; through an Exceptional Plenary Indulgence granted for a virtual pilgrimage to Lourdes conducted "via broadcast, live-stream, recorded television or radio program"; through the promotion of a "virtual parish" with a daily Mass broadcast on Facebook and YouTube that is celebrated by the pope in an empty chapel; or through the recitation of the Angelus prayer through video conferencing.⁷⁷ Just as the Jesuits used the printing press during the Catholic Reformation in the sixteenth century to support a global distribution of copies of devotional images, televised and livestreaming displays today provide an instantaneous dissemination of sacred art at a time when visiting cult centers in person may be impossible.⁷⁸ The prominent display and promotion of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon and the crucifix of San Marcello, two representations historically associated with miraculous healing, demonstrate the continuing significance and sacred power associated with devotional images during the coronavirus pandemic. The pope's use of these images as well as their online and televised distribution through the Holy See's national broadcaster, Vatican Media, have underscored their authority, legitimacy, and historic resonance.⁷⁹ At a time when new technology is being promoted to overcome social distance and to address devotional needs, images long associated with the miraculous eradication of disease continue to play a central role for the *salus populi*—for the welfare of the people.

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Notes

¹ See Philip Pullella, “Pope in Dramatic Visit to Empty Rome to Pray for End of Virus,” *Reuters*, March 15, 2020 (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-pope/pope-in-dramatic-visit-to-empty-rome-to-pray-for-end-of-virus-idUSKBN212094>, accessed March 16, 2020); Francis d’Emilio, “Pope Goes on Roman Walkabout, Prays for End to Pandemic,” *AP News*, March 15, 2020 (<https://apnews.com/e2ca795ac04b8038b80f259e1fc-207ca>, accessed March 20, 2020); Delia Gallagher, “Pope Francis Prays for a Coronavirus Miracle at ‘Plague’ Crucifix Church,” *CNN*, March 16, 2020 (<https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/16/europe/pope-francis-prayer-coronavirus-plague-crucifix-intl/index.html>, accessed March 16, 2020); *Vatican News*, “Pope Francis’ Twin Prayers for an ‘End to the Pandemic,’” *Vatican News*, March 15, 2020 (<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-03/pope-francis-mary-prayer-crucifix-coronavirus.html>, accessed March 16, 2020).

² The most extensive analysis of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon is found in Gerhard Wolf, *Salus populi romani: die Geschichte römischer Kultbilder im Mittelalter* (Weinheim: VCH Acta Humaniora, 1990). See also Pietro Amato, *De vera effigie Mariae. Antiche icone romane* (Milan and Rome: A. Mondadori, De Luca Edizioni d’Arte, 1988), 52–60; and Barbara Jatta, “Restaurata la Salus populi Romani,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, 158, no. 19, January 25, 2018 and http://www.vatican.va/various/basiliche/sm_maggiore/it/salus-populi-romani/salus-populi-romani-barbara-jatta-or_it.htm (accessed July 6, 2020). Measuring 117 x 79 cm, the ash and linden wood icon has been variably dated from the fifth century through the thirteenth century; a recent technical analysis and restoration by the Laboratorio di Restauro Pitture of the Vatican Museums suggests a date from the late ninth century through the early eleventh century, with the frame dating slightly later. The exact origins of the icon are unknown. For the poplar wood crucifix of San Marcello, see Carla Bertorello, Barbara Fabian, Angela Lo Monaco, and Elio Corona, “Il restauro del crocifisso di San Marcello a Roma. Conservazione ed esigenze di culto,” *Kermes* 14 (2001): 27–40; Kira Maye Albinsky, “Art, Ritual, and Reform: The Archconfraternity of the Holy Crucifix of San Marcello in Rome” (PhD diss., Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2017). The crucifix, measuring 1.92 x 1.94 m. (with the cross 2.63 by 1.99 m.), is associated with an anonymous fourteenth- to fifteenth-century sculptor. In addition to being used in propitiatory processions, the crucifix has also been transferred to St. Peter’s during Jubilee celebrations since the year 1600, most recently under John Paul II in 2000.

³ Pullella, “Pope in Dramatic Visit.”

⁴ For the processional use of icons in Rome and beyond, see Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

⁵ Early references to the *letania septiformis* occur in Gregory of Tours’ *Historiarum libri decem* and a sermon of Gregory I that announced the procession in 603; the procession is next mentioned by Paul the Deacon (second half of the eighth century) and John the Deacon (late ninth century). For the early sources related to Gregory’s procession, see Cesare D’Onofrio, *Castel S. Angelo e Borgo tra Roma e papato* (Rome: Romana Società editrice, 1978), 152–8; Wolf, *Salus populi romani*, 131–5; Margaret M. Andrews, “The *Laetaniae Septiformes* of Gregory I, S. Maria Maggiore and Early Marian Cult in Rome,” in *The Moving City: Processions, Passages and Promenades in Ancient Rome*, eds. Ida Ostenberg, Simon Malmberg, Jonas Björnebye (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 155–64; Jacob Latham, “Inventing Gregory ‘the Great’: Memory, Authority, and the Afterlives of the *Letania Septiformis*,” *Church History* 84 (2015): 1–31.

⁶ As described, for example, in the ninth-century *Sacramentarium Gregorianum* and the *Liber Pontificalis* life of Pope Leo III (795–816).

⁷ Bartholomew of Trent, *Liber epilogorum in gesta sanctorum*, ed. Emore Paoli (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2001), 119: CLXI *De apparitione sancti Michaelis*, as discussed in Wolf, *Salus populi romani*, 134–5; Latham, “Inventing Gregory,” 23–4.

⁸ Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, 2nd ed., ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1998), vol. 1, 288–9: “...in qua ymaginem beate Marie semper uirginis, que adhuc, ut aiunt, est Rome, quam Lucas arte medicus et pictor egregius formasse dicitur et eidem uirgini simillima per omnia perhibetur, ante processionem reuerenter portari fecit. Et ecce, tota aeris infectio et turbulentia ymagini cedebat ac si ipsam ymaginem fugeret et eius presentiam ferre non posset sicque post ymaginem mira serenitas et aeris puritas remanebat. Tunc in aere, ut fertur, iuxta ymaginem audite sunt uoces angelorum canentium ‘Regina celi letare....’” Wolf discusses

and reproduces a version of the *Legenda aurea* that clarifies the image was “in ecclesia, quae dicitur Sancta Maria Major”; see *Salus populi romani*, 134–8, 329–30: Q19. See also Latham, “Inventing Gregory,” 24. Another variant of this legend was recorded by a fifteenth-century traveler from Spain, Pedro Tafur, who suggested that the plague was related to the worshipping of a false idol in the church of Sant’Agata in Suburra; after the idol was destroyed by a thunderbolt, Pope Gregory returned to St. Peter’s, encountering the archangel Michael at Hadrian’s tomb. The sheathing of the angel’s sword, in this instance, indicated that idolatry had been suppressed, God had been appeased, and the plague would cease. See *Pedro Tafur: Travels and Adventures (1435-1439)*, ed. and trans. by Malcolm Letts (New York, London: Harper & Brothers, 1926), chap. 3, as digitized at <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/tafur.html#ch3> (accessed March 17, 2020).

⁹ For icons associated with St. Luke, see Michele Bacci, *Il pennello dell’Evangelista. Storia delle immagini sacre attribuite a san Luca* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 1998).

¹⁰ For a discussion of the competition of Marian icons in Rome, see D’Onofrio, *Castel S. Angelo*, 152–8; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 320–9; Wolf, *Salus populi romani*, 156–60.

¹¹ The Santa Maria Maggiore icon was sometimes referred to as the Madonna of the Snow, in recognition of the miraculous snowfall. Santa Maria Maggiore was actually dedicated under Sixtus III (432–40).

¹² The first mention of an encounter between icons in Santa Maria Maggiore occurs in 1170. William Tronzo, “Apse Decoration, the Liturgy and the Perception of Art in Medieval Rome: S. Maria in Trastevere and S. Maria Maggiore,” in *Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance. Functions, Forms, and Regional Traditions*, ed. William Tronzo (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1989), 175; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 68; Wolf, *Salus populi romani*, 37, 93ff. See also Ernst Kitzinger, “A Virgin’s Face: Antiquarianism in Twelfth-Century Art,” *The Art Bulletin*, 62 (1980): 6–19; Hans Belting, “Icons and Roman Society in the Twelfth Century,” in *Italian Church Decoration*, 27–41.

¹³ Guillelmus Durandus, *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, Lib. VII, cap. 890 (septem dies post Pascha), ed. 1459, f. 113: “Ad hoc notandum est, quod cum in urbe Roma esset magna aeris pestilentia, Beatus Gregorius in tempore paschali ordinavit, ut imago Beatae Virginis, quae in Ecclesia Sanctae Mariae Maioris servatur, quam beatus Lucas pinxisse dicitur, et eidem Virgini similis perhibetur, processionaliter portaretur, et dum ante processionem reverenter portaretur, ecce tota aeris infectio et turbulentia cedebat imagini fugiens, ac si eam ferre non posset, sic quod post imaginem mira sanitas remanebat, tunc autem iuxta imaginem auditae dicuntur tres voces angelorum, canentium, Regina coeli laetare alleluia...” As transcribed in Wolf, *Salus populi romani*, 330 Q20, see also 98–101. Later sources include a treatise composed during the plague year of 1464 that promoted miracles performed by the Marian image (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 5539) as well as a contemporary frame sponsored by Cardinal Guillaume d’Estouteville that included an image of Gregory’s procession; see Sheila Barker, “Miraculous Images and the Plagues of Italy, c. 590–1656,” in *Saints, Miracles and the Image: Healing Saints and Miraculous Images in the Renaissance*, eds. Sandra Cardarelli and Laura Fenelli (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 33, 49 n. 14. For the role of the confraternity of the Gonfalone in the care and celebration of the icon, see Barbara Wisch and Nerida Newbigin, *Acting on Faith: The Confraternity of the Gonfalone in Renaissance Rome* (Philadelphia: St. Joseph’s University Press, 2013), 156–89.

¹⁴ Ottavio Panciroli, *I tesori nascosti nell’alma città di Roma, con nuovo ordine ristampati, & in molti luoghi arricchiti* (Rome, 1625), 450: “Stava la dett’Image [the Marian icon] nella cappella del Salvatore alla cima delle Scale sante, e si tiene una di quelle, che S. Luca dipinse. L’occasione di levarla da quel santo luogo fù, perche essendo Roma travagliata da grave pestilenza l’anno 1231. *Ann. to. 13. eo an.* Gregorio IX determinò portarla in processione a questa chiesa [Santa Maria del Popolo], *Alber. lo. cit.* e postola sù l’altare maggiore, vedendo che cessava la peste, non volse più ritornarla al suo luogo.” Andrea Vittorelli instead associates the Gregory IX plague with the year 1227: “Gregorio IX...in questo tempio la [the icon] transferì, l’anno 1227. con occasione di publica processione; che, con i Cardinali, & Popolo Romano fece; per chiedere da Dio gratia; che cessasse il flagello di gravissima pestilenza; ch’all’hora andava serpendo. Era costume, di portarla in processione, ne tempi di grave calamità, & per ciò la fece portare all’hora Gregorio alla Chiesa del Popolo, illustre per miracoli: celebrò anco quivi la Messa; & vedendo; (dopo pochi giorni) ch’era estinto l’incendio della pestilenza, non la rimosse.” See *Gloriose memorie della B.ma Vergine Madre di Dio; Gran parte delle quali sono accennate con Pitture, Statue, & altro nella maravigliosa Cappella Borghesia dalla Santità di N. S. PP. Paolo V* (Rome, 1616), 356.

¹⁵ Shelley E. Zuraw, "The Efficacious Madonna in Quattrocento Rome: Spirituality in the Service of Papal Power," in *Visions of Holiness: Art and Devotion in Renaissance Italy*, eds. Andrew Ladis and Shelley E. Zuraw (Athens, GA: Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, 2001), 104–5.

¹⁶ Giulia Barone, "Immagini miracolose a Roma alla fine del Medio Evo," in *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, eds. Erik Thunø and Gerhard Wolf (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2004), 129–31.

¹⁷ Ptolemy of Lucca, "Historia Ecclesiastica," in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, XI, ed. Ludovico Antonio Muratori (Milan: Typographia Societatis Palatinae, 1727), coll. 912: "Pergendo igitur per Urbem tota turbulentia aëris à facie ipsius recedebat; sicque post Imaginem mira serenitae, & aëris puritas remanebat. Tunc, ut fertur, juxta Imaginem auditae sunt voces Angelorum canentium: *Regina Caeli*....Tunc sanctus Pontifex vidit redeundo de processione ad Sanctum Petrum super Castrum Crescentii Angelum Domini, qui gladium cruentatum detergens, in vaginam revocabat: ex quo cognovit pestilentiam cessasse."

¹⁸ Sister Cecilia, one of the nuns who moved to San Sisto in 1221, notes that the icon was transferred during a nocturnal procession out of fear that the Romans would object due to the increased inaccessibility of the image at the more distant church of San Sisto, which was located in the *disabitato* close to the ruins of the Baths of Caracalla. For Cecilia's text, see Angelus Walz, "Die 'Miracula beati Dominici' der Schwester Cäcilia," *Archivium fratrum praedicatorum* 37 (1967): 43. The San Sisto icon, along with the female religious community, was transferred to the church of Santi Domenico e Sisto in the late sixteenth century; the icon is now found in Santa Maria del Rosario, where it has been located since 1931.

¹⁹ The anonymous description is reproduced in Casimiro da Roma, *Memorie istoriche della chiesa e convento di S. Maria in Araceli di Roma* (Rome, 1736), 134; see also D'Onofrio, *Castel S. Angelo*, 160–2.

²⁰ For a discussion of the early sources for the Santa Maria in Aracoeli icon and its relationship to other Roman icons, see Carlo Bertelli, "L'immagine del 'Monasterium Tempuli' dopo il restauro," *Archivium fratrum praedicatorum* 31 (1961) 82–111, esp. 95–100; Belting, "Icons and Roman Society," 27–41, esp. 35; Wolf, *Salus populi romani*, 228–235; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 320–323. For Santa Maria in Aracoeli more generally, see Claudia Bolgia, *Reclaiming the Roman Capitol: Santa Maria in Aracoeli from the Altar of Augustus to the Franciscans, c. 500–1450* (London, New York: Routledge, 2017). For the confraternal care of the Aracoeli icon, see Wisch and Newbigin, *Acting on Faith*, 190–209. The role of the Aracoeli icon as an advocate of the Roman people would have been reinforced by its location in the Capitoline basilica, a church that had a special political, religious, and civic relationship with the governing structures of the city located in the adjacent Piazza del Campidoglio. For a discussion of the later sixteenth-century renovation of the interior and the installation of the icon on the high altar, see Kirstin Noreen, "The High Altar of Santa Maria in Aracoeli: Recontextualizing a Medieval Icon in Post-Tridentine Rome," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 53 (2008): 99–128.

²¹ For a transcription of the 1350 letter from Cola di Rienzo to the Archbishop of Prague that confirms this event, see Claudia Bolgia, "The Felici Icon Tabernacle (1372) at S. Maria in Aracoeli, Reconstructed: Lay Patronage, Sculpture and Marian Devotion in Trecento Rome," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 68 (2005): 30 and 68 appendix 3.

²² As recorded on a plaque located to the left of the central portal of the church. For the construction of the staircase, see Casimiro da Roma, *Memorie istoriche*, 26–7; Ronald E. Malmstrom, "S. Maria in Aracoeli at Rome" (PhD diss., New York University 1973), 129–31; Marianna Brancia di Apricena, *Il complesso dell'Aracoeli sul Colle Capitolino (IX–XIX secolo)* (Rome: Quasar, 2000), 79–80, 89. The use of the Aracoeli icon during both Gregory's sixth-century procession and the 1348 outbreak of the plague was also recorded in a guidebook by William Brewyn from c. 1470. For a discussion and transcription of that text, see Bolgia, "The Felici Icon Tabernacle," 29–30, 69–70: appendix n. 11.

²³ Mariano da Firenze, *Itinerarium urbis Romae*, ed. with notes by Enrico Bulletti, *Studi di antichità cristiana* 2 (Rome: Pontificio istituto di archeologia cristiana, 1931), 42: "Licet canonici sanctae Mariae Maioris dicant illam fuisse quae in eorum ecclesia veneratur; sicque fratres Praedicatores asserunt esse illam quae in ecclesia eorum sancti Xysti est." For Fra Mariano and his text, see also D'Onofrio, *Castel S. Angelo*, 150–1; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 532.

²⁴ Mariano da Firenze, *Itinerarium*, 42: “Sed qualis sit, Deus scit.”

²⁵ Mariano da Firenze, *Itinerarium*, 42: “In pariete chori subter imagine iam dictae Virginis lapis marmoreus insertus est, ferrea crata circumdatus, super quem angelus evaginato gladio in arce Hadriani quae et Crescentii item dicta, adstare visus est cum divus Gregorius cum dicta imagine in festis paschatis processionaliter ad sanctum Petrum pergebat et tunc ante eam aer infectus purificabatur....” See also Pompilio Totti, *Ritratto di Roma moderna* (Rome, 1638), 409; Cesare D’Onofrio, *Castel S. Angelo* (Rome: Cassa di Risparmio, 1971), 91–104; idem, *Castel S. Angelo* (1978), 148–62; Johanna Heideman, “The Roman Footprints of the Archangel Michael. The Lost Shrine of S. Maria in Aracoeli and the Petition of Fioravante Martinelli,” *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* 47 (1987): 147–56; eadem, “Orme romane ed il perduto reliquiario delle ‘pedate’ dell’Arcangelo Michele,” *Bollettino dei Musei Comunali di Roma* 4 (1990) 17–26; Bolgia, “The Felici Icon Tabernacle,” 38–40. The circular stone is now contained in the Palazzo Nuovo of the Museo Capitolino (Sala delle Colombe, inv. nr. 331).

²⁶ For fourteenth- and fifteenth-century legislation related to plague outbreaks and quarantine regulations in Italy, see Ann G. Carmichael, “Plague Legislation in the Italian Renaissance,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 57, n. 4 (1983): 508–25; Jane Stevens Crawshaw, “The Renaissance Invention of Quarantine,” in *The Fifteenth Century XII: Society in an Age of Plague*, eds. Linda Clark and Carole Rawcliffe (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), 161–73.

²⁷ As recounted by Vittorelli, *Gloriose memorie*, 356: “Sisto Quarto venerò questa Imagine, & Chiesa, & vedendo Roma travagliata da insolite mortali febri; che in pochi giorni, avevano tolta di vita moltitudine grande di huomini, andò a visitarla, fece offerire à Dio l’augustissimo Sacrificio della Messa; &, con calde preghiere, lo supplicò; che rendesse salubre l’aria, & risanasse gl’infermi.”

²⁸ For the following description of this fifteenth-century plague and the ensuing processions involving the icon of Sant’Agostino, see Angelo Lombardi, *Cenni storici intorno la sacratissima immagine di Maria ss.ma...di S. Agostino in Roma* (Naples, 1859), 41–5. See also Panciroli, *I tesori nascosti*, 471; Totti, *Ritratto di Roma*, 264.

²⁹ Lombardi, *Cenni storici*, 45.

³⁰ Panciroli, *I tesori nascosti*, 471: “l’anno 1485. essendo una gran peste in Roma, si liberò, portandola Innocenzo VIII. in processione da questa chiesa a quella di S. Pietro in Vaticano, *ex iisdem M.S.* Questa miracolosa gratia è rappresentata in varie figure di mezzo rilievo nell’ornamento di marmo, in cui è riposta.” See also Sible de Blaauw, “Das Hochaltarretabel in Rom bis zum frühen 16. Jahrhundert: das Altarbild als Kategorie der liturgischen Anlage,” *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome. Papers of the Netherlands Institute in Rome* 55 (1996): 101. For an overview of fifteenth-century propitiatory processions, see Zuraw, “The Efficacious Madonna,” 101–22, esp. 101–106. Roman icons were also copied and distributed throughout Europe, especially from the 1460s through the 1490s by artists such as Antoniazio Romano; see Zuraw, “The Efficacious Madonna,” 105–106 and Wisch and Newbiggin, *Acting on Faith*, 114–7.

³¹ Andrew Casper, “Icons, Guidebooks, and the Religious Topography of Sixteenth-Century Rome,” in *Early Modern Rome 1341–1667*, ed. Portia Prebys (Ferrara: EDISAI, 2011), 477–87.

³² Petrus Canisius, *De Maria Virgine incomparabili, et dei genitrice sacrosancta* (Ingolstadt, 1577), 697–8.

³³ Gabriele Paleotti, *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane in Trattati d’arte del Cinquecento, fra Manierismo e Controriforma*, ed. Paola Barocchi, vol. 2 (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1961), 229; Giuseppe Scavizzi, *The Controversy on Images from Calvin to Baronius* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 232.

³⁴ Panciroli, *I tesori nascosti*, 69: “Nel principio del Papato di S. Gregorio il grande, essendo Roma travagliata da grave pestilenza, fù per ordine suo portata questa immagine [that of Santa Maria in Aracoeli] con altre in processione, come in simili occasioni soleva farsi.” Vittorelli, *Gloriose memorie*: for the icon in Santa Maria Maggiore, 281–2, 349–53 (367–71, due to a mispagination); for the icon of Santa Maria in Aracoeli, 363–4; and for the image in Santa Maria in Portico, 380.

³⁵ Fioravante Martinelli, *Imago B. Mariae virginis quae apud venerandas SS. Sixti, & Dominici moniales à mille fere annis maximo cultu asservatur* (Rome, 1635), xxvii: “...haec sacrosancta imago, quam & vetusti Codicis narratio, tum fama, & constans traditio à S. Luca depictam affirmat, publicè in maxima Urbis calamitate, irae divinae placandae, &

pesti averruncandae, a S. Gregorio Magno circumlata fuerit....” Francesco Maria Torrigio includes a chapter entitled “La sacra Immagine fù delineata da S. Luca, fù portata in Processione altempo di S. Gregorio, e fù posta in S. Sisto” but does not discuss at length the Gregory procession; see *Historia della veneranda immagine di Maria Vergine posta nella Chiesa del Monastero delle RR. monache di Santi Sisto, e Domenico di Roma (Rome, 1641)*, 23.

³⁶ Panciroli’s *Tesori nascosti*, first published in 1600, was updated and republished in 1625 with a dedication to Costanza Magalotti Barberini.

³⁷ Vittorelli’s text, *Gloriose memorie* (1616), was dedicated to the Borghese pope, Paul V, who sponsored the construction of the Pauline Chapel.

³⁸ Texts by Martinelli and Torrigio include several disagreements between the two scholars. For a brief discussion of that polemic, see Raimondo Spiazzi, ed., *La chiesa e il monastero di San Sisto all’Appia: raccolta di studi storici* (Bologna: Edizioni studio domenicano, 1992), 388–394. See also Kirstin Noreen, “Female Community, Identity, and Icon: Honoring the Madonna Advocata in Santi Domenico e Sisto,” forthcoming.

³⁹ Italy was affected by two primary outbreaks of the plague in the seventeenth century: in the north and central regions primarily from 1629 to 1633 and in southern Italy from 1656 to 1657. For the use of border controls, the institution of quarantine, and the position of the Church during the plague of 1630–1631 in Florence, see John Henderson, *Florence Under Siege: Surviving Plague in an Early Modern City* (London: Yale University Press, 2019). For provisions to separate the healthy from the sick in Rome, see Sforza P. Pallavicino, *Della vita di Alessandro VII*, (Prato: Tipografia fratelli Giachetti, 1839–1840), vol. 2, esp. lib. 4, cap. 13–4, 171–84; Pallavicino notes (182): “Nè solamente furon dismesse le comunanze o geniali, o civili, ma non meno le sacre, cioè le pontificie cappelle, le consuete processioni, le pie congreghe, la solennità degli uffizj nelle chiese, chiudendole in quei giorni, ch’eran per loro solennemente festivi, e però attrattivi di molto popolo.” For Rome, see also Girolamo Gastaldi, *Tractatus de avertenda et profliganda peste politico-legalis* (Bologna, 1684).

⁴⁰ Pallavicino, *Della vita*, 2, lib. 4, cap. 14, 183: “Poi nell’ottava de’ morti, proibendo il solito concorso alla perdonanza solenne di S. Gregorio, surrogò per acquisto di quella famosa indulgenza alcuna delle private opere dette avanti.” See also Sheila Barker, “Art, Architecture and the Roman Plague of 1656–1657,” in *La peste a Roma (1656–57)*, ed. Irene Fosi (Rome: Università Roma Tre-Croma, 2007), 251 and Barker, “Miraculous Images,” 43.

⁴¹ Vittorelli, *Gloriose memorie*, 380: “Più volte, in tempo, che Roma era da pestilenza travagliata, fù questa pretiosa Reliquia (chiamiamola così) portata in processione, come nell’allegata Relatione si scrive. La portò S. Gregorio, à S. Pietro in Vaticano, & la riportò alla propria Chiesa, & cessò l’ira di Dio. Calisto Terzo, per simile occasione, la fece; con sacra pompa, portare per la Città, & ottenne la liberatione da sì funesto flagello; il medesimo fece Adriano Sesto: & fuggiva la mortale contagione, ov’era portata la Immagine, recata in terra da Serafini.” Vittorelli is unclear regarding which Gregory he references. Luigi Marracci specifies that the Virgin, as represented in the miraculous image, had interceded during a plague at the time of Gregory VII, as well as John I, Callistus III, and Hadrian VI; see *Memorie di S. Maria in Portico, ora in Campitelli, dal giorno della sua apparizione nell’anno 525 fino all’anno 1675*, ed. Giovacchino M. Corrado (Rome: Fratelli Monaldi, 1871), 104.

⁴² Marracci, *Memorie di S. Maria in Portico*, 88–106; Pallavicino, *Della vita*, 2, lib. 4, cap. 14, 184; Barker, “Art, Architecture,” 251–4; eadem, “Miraculous Images,” 43–6.

⁴³ As Barker indicates, the Roman Senate requested the public vow at a time when the priests of Santa Maria in Portico were defying plague-time ordinances with their promotion of the church’s Marian image. Following the pope’s agreement, the image was moved to several locations before it was placed in the church of Santa Maria in Campitelli, at the base of the Capitoline and close to the Senate. See “Art, Architecture,” 251–2.

⁴⁴ Barker, “Art, Architecture,” 252–4; Barker, “Miraculous Images,” 45–6.

⁴⁵ For the following discussion of the Assumption procession, see Wisch and Newbigin, *Acting on Faith*, 156–74 and Kirstin Noreen, “Serving Christ: The Assumption Procession in Sixteenth-Century Rome,” in *Remembering the Middle Ages in Early Modern Italy*, eds. Lorenzo Pericolo and Jessica N. Richardson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 231–5.

⁴⁶ For the location of the icon in Santa Maria Maggiore prior to its seventeenth-century transfer to the Pauline

Chapel, see Wolf, *Salus populi romani*, 223–7.

⁴⁷ This clause was included in an act of donation by Clement VIII, as cited by Steven F. Ostrow, *Art and Spirituality in Counter-Reformation Rome: The Sistine and Pauline Chapels in S. Maria Maggiore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 130. See also Wisch and Newbiggin, *Acting on Faith*, 169. The Gonfalone confraternity was elevated to an archconfraternity in 1579.

⁴⁸ For the seventeenth-century installation in the Pauline Chapel, see Ostrow, *Art and Spirituality*, esp. 118–75.

⁴⁹ For the reproduction and distribution of copies of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon, see Sepp Schüller, “Die ‘Chinesische Madonna,’ der bedeutendste Fund aus der ersten Missionsperiode in China,” *Die Katholischen Missionen* 64 (1936): 177–183; Ugo Monneret de Villard, “La Madonna di Santa Maria Maggiore e l’illustrazione dei miracoli di Maria in Abissinia,” *Annali Lateranensi* 11 (1947): 9–90; Pasquale M. d’Elia, “La prima diffusione nel mondo dell’immagine di Maria ‘Salus Populi Romani,’” *Fede e Arte* (1954), 301–11; Marie-France Jacops, “Contribution à l’étude de la dévotion mariale en Lorraine: le culte de la Vierge de saint Luc,” *Pays-lorrain* 65, no. 2 (1984): 101–117; Tania C. Tribe, “Memory and Wonder: Our Lady Mary in Ethiopian Painting (15th–18th Centuries),” in *Memory and Oblivion. Proceedings of the 29th International Congress of the History of Art held in Amsterdam, 1–7 September 1996*, eds. Wessel Reinink and Jeroen Stumpel (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 625–34; Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542–1773* (Toronto and Buffalo, 1999); Kirstin Noreen, “The Icon of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome: An Image and its Afterlife,” *Renaissance Studies* 19 (2005): 660–72; Mia M. Mochizuki, “Sacred Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction: The *Salus Populi Romani* Madonna in the World,” in *Sacred and Profane in Early Modern Art*, ed. Kayo Hirakawa (Kyoto: Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University, 2016), 129–44; Simon Ditchfield, “*Romanus* and *Catholicus*: Counter-Reformation Rome as *Caput Mundi*,” in *A Companion to Early Modern Rome, 1492–1692*, eds. Pamela M. Jones, Barbara Wisch, and Simon Ditchfield (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 141–6.

⁵⁰ In Poland, an early seventeenth-century copy of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon that was believed to have been blessed by Clement VIII (1592–1605) and associated with the Jesuit St. Stanislaw Kostka was used in propitiatory processions in Kraków. For this image, known as the “Polish Mother of God,” see Krzysztof J. Czyżewski and Marek Walczak, “The Archconfraternity of the Rosary in the Dominican Churches of Kraków. Piety and Patronage of the Arts,” in *Illuminating the Soul, Glorifying the Sacred. Religious Confraternities and the Visual Arts in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Barbara Murovec, Mija Oter Gorenčič, and Barbara Wisch, a special issue of *Acta historiae artis Slovenica*, 23/2 (2018): 139–62.

⁵¹ Kirstin Noreen, “Replicating the Icon of Santa Maria Maggiore: The *Mater ter admirabilis* and the Jesuits of Ingolstadt,” *Visual Resources* 24 (2008): 19–37.

⁵² For the following discussion, see Andrew P. Griebeler, “Cholera and the *Salus Populi Romani*,” in *Erzeugung und Zerstörung von Sakralität zwischen Antike und Mittelalter: Beiträge der internationalen Tagung in München vom 20.–21.10.2015*, eds. Armin F. Bergmeier, Katharina Palmberger, and Joseph E. Sanzo (Heidelberg: Propylaeum, 2016), 133–41. The only other documented removal of the icon from the Pauline Chapel prior to the cholera outbreak occurred in 1831, when the image was taken to the church’s nave to mark the start of Gregory XVI’s pontificate; see Wisch and Newbiggin, *Acting on Faith*, 169.

⁵³ Gregory XVI’s name selection was likely influenced by his position as abbot of the Monastery of San Gregorio Magno al Celio and through a desire to honor his predecessor, Gregory XV, the founder of Propaganda Fide. See “Pope Gregory XVI,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07006a.htm>, accessed October 12, 2020.

⁵⁴ In the year following the 1837 procession, a silver revetment and new crowns were added to the icon by Gregory XVI; see Jatta, “*Restaurata la Salus populi Romani*.”

⁵⁵ The pope did not participate in all parts of the 1835 and 1837 processions. Gregory XVI did, however, lead the 1835 procession as it passed Castel Sant’Angelo on the way to St. Peter’s; it was at Castel Sant’Angelo that the miracle of Gregory the Great and the archangel took place. For exact details of Gregory XVI’s participation, see Griebeler, “Cholera,” 135–138.

⁵⁶ See, for example, the discussion of sacred images in nineteenth-century Genoa, in Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser, *Spectacular Miracles: Transforming Images in Italy from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), esp. 240–7.

⁵⁷ *Providentissimus Deus* (1893): https://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18111893_providentissimus-deus.html (accessed July 22, 2020). See also Dan O’Leary, *Roman Catholicism and Modern Science: A History* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 68–72.

⁵⁸ Kirstin Noreen, “Opening the Holy of Holies: Early Twentieth-Century Explorations of the Sancta Sanctorum (Rome),” *Church History* 80: 3 (2011): 520–46.

⁵⁹ Wolf explains that the title *Salus Populi Romani* was first used in 1870 by Pius IX, but became more widely diffused in the early twentieth century. In 1958–1959, John XXIII reproduced the icon accompanied by *Salus Populi Romani* on a silver medal. See Wolf, *Salus populi romani*, 19 and 254 n. 83; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 68.

⁶⁰ As described by Griebeler, who discusses the meaning of the title in relation to its use in ancient Rome (“Cholera,” 133).

⁶¹ Amato, *De vera effigie Mariae*, 52.

⁶² Amato, *De vera effigie Mariae*, 52; “The Assumption Proclamation (1950),” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-JcSyaRU0kc> (accessed July 6, 2020).

⁶³ Samuel Koo, “Marian Year Called Return to Tradition,” *The Washington Post*, February 21, 1987 (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1987/02/21/marian-year-called-return-to-tradition/60060152-4c5f-4ef6-b41e-15223cff0487/>, accessed October 14, 2020). The 1953–1954 international Marian Year commemorated the centenary of Pius XII’s proclamation of the Dogma of Mary’s Assumption. The second international Marian Year, proclaimed by John Paul II, ran from June 1987 through August 1988.

⁶⁴ “Religion: The Queenship of Mary,” *Time*, November 8, 1954; “Incoronazione de la ‘Salus Populi Romani,’” <http://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/2017/08/pope-pius-xii-celebrates-queenship-of.html#XwPtrsZ7l-U> (accessed July 6, 2020). For *Ad caeli reginam*, see http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_11101954_ad-caeli-reginam.html (accessed July 2, 2020).

⁶⁵ Amato, *De vera effigie Mariae*.

⁶⁶ For example, in 2018 Francis added the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church to the Roman calendar on the day after Pentecost Sunday. Pope Francis’s devotion to the Virgin has been discussed in the popular press and visually documented in a “devotional keepsake” that includes quotes from his speeches, prayers and tweets; see Christopher J. Hale, “Why Pope Francis Is Obsessed With Mary,” *Time*, March 25, 2015; Deacon Nick Donnelly, “Why Does Pope Francis Love the Blessed Virgin Mary So Much?,” *National Catholic Register*, December 21, 2015 (<https://www.ncregister.com/news/why-does-pope-francis-love-the-blessed-virgin-mary-so-much>, accessed October 9, 2020); Vincenzo Sansonetti, ed. *Pope Francis and the Virgin Mary: A Marian Devotion* (New York: Rizzoli, 2015). John Paul II was also known for his Marian piety; see Edward D. O’Connor, “The Roots of Pope John Paul II’s Devotion to Mary,” *Marian Studies* 39 (1988): 78–114.

⁶⁷ Paddy Agnew, “Changed times at Vatican as Pope Francis makes first public outing,” *The Irish Times*, March 14, 2013 (<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/changed-times-at-vatican-as-pope-francis-makes-first-public-outing-1.1325645>, accessed March 23, 2020). This visit was recorded in a video of Telegraph.co.uk, found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8Q3vEuzJq4> (accessed March 27, 2020). For Francis’s particular devotion to the icon of Santa Maria Maggiore, see also Angelo Jesus Canta, “Our Lady of the Coronavirus,” *America*, March 22, 2020 (<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2020/03/22/our-lady-coronavirus?fbclid=IwAR0J4M-KIX045YizNcNYh6zIMyyfU04qu4C722HBTRM3qdtATW7ISzTmcqBc>, accessed March 25, 2020). The basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore also played a special role for the founder of the Jesuits, as this was the location where Ignatius of Loyola celebrated his first Mass as a priest on December 25, 1538.

⁶⁸ Elizabeth Dias, “Pope Francis Leads Global Prayer Vigil for Syria,” *Time*, September 7, 2013.

⁶⁹ Deborah Castellano Lubov, "Pope Prays at Santa Maria Maggiore Before Departing for Mozambique," *Zenit*, September 3, 2019 (<https://zenit.org/articles/pope-prays-at-santa-maria-maggiore-before-departing-for-mozambique/>, accessed March 23, 2020). See also Deborah Castellano Lubov, "Pope Prays at Santa Maria Maggiore Before Departing for Georgia," *Zenit*, September 30, 2016 (<https://zenit.org/articles/pope-prays-at-santa-maria-maggiore-before-departing-for-georgia/>, accessed March 23, 2020); eadem, "Returning from Morocco, Pope Stops at Santa Maria Maggiore," *Zenit*, April 1, 2019 (<https://zenit.org/articles/returning-from-morocco-pope-stops-at-santa-maria-maggiore/>, accessed March 23, 2020); eadem, "Returning from Romania, Pope Stops at Santa Maria Maggiore," *Zenit*, June 3, 2019 (<https://zenit.org/articles/returning-from-romania-pope-stops-at-santa-maria-maggiore/>, accessed March 23, 2020).

⁷⁰ Jatta, "Restaurata" and http://www.vatican.va/various/basiliche/sm_maggiore/it/salus-populi-romani/salus-populi-romani-barbara-jatta-or_it.htm; "Santa Maria Maggiore, restaurata l'icona della 'Salus Populi Romani,'" *La Stampa*, January 24, 2018, <https://www.lastampa.it/vatican-insider/it/2018/01/24/news/santa-maria-maggiore-restaurata-l-icona-della-salus-populi-romani-1.33971530> (accessed July 6, 2020). By January 2019, Francis had visited the Esquiline basilica sixty-seven times during his pontificate; see Elise Harris, "Pope's Love Affair with Mary Hits New High with 67th Roman Visit," *Crux Now*, January 23, 2019 (<https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2019/01/popes-love-affair-with-mary-hits-new-high-with-67th-roman-visit/>, accessed July 17, 2020).

⁷¹ Fr. Raymond J. de Souza, "Pope Francis Restores Beloved Marian Icon to Prominence," *National Catholic Register*, January 31, 2018 (<https://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/pope-francis-restores-beloved-marian-icon-to-prominence>, accessed July 2, 2020).

⁷² The reporting of Francis's visits to Santa Maria Maggiore and San Marcello was widespread. See, for example, Hannah Brockhaus, "Pope Francis Makes Walking Prayer Pilgrimage for Coronavirus Pandemic," *Catholic News Agency*, March 15, 2020 (<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-francis-makes-walking-prayer-pilgrimage-for-coronavirus-pandemic-40105>, accessed July 17, 2020) and Cindy Wooden, "Pope Francis Makes Mini-Pilgrimage Outside Vatican to Pray for End of Coronavirus Pandemic," *Catholic News Service*, March 16, 2020 (<https://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2020/pope-makes-mini-pilgrimage-outside-vatican-to-pray-for-end-of-pandemic.cfm>, accessed July 17, 2020). According to Father Elio Lops, a priest of the vicariate of Rome, Francis had planned to go to Santa Maria Maggiore on March 13 to mark the seventh year of his pontificate, but had canceled that visit due to the Italian lockdown.

⁷³ Francis was accompanied on his mini-pilgrimage by a small police escort. Brockhaus includes a copy of a tweet from the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) that depicts the pope's visit to San Marcello (see "Pope Francis").

⁷⁴ Devin Watkins, "Pope's Special *Urbi et Orbi* Blessing: 'God Turns Everything to our Good,'" *Vatican News*, March 27, 2020 (<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-03/pope-francis-urbi-et-orbi-blessing-coronavirus.html>, accessed March 27, 2020). For the full address, see Pope Francis, "Read: Pope Francis' *Urbi et Orbi* Address on Coronavirus and Jesus Calming the Storm," *America*, March 27, 2020 (<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2020/03/27/read-pope-francis-urbi-et-orbi-address-coronavirus-and-jesus-calming-storm>, accessed March 27, 2020). The pope announced the *Urbi et Orbi* blessing during his Angelus address on March 22. Two days prior to the *Urbi et Orbi* blessing, on the feast of the Annunciation (March 25), Francis asked Christians of all denominations to join in a recitation of the Lord's Prayer at noon.

⁷⁵ "Miraculous Crucifix Moved to St. Peter's Square for Pope Francis' *Urbi et Orbi* Blessing," *Catholic News Agency*, March 25, 2020 (<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/miraculous-crucifix-moved-to-st-peters-square-for-pope-francis-urbi-et-orbi-blessing-54055>, accessed July 17, 2020).

⁷⁶ "Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary on the granting of special Indulgences to the faithful in the current pandemic, 20.03.2020," <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/03/20/200320c.html> (accessed July 15, 2020).

⁷⁷ Virtual pilgrimage using the internet is not new, as demonstrated by Mark W. MacWilliams, "Virtual Pilgrimages on the Internet," *Religion* 32, no. 4 (2002): 315–35. For the Exceptional Plenary Indulgence, see the Our Lady of Lourdes Hospitality, North American Volunteers website: <https://lourdesvolunteers.org/online-lourdes-vir->

[tual-pilgrimage-experience-2/](#) (accessed July 21, 2020). See also Elise Ann Allen, “As Coronavirus Spreads, so does Pope’s ‘Virtual Parish,’” *Crux*, March 17, 2020 (<https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2020/03/as-coronavirus-spreads-so-does-popes-virtual-parish/>, accessed March 24, 2020). The extensive use of social media platforms demonstrates an evolving approach to digital media consumption; see Jonathan Crowd, “How the Vatican’s Social Media Strategy Became a Surprise Success Story,” *Skyword*, June 12, 2018 (<https://www.skyword.com/contentstandard/how-the-vaticans-social-media-strategy-became-a-surprise-success-story/>, accessed July 20, 2020).

⁷⁸ Mochizuki, “Sacred Art.”

⁷⁹ For the digital reproduction of cult images, see Kirstin Noreen, “Negotiating the Original: Copying the Virgin of Guadalupe,” *Visual Resources* 33, n. 3-4 (2017): 363–84 and Andrew R. Casper, “What Does it Mean to Exhibit the Shroud of Turin Online?” *Slate*, April 10, 2020 (<https://slate.com/technology/2020/04/shroud-of-turin-virtual-exhibition-easter.html>, accessed July 20, 2020).



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‘Ransom of His Soul:’ Shaped Text as Medium and Mediator in Byzantium

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Mateusz J. Ferens

‘Ransom of His Soul:’ Shaped Text as Medium and Mediator in Byzantium

Abstract

Shaped text in the Byzantine context has recently received considerable attention from scholars. Yet decorative, non-figural shaped texts remain relatively unexplored. Drawing on the works of Jeffrey Hamburger and Ivan Drpić, this article analyzes an instance of a decorative shaped text in the catena of the Middle-Byzantine manuscript known as Laur. Cod. Plut. 5.9. This paper argues that the shaped text bore a significant purpose and a theological meaning for its producer, Nike-tas. Far from being merely decorative, the shaped text featured as its own distinct medium and functioned as a soteriological mediator between man and God.

Keywords: aesthetics, Byzantine, decoration, manuscript, mediation, medium, ornament, salvation, shaped text, soteriology

Introduction

The section of patristic commentary, or catena, found on folio 279r of the tenth-century Florentine codex Laur. Cod. Plut. 5.9 differs from the conventional framing configurations of Byzantine catenae because of its irregular shape (fig. 1). This shaped catena contains the leftover text that did not fit within the main body of the larger catena and is therefore marginalized, quite literally, to the edge of the page.¹ The shape has a curious configuration: despite its purely decorative appearance, it verges on representing, without *actually* representing, a kind of stylized column or candlestick. Not only does this shape deviate from standard conventions of transcribing catenae in Byzantine manuscripts, it also differs from most of the other catenae in this codex. It therefore

stands out as an anomalous configuration, and in this way, it is doubly marginalized. At the same time, the shaped text exemplifies an extraordinary effort on the part of the copyist in arranging the shape and then filling it with the overflowing text of the catena in a way that makes it fit neatly on the vertical axis of the page. Its anomalous position asks questions of today's scholars just as much as it would have of its Byzantine viewers in the tenth century: what may have been the motivation and the meaning behind the copyist's work? To answer this question, it is not enough to compare it with other examples. Even the growing literature on shaped texts in Byzantine manuscripts offers an incomplete explanation of this particular variant because scholars contributing to the discourse tend to focus on figural arrangements—texts that represent a recognizable shape of some material object—and not on decorative shapes. Similarly, studies of ornament tend to occlude text-based configurations.²

That this trailing remainder of text received such unusual treatment from the copyist is a matter deserving some attention. At the very least, it posits important questions about the role of text as a manipulable medium. Prompted by the works of Ivan Drpić and Jeffrey Hamburger who have dealt with text-based configurations in depth, this article argues that the combination of textual and visual properties in the shaping of this catena constitutes a third medium that amplifies the tension between image and text. The Byzantine concept of adornment (*kosmos*) played a critical role in the generation of this third medium. In particular, the soteriological or salvific connotations of the act of adornment expressed in the Laurentian codex's dedicatory inscriptions suggest that the copyist and the patron were engaged in something more than mere decoration.

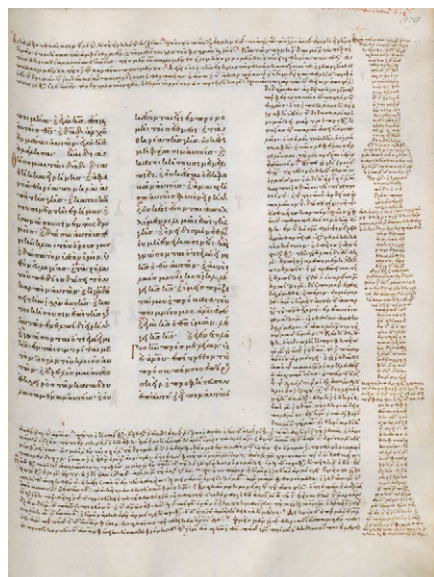


Fig. 1 Catena with decorative extension, Laur. Cod. Plutei 5.9, fol. 279r, Ez. 34:23 – 35:3, Byzantine, ca. 1001–1100. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana (photo with permission of MiBACT; any further reproduction by any means is prohibited)

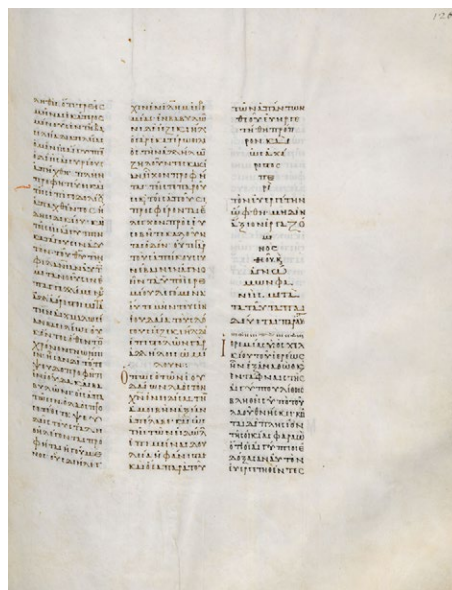


Fig. 2 Prefaces to Jeremiah with cruciform text, Laur. Cod. Plutei 5.9, fol. 126r, Byzantine, tenth century or later. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana (photo with permission of MiBACT; any further reproduction by any means is prohibited)

It so happens that folio 126r in this same Laurentian codex contains another instance of shaped text, but it differs from the column-like shape on folio 279r in two important ways (fig. 2). First, the shaped text on folio 126r is not part of a catena but is rather the primary text of the preface to Jeremiah. Second, it is shaped in the form of a decorative cross with triangular vertical arms, whereas the column-like shape on folio 279r bears no recognizable allusion to a symbolic or figural form. It could be argued that the column-like shape does include two horizontal arms that evoke cruciform shapes, but these are only evocative if the rest of the shape is ignored. In contrast with the much clearer cruciform shape on folio 126r, the bulbous features, the flared extremities, and the overall composition on folio 279r are ambiguous enough that the viewer is aware that something is being represented without being able to identify it precisely. Likewise, the perpendicular appendages are enough to dissuade the viewer from identifying the shape as a column in the strict, architectural sense. The catena on 279r is not a title or part of the primary text, as is the case with the shaped text on folio 126r, and its shape is so irregular that it seems to function as a geometric ornament that evokes, but does not quite instantiate, the shape of a cross or an architectural column. Therefore, the cross-shaped example on folio 126r cannot explain the shape of the catena; they are not iterations of each other in either form or substance.



Fig. 3 Catena with decorative extension, Taur. B.I.2, fol. 26r, Hos. 14:10, Joel 1:1–6, Byzantine, tenth century or later. Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale (photo by Fabio Uliana by permission of the Biblioteca Nazionale)

The shaped catena is rare and unusual, but it is not entirely unique. Aside from several other iterations of decorative catenae in the Laurentian codex, a closely related example is located in another tenth-century manuscript partially preserved at the Biblioteca Nazionale in Turin: Taur. B.I.2 folio 26v (fig. 3).³ Here too, the copyist seems to have rendered the remainder of the catena into a column of shaped text with a decorative, non-figural (i.e., non-representational) outline. Although the page in Taur. B.I.2 is damaged and thus provides only a partial view of this shaped catena, the upper half of the vertical shape is almost identical to the one in the Laurentian manuscript. This coincidence seems to point to a case of idiosyncrasy rather than representing a more general trend among tenth-century Byzantine copyists. Art historian John Lowden supposes that the two manuscripts are either twin codices or, at the very least, that they passed through the hands of the same copyist at some point in their making.⁴ In other words, the shaped catenae are unusual enough to likely constitute a personal touch or a kind of maker's mark on the part

of the copyist. And this idiosyncrasy adds yet another layer of complexity to an already puzzling visual component.

Still, the shaped catenae cannot be dismissed as *only* the idiosyncratic expression of a single copyist. As in other visual cultures at the time, shaped texts occurring at major points of the script were a common feature in Byzantine manuscripts. This was especially the case with shaped

titles at the beginnings of texts and funnel-shaped endings to passages or sections of text. Typically occurring in Byzantine and occasionally in Latin manuscripts, such treatment can be found in countless examples from the Middle- to the Late-Byzantine periods. For example, the fourteenth-century illuminated lectionary of John VI Cantacuzenus includes a large number of such endings that appear with considerable regularity throughout the codex (fig. 4). In a curious instance of meta-pictorial representation, from an eleventh- or twelfth-century Latin manuscript, Hugh the Painter emphasized his funnel-shaped ending with an elaborate border; he then depicted himself with the manuscript just to the right of the border as if to emphasize his handiwork (fig. 5).⁵ Decorative shaped texts feature prominently and intentionally in both Byzantine and Latin manuscripts, yet it is predominantly the figural or symbolical forms that have attracted the attention of art historians, not the funnels or the non-representational geometric shapes. In his overview of both the Laurentian and Turin codices, Lowden passes over these features with a brief description, giving no indication as to their possible meanings or functions.⁶

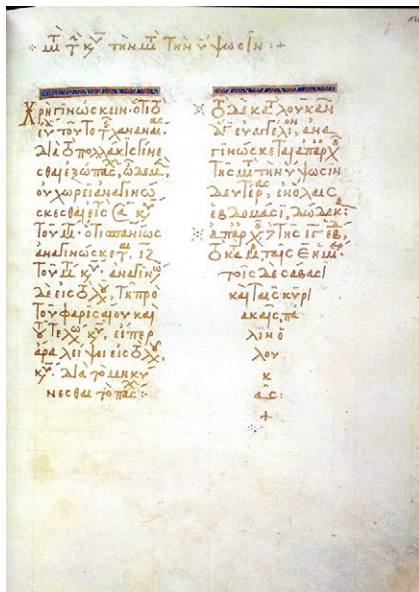


Fig. 4 Illuminated Gospel Lectionary of John VI Cantacuzenus (facsimile), fol. 132r, Byzantine, ca. 1340/41. Original: Vatopaidi Monastery Library. (Photo of facsimile by M. J. Ferens, Kohler Library, Madison)



Fig. 5 Hugh the Painter and funnel-shaped text, MS. Bodley 717, fol. 287v, detail, English manuscript, eleventh–twelfth century. Oxford, Bodleian Library (photo: courtesy of the Bodleian Library)

It is only in recent works by scholars like Ivan Drpić and Jeffrey Hamburger that shaped texts in the Byzantine cultural context have been given greater attention.⁷ Through their work, scholars are much better equipped to understand Byzantine attitudes toward shaped texts in general, and geometric non-figural arrangements in particular. Drpić and Hamburger insist that the shaping of texts in the Byzantine context is never insignificant, partly because Byzantine semiotics attributed value to the location of a word in space and partly because ornamentation contributed to the beautification, and therefore the sanctification, of the world. Their contributions show that,

at the very least, non-figural instances of shaped texts likely played a much greater role than their decorative appearance suggests at first glance. The evidence presented here will validate many of their assertions, but because they generally work with representational figures (Drpić mostly works with epigrams on artworks and architecture and Hamburger with representational shaped texts), this study will also complicate and move beyond some of their assumptions about shaped texts. By considering a broader view of Byzantine aesthetics and image theory, and by pointing to an important clue in the dedicatory poems of the Laurentian codex, this article provides an explanation for these unusual shaped catenae. In finding that the shaped catenae constituted a distinct medium and that they functioned as mediators of salvation for the patron and copyist, it contributes an overlooked dimension to current discourse on Byzantine visual culture and shaped texts.

(An)Iconicity of Shaped Text

In the introduction to his book *Script as Image* (2014), Hamburger creates a framework for his study of the text-image relationship in medieval manuscripts. Noticing the interdependence of this relationship, he calls it “iconicity of script.”⁸ He treats text as a visual medium that is instrumental, expressive, and capable of extending beyond the concepts of signification or symbolism.⁹ Such a definition reevaluates the text-image relationship, and it posits shaped text as an autonomous medium different from either the image or the text alone. This distinction is important and useful in clarifying discourse on this topic; otherwise, the text-image dichotomy becomes dependent on one or the other component and restricts discourse to their respective limitations. Here, Hamburger understands medium more directly as an independent material or technique of artistic work. In other words, medium is not just the hybrid or composite outcome of the merging together of text and image, but it is also a substance—an artistic medium—in its own right.¹⁰ What follows from Hamburger’s definition is a proposed theory of the “iconicity of script” that acknowledges modalities and analytical systems unique to shaped texts. If the text-image relationship were not treated as its own medium, capable of employing a range of its own modal systems, then it would be restricted to just literary or visual analysis. When it is considered as its own medium in accordance with Hamburger’s definition, shaped text allows for discourse that fully acknowledges its complexities as a modality unique to itself even as it is composed of two reciprocating elements—text and shape.

However, Hamburger’s approach has limitations. “Iconicity of script” corresponds most effectively to texts shaped to resemble a recognizable form resulting in the treatment of text as an icon or image. The phrase implies that script or text has been turned into image, and it therefore prioritizes the visual and, specifically, the iconic element over any other. “Iconicity of script” becomes one of many different forms of iconicity, or, put another way, “iconicity of script” treats the shaped text as a form of visual art that happens to be constructed of letters and words rather than paint, clay, marble, or any other medium. By prioritizing the iconic quality or the recognition of form in his juxtaposition of script and image, Hamburger leaves unexplored the non-figural, geometric

shapes such as funnels at the ends of passages or, in the case of the Laurentian codex, the column-like shape on folio 279r.

Hamburger's term "iconicity of script" fails to describe many cases of non-figural shaped text because it assumes that script or text, as the medium, acquires the modality of icon. In such cases, this definition contradicts itself. On one hand, it claims to treat the shaped text as a distinct medium different from either text or image, and on the other hand, it prioritizes the visual component as the output and text as the medium that assumes a visual mode. An image constructed from script is still an image. Thus, the column-like catena on folio 279r approaches something equivalent to the "iconicity of script" but manifests itself as non-representational ornament rather than icon or image. In this case, the phrase "aniconicity of script" comes to the fore as an appropriate, if also a paradoxical, neologism.

The distinction between icon and aniconic script may be subtle when applied to shaped texts, but it bears important connotations for the study of the shaped catena. Juxtaposing folio 126r in the Laurentian codex against the column-shaped catena on folio 279r exemplifies the different values at play. Insofar as the former text assumes or at least suggests the shape of a cross, it acts as a medium used to construct a recognizable image. And, indeed, the cross shape should be thought of as an image according to Byzantine post-iconoclastic image theory. After the iconoclastic controversy of the eighth and ninth centuries, the Byzantines thought of the cross as an image (i.e., icon) of the True Cross rather than an ornament or symbol.¹¹ Thus, the Byzantine beholder of the shape on folio 126r would consider it an image, and this justifies employing the phrase "iconicity of script" to describe the effect. However, the shape on folio 279r does not represent anything concretely recognizable. Despite its evocation of crosses or a column, it is a shape for the sake of a shape, or rather, it is a self-referencing shape because it does not signify anything in the natural world other than itself. It is as much a text-made-shape as it is a shape-made-text, but it is not an image, since it does not represent any single object in particular, nor is it just text. It truly becomes its own medium. Folio 279r thus furthers Hamburger's claim that shaped text constitutes its own medium, but at the same time, it extends the concept "iconicity of script" beyond the limits of representational form – beyond iconicity itself.

Thanks to these inherent tensions, shaped texts such as the catena in question never actually realize the transformation of text into image. It is indeed *shaped* text, and therefore inherently *visual* in essence, but the shape never achieves iconicity, that is, representability. Without a referent, non-iconic shaped text does not "represent" in the strict sense of the term; in other words, it does not make any specific referent "present again." This can be shown more clearly using other examples of decorative shaped texts such as the funnel-shaped endings that proliferate in Byzantine manuscripts. Such funnels are categorically aniconic even if they may resemble or imitate pieces of jewelry and tassels on liturgical vestments. They do not fulfill the role of image—at least not to the degree that the shape represents an object or entity found in the natural world. This resulting aniconic script, or "aniconicity of script" to reformulate Hamburger's phrase, becomes a significant, if overlooked, feature of shaped texts.



Fig. 6 Scroll with invocation in the shape of a lion, E.H. 2878, 1458. Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Museum (image from İrvin Cemil Schick, "The Content of Form," in *Sign and Design: Script as Image in Cross-Cultural Perspective (300-1600 C.E.)*, Brigitte M. Bedos-Rezak and Jeffrey F. Hamburger eds. [Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collections, 2016], 186, fig. 9.4)

As a medium in its own right, aniconic script lends itself to various circumstances that call for non-representational form to resolve tensions between text and image. An example of this can be found in manuscript E.H. 2878 held at the Topkapı Palace Museum. The fifteenth-century illumination of a lion constructed entirely of words within a contour line is an example of shaped text that resists fully becoming image (fig. 6).¹² The lion bears no direct reference to the content of the text from which it is composed; it reads: "prince of the believers, 'Alī son of Abū Ṭālib; may the generosity of God be upon his victorious countenance, and may God be pleased with him." Instead, the image refers to the rich cultural iconography of lions in Islamic art as representations of power and right to authority.¹³ At the same time, the copyist refers to the general tension inherent in Islamic culture between iconic and aniconic representation. It is well recognized that Ottoman visual culture was not entirely aniconic, but tensions nevertheless existed within the larger cultural sphere, and these tensions were greatly amplified in literary circles among copyists of religious and semi-religious texts. In this literary sphere, aniconism was occasionally tested and sometimes broken. Thus, this fifteenth-century manuscript possibly exemplifies an artist pushing cultural resistance to figural representation to the very limit.

By creating a visual rendering that can situate itself, even if precariously, within the restrictions of the immediate cultural context, the copyist seems to offer a commentary on what should and should not be regarded as figurative representation. At the very least, the copyist is acknowledging the tensions inherent in the cultural setting and offers up a visual format that nestles somewhere within the fissure of text and image. This is not a conversion of text into image or else the image would find itself infringing upon the conventions and practices employed by Ottoman

copyists of religious and semi-religious texts.¹⁴ At the same time, it is not simply text because it has been manipulated to such a degree that it compromises legibility to facilitate an altogether independent meaning. The artist visually flexed and contorted the grammatical and orthographic composition to accommodate a visual demand. It would therefore be entirely plausible to claim that this example is neither text nor image rather than to say that it is both; it emphatically compromises its position as either one of the two elements and becomes some third element in its holistic entirety. It employs the “iconicity of script” at the same time that it relies on the “aniconicity of script”—even if it is still formulated, paradoxically, as a text-image composite. In other words, the combination of text and image has become something more than the sum of its parts.

A Byzantine example of this paradoxical composite is John the Grammarian’s inscription over the Chalke gate in Constantinople that he used as a replacement for the icon of Christ during the iconoclastic controversy of the eighth and ninth centuries. The pro-iconoclastic poem reads:

They who speak of God write/depict Christ in gold and contemplate [Him] not with the material [eyes] but rather through the speech of the prophets; for faith in God is the hope of those who speak in like manner. They trample openly upon the resurgent error of those who make images, as it is an abomination to God. In agreement with them, they who wear the crown gloriously raise the cross high with pious resolve.¹⁵

Χρυσογραφοῦσι	Χριστὸν	οἱ θεηγόροι
ῥῆσει προφητῶν, μὴ βλέποντες		τοῖς κάτΩ.
Ἰσηγόρων γὰρ	ΕΛΠΙΣ	ἡ θεοπιστίΑ.
Σκιογράφων δὲ	τὴν πάλινδρομον	πλάνηΝ.
Τρανῶς πατοῦσιν	ὡς Θεῶ	μισουμένηΝ.
Οἷς συμπνέοντες	οἱ φοροῦντες	τὰ στέφΗ
ῥυοῦσι φαιδρῶς	Σταυρὸν εὐσεβεῖ	κρίσει.

Fig. 7 Inscription of John the Grammarian, ninth century (image from Ivan Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion in Later Byzantium* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016], 225)

Drpić notes that this poem was rendered in such a way as to create an acrostic in the middle of the paragraph that takes the shape of a cross (fig. 7). The resulting cruciform shape in the center of the inscription utilized the arrangement of letters to spell out the self-referencing phrase “*to pathos elpis*” (the cause of hope).¹⁶ The “cause of hope” refers not only to the cross for which the phrase acts as a structure but

also to the True Cross. At this time, when iconodule image theory was only just being developed by St. John of Damascus, St. Theodore the Studite, and the other defenders of images, the iconoclasts conceived of the cross as the only acceptable figure to be displayed in a religious setting because they treated it as a non-representational or non-iconic figure even if technically the cross shape referred to the prototypical True Cross.¹⁷ Iconoclasts replaced some of the most prominent images in churches with crosses, and Drpić is convinced that the cross thus visualized in John the Grammarian’s inscription was somehow highlighted, perhaps by gilded letters, to ensure that it was recognized by passersby.¹⁸

This inscription again demonstrates the great advantage of the shaped text as medium. It avoided

charges of being regarded as an image so long as it remained aniconic script. Simultaneously, the entire inscription is more than merely text since it directly replaced an image previously deployed over the gate. In this way, it took on the function of an image, and it ensured its recognition as such by the clever rendition of (possibly gilded) letters and the poetic formulation of the acrostic that spells out the cruciform shape both figuratively and literally. At first, this example may evoke the cross shape on folio 126r of the Laurentian codex where the cross was regarded as an image or icon of the True Cross by the post-iconoclastic Byzantine viewer.¹⁹ However, John the Grammarian's poem with its prominent cross was conceived of very differently by iconoclasts in the ninth century; for them, the cross in the inscription was fundamentally non-iconic. It came to occupy a liminal position between non-figural shapes and fully figural representations such as icons of Christ or the saints. In other words, the iconoclasts introduced the cross as a third category that functioned as image but was not conceived of as an idolatrous image by definition. The iconodules later pointed out just how inconsistent and contrived this formulation really was and established their own definitions of images. More to the point, iconicity is thus shown to be a fluid concept subject to the vicissitudes of a developing visual culture. A cross in one context is regarded as an image, and in another context it is not.



Fig. 8 Curzon Cruciform Lectionary, Add MS 39603, fol. 1r, Constantinople, twelfth century. London, British Library (photo: courtesy of the British Library)

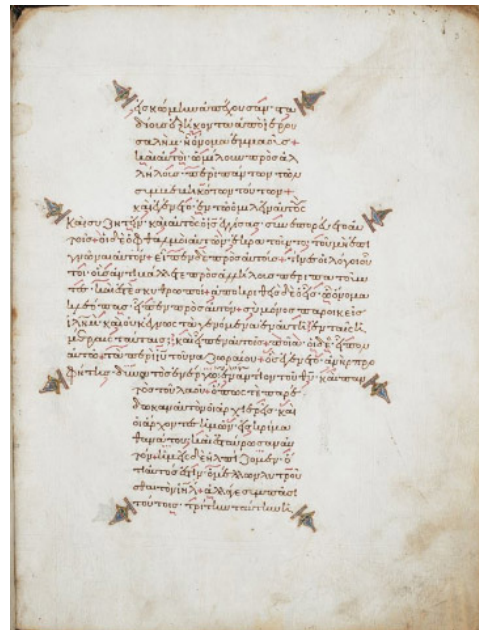


Fig. 9 Curzon Cruciform Lectionary, Add MS 39603, fol. 3r, Constantinople, twelfth century. London, British Library (photo: courtesy of the British Library)

These two examples, the illumination from the Topkapı manuscript and the iconoclastic inscription of John the Grammarian, demonstrate the critical function of shaped text in historical context. They avoid direct identification as fully iconic representations, and yet, they reach far beyond the capabilities and properties of text by functioning as images. Compositional or visual context similarly affects the fluctuation of iconicity that can be observed in particular examples of

shaped text. The iconicity of an ornamental shape might be heightened when it appears next to non-decorative undifferentiated text, but deemphasized when juxtaposed against an illumination. In the twelfth-century Curzon Cruciform Lectionary now located in the British Library, the entire text is rendered in cruciform shape (fig. 8, fig. 9). This codex is post-iconoclastic, and therefore, according to contemporaneous Byzantine theory, the cruciform shape constitutes an image. Indeed, its iconicity is emphasized by the decorative florets that draw the viewer's attention to the corners and therefore to the cruciform shape itself.²⁰ Yet the text never really reaches iconicity; it never fully represents its referent. This contradiction is driven home by the repetition of cruciform shapes that dilute the iconicity of the cruciform text. Because the post-iconoclastic image theory of the Byzantines leaves open the question regarding degrees of iconicity, this accommodation allows for a theorization of aniconic shaped text even if such a theory was not explicitly articulated by Byzantine aestheticians.



Fig. 10 Gospel lectionary showing an image of Christ on the Cross, BZ.1939.12, Dumbarton Oaks MS. 1., fol. 145r, Constantinople, ca. 1050-1100. Washington, DC, Dumbarton Oaks Library (photo: © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC)

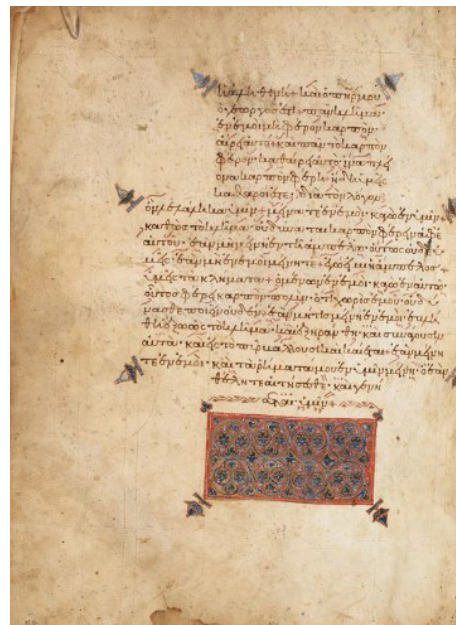


Fig. 11 Curzon Cruciform Lectionary, Add MS 39603, fol. 196v, Constantinople, twelfth century. London, British Library (photo: courtesy of the British Library)

There can be little doubt that the cruciform text on folio 1r of the Curzon Lectionary visually differs from the cruciform text on folio 126r of the Laurentian codex. In the former, the text is framed by a decorative border, and even if the text is technically cruciform in shape, it is the dominant colorful border that visually constitutes the shape of the cross—one can almost imagine how the text would spill out into an amorphous pile of letters had it not been for the solid ornamental border that props up the entire composition. Compared with the cruciform text in the Laurentian codex, the framed text on folio 1r of the Curzon Lectionary seems to be constricted

rather than shaped. It can hardly be described as shaped text, let alone given the status of iconic script. By contrast, a Gospel lectionary at Dumbarton Oaks (Dumbarton Oaks MS 1) contains a reverse example on folio 145r (fig. 10). Here, it is the text that surrounds the image of Christ crucified on the cross. Similar to the Curzon Lectionary, the lectionary at Dumbarton Oaks includes cruciform-shaped text across the majority of its pages, but on this particular folio an image of the Crucifixion is imbedded into the text. The effect of this composition is such that the text functions as a virtual container for the image—a reliquary of text containing a relic/image, and, as so often happens with reliquaries, this container imitates the shape of the relic inside.²¹ Clearly, text can function as a containing medium no less than the ornamental framework on folio 1r of the Curzon Lectionary functions as a container of text. However, this example again shows that shaped text loses some of its iconicity when juxtaposed against an image with a stronger degree of representability. On any other page, the cruciform text could be regarded as an image, but here, in contrast with an image of the crucified Christ, the shape of the text loses some of its potency as an image and cedes iconographical primacy to the fully figural image. At once iconic and aniconic, the viewer is thus reminded of the fluid property of shaped text, but this does not mean that text and illumination cannot operate on equal terms. In fact, the copyist and illuminator of the Curzon Lectionary forced shaped text and illumination into cooperation on folio 196v where text and illuminated ornament function symbiotically to complete the shape of the cross (fig. 11). Having copied the last part of the text but finding the cruciform shape unfinished, the copyist collaborated with the illuminator who completed the composition by adding the ornament at the bottom. The Curzon Lectionary beautifully exemplifies the various unique properties of shaped text even as it highlights the limitations of its iconicity.

Because shaped text in these examples oscillates between iconicity and aniconicity, its fluidity made it a versatile and powerful tool in the hands of skilled copyists and artists. More importantly, the hypothesis that aniconic shaped text constitutes its own medium explains why non-figural shaped text, such as the column-like shape on folio 279r of the Laurentian codex, does not just look different than the rest of the text on the page, it also functions differently. While the exact function and meaning of the shaped catena will be explored in the following two sections, the premise inherent in the concept of aniconic script foregrounds the possibility that shaped text as a medium functions independently of either the content of the text or the shape.

The Medium and Function of Shaped Text

Text maintained a special status in Byzantium, especially when it signified imperial or holy status (emperors, saints, Christ, etc.). In notable surviving instances, Byzantine artists demonstrate a heightened awareness of text in their work by the special attention they gave to names and their location. The hierarchic spatial demands made of names sometimes required artists to manipulate written compositions by sacrificing or downplaying grammatical and linguistic structures.

Antony Eastmond brings several of these examples to the fore in his study of monograms, and



Fig. 12 Reliquary cross given by Emperor Justin II (565–578) to Rome, sixth century. Rome, Vatican Museums (photo: Gfawkes05 from Wikimedia Commons)

two particularly striking cases that also involve shaped text will serve to underscore the Byzantine treatment of names.²² The first instance involves a dedicatory poem on a sixth-century reliquary cross (fig. 12).²³ Written out in two hexameter verses, the poem features the emperor's name, Iustinus, in the middle of the second verse: "*Ligno quo Christus humanum subdidit hostem | dat Romae Iustinus opem et socia decorem.*"²⁴ Spelled out in a straight line, the name does not occupy a particularly significant place in the composition. However, the name occupies a prominent place on the arm of the cross where it becomes the first word encountered from the left side. To ensure that the name appears exactly in this position, the artist constricted the preceding eight words into the vertical portion of the cross. After this apportionment, the text was spatially configured to physically fit into the cruciform arms of the reliquary allowing the name, Iustinus, to feature in a prominent position on the object. This second

revision came at a significant cost to legibility because the entire first verse and a portion of the second verse were packed into the upper arm of the cross. In mathematical terms, the artist constricted slightly over sixty percent of the text into just twenty-five percent of the space leaving about twelve percent of the text for each of the remaining three arms. Put this way, there seems to be little doubt that the artist here has prioritized certain inherent non-textual qualities of script over the convention and function of text.

Another striking example exists at the church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus in Constantinople. Here, a dedicatory inscription to the founders Justinian and Theodora runs along the interior nave of the building just above the cornices of the capitals (fig. 13, fig. 14). In this twelve-line hexameter poem, the name of Justinian appears in the third verse while Theodora's name appears in the tenth verse (i.e., the third-from-last verse). This somewhat awkward separation of the donors' names is explained by the actual positions of the names in the architectural context. The two names appear on the north and south sides of the nave facing each other and correspond to the gendered spaces of the imperial church.²⁵ In this case, the names in the inscription would also correlate with the persons of Justinian and Theodora as they would perhaps stand in the church's gallery during the liturgy—directly above their names in the inscription. Whether or not the names were gilded or somehow emphasized by color has not been determined, but this remains a possibility. As with the inscriptions of John the Grammarian on the Chalke Gate and the cross reliquary, the Byzantine artists here have again prioritized the spatial configuration of the text over literary content. These examples suggest that the literate Byzantine viewer could reasonably expect certain texts to defer to visual demands associated with hierarchies of space, sometimes at the cost of legibility. If these expectations were also applied to script in other contexts, they could account for the funnel-shaped endings and other variously shaped texts that occur in Byzantine

manuscripts. The notion that Byzantine viewers might place visual demands on text in both of these contexts—the monumental and the literary—is certainly a reasonable proposition.



Fig. 13 Dedicatory inscription to Justinian and Theodora, church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus, sixth century. Constantinople (Istanbul) (photo: Dick Osseman from Wikimedia Commons)

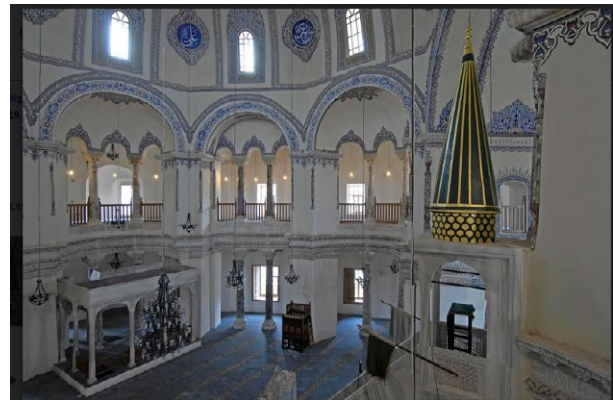


Fig. 14 Dedicatory inscription to Justinian and Theodora seen from the gallery, church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus, sixth century. Constantinople (Istanbul) (photo: Dick Osseman from Wikimedia Commons)

Most significant in these examples of dedicatory inscriptions is the way they convey the Byzantine approach to text that was meant to fill a physical space and fulfill a visual role. To this end, the very structure of Byzantine poetic compositions seems ideally suited for rendering text into visual form. Each example—John the Grammarian’s inscription, Justin’s cross-reliquary, and the inscription in the church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus—employed a strict poetic formulation either in the form of hexameter verses or a dodecasyllabic composition. Byzantine hexameter and dodecasyllabic verses are rather rigid structures for poetry, and some scholars have seen in this rigid structure a certain lack of creativity. However, these poetic restrictions conform exceptionally well to geometric outlines in physical space.²⁶



Figs. 16-17 Reliquary-enkolpion (obverse on left; reverse on right), Museum No. M3-1147, twelfth century. Moscow, Kremlin Museums (photos by S. V. Baranov; images from Ivan Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion in Later Byzantium* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016], 199 and 200).

This is most clearly evident in their employment on the reverse side of a reliquary-*enkolpion* now located in the Moscow Kremlin Museum (fig. 15, fig. 16). Here, the eight lines of poetry that list the various relics inside the reliquary fit neatly within its square form. Because each verse is naturally longer or shorter than the others, the inscriber repositioned, omitted, or conjoined certain vowels, consonants, and some conjunctions in order to ensure that each line begins and ends at the edges of the reliquary's frame. Drpić calls this technique the “verse-filling asyndeton” where asyndeton refers to the intentional elimination of conjunctions.²⁷ He explains that it lends itself strategically to spatial contexts, and it solves a persistent problem encountered by virtually all copyists who transcribed text onto physical surfaces in medieval productions.

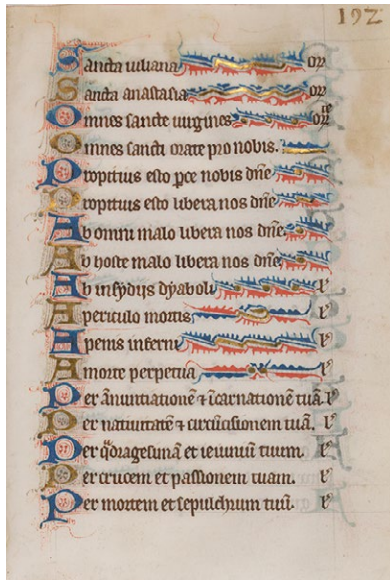


Fig. 17 French, Leaf from a Book of Hours (Litany), late fourteenth century, ink, tempera, and gold on parchment, 5 3/4 x 4 1/8 in. Chazen Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin – Madison, Gift of Barbara Mackey Kaerwer, 2013.37.64 (photo with permission of Chazen Museum of Art)

Other solutions to configuring text to meet visual demands were also employed, but less effectively. A fourteenth-century Latin leaf containing a litany from the *Book of Hours*, now held at the Chazen Museum of Art in Madison, provides one such example (fig. 17). Here, the copyist filled the blank spaces at the ends of shorter verses with an ornament that was gilded and painted in red and blue tempera. In both the reliquary-*enkolpion* and the litany leaf, visual cohesion of text on the surface was of great concern to each of the artists, but they addressed the demands of visual structuring in different ways. Unlike his Latin counterpart, the Byzantine metalsmith avoided extraneous elements in the reliquary largely because his dodecasyllabic composition, aided by “verse-filling asyndeton,” was structured in a way that facilitated the resultant shaped form. More than just a coincidence of poetics and shaped surface, this inscription demonstrates a cultural approach toward orthography and linguistic composition that is exceptionally fluid and thoroughly based on the visual expectations within Byzantine culture.

All of the instances of Byzantine shaped texts described above allude to a cultural approach toward the text-image relationship that treats shaped texts as a kind of hybrid medium. If these shaped texts were considered purely through textual analysis with no consideration for the visual component, a large portion of their meaning and agency would become instantly weakened. The visual properties simply cannot be communicated by non-visual means such as aural reading of the text. More specifically, the poem of John the Grammarian loses virtually all of its potency when the cruciform formation of the acrostic is not also considered. Similarly, both of the dedicatory inscriptions—one to Justinus on the cross reliquary and the other to Justinian and Theodora at the church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus—must be considered in their respective contexts in order to fully acknowledge the locative significance of the patrons' names. And finally, the inscription on the reliquary-*enkolpion* emphasizes how efficiently Byzantine prose facilitated the rendition of poetic language into visual form.

These examples express a symbiotic relationship between Byzantine literary and visual cultures. They point to a broader and higher purpose of sacred communication in which the application of text to surface was done with great consideration for spatial and visual context. These examples also provide evidence of an attitude in which matters of grammar and syntax give way to visual cohesion—where priority is given to the text-image dyad rather than to composition or readability. Thus, the visual and functional demands of each of these objects ensured that text was manipulated, shaped, and treated as if it were a medium in its own right. Perhaps more importantly, shaped text was used to imbue words with meaning that extended well beyond their semantic quality.

Shaped Text as Mediator

Shaped texts that take the form of non-figural, decorative elements are somewhat more cryptic than ones which take representational or even symbolic configurations such as the cruciform acrostic in John the Grammarian's inscription or the cross reliquary with the name Iustinus. Still, the principles at play in the text-image relationship apply also to these instances. Decorative shaped texts carry meaning rooted in their function as a distinct medium (shaped text) that is not constrained by orthographical or syntactical regulations. However, non-figural shaped texts rely much more heavily on the aniconic properties of the text-shape dyad than figural shaped texts that contain either a clear visual referent (e.g. John the Grammarian's acrostic) or a semantic referent (e.g. names in inscriptions). In other words, the manipulation or shaping of text is more easily justified when the desired outcome is the shape of a cross or the even distribution of text across a square-shaped reliquary-*enkolpion*, or when a particular name is to be positioned in a desired location. However, a non-figural, decorative shape employs different parameters and therefore requires a different set of justifications.

The column-shaped catena on folio 279r that initiated this foray into Byzantine shaped texts contains a referent and a meaning that is much more difficult to uncover. However, two dedicatory poems in the same codex provide important clues. These poems allude to the codex and its maker and refer to the decorative program on the codex's pages; in fact, they directly mention "adornment." The introductory poem to Isaiah refers to a person by the name of Niketas who was clearly involved in the making of the codex, likely as a patron and possibly as the author of the poems (fig. 18). The preface to Isaiah reads: "Isaiah... | ... left precepts for profit in living | Which Niketas... | Has brought together in this place in adornment | As token of his faith, and ransom of his soul."²⁸ The poem to Ezekiel bears a similar description: "... [Ezekiel] showed so clearly the knowledge of the complete end | Of things that he could write down even the measures | Of arrangements for the future in the words | Which thus a dutiful soul adorns in hope."²⁹ These passages make it clear that Niketas, who was involved with the production of the manuscript, placed significant emphasis on its adornment. By doing so, he hoped that this adorning would be perceived by God as a token of his faith and a ransom of his soul, and thus, become a salvific act.



Fig. 18 Poem on Isaiah, Laur. 5.9, fol. 3v, Byzantine, tenth century or later. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana (photo with permission of MiBACT; any further reproduction by any means is prohibited).

The manuscript contained illuminations of each of the four prophets, though only one survives today. These illuminations are also decorated with a luxurious colored border very similar to the decorative border surrounding the introductory poem to Isaiah. The passages in the poems that mention adornment likely refer to all of these instances as a whole: the illuminations, the luxurious borders, and most certainly the decorative shaped texts that occur on folios 279r and 126r. These latter texts should not by any means be discounted as acts of adornment simply because they are constructed of words rather than paint and gold flakes. On the contrary, the attitude of Byzantine copyists toward shaped texts strongly suggests that Niketas includes the instances of shaped text in his codex as part of a conscious effort that contributed to the overall adornment of the codex.

Even if it may have not been planned initially, the ornamentally shaped catena nevertheless required a significant degree of effort and careful alignment. In like manner, the shaping of the preface to Jeremiah in the form of a cross on folio 126r exemplifies an effort that extends beyond the utilitarian layout of the rest of the text. These two examples point to deliberate efforts on the part of the copyist to give the text no small degree of aesthetic prominence. When Niketas asks God to pay attention to his act of adorning the codex, he presents his work in overt terms as a visual or aesthetic production rather than as a literary one. In other words, it is the visual elements in the codex that constitute for Niketas the intended emphasis and the salvific purpose of the manuscript.

When Niketas is mentioned adorning the manuscript as a token of faith and a ransom of his soul in the dedicatory poems, the author of these passages, presumably Niketas himself, integrates the act of adornment or beautification with soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) and beneficence. Such integration was common in Byzantium in the tenth and eleventh centuries when the manuscript was written. It involved the Byzantine understanding of *kosmos*—the most common word for “adornment”—as a conceptualization of artistic or creative activity that moved beyond utility toward an aesthetic and spiritual ideal.³⁰ Drpić explains that “to encase or frame a sacred object with a lavish material *kosmos* (adornment) was understood by the Byzantines as a way to gain access to and partake, as it were, of the object’s sanctity.”³¹ At its most profound stage, this concept applied directly to epigrams, which became regarded as the highest category of adornment “above any material *kosmos*.”³² According to Drpić, “what made [words] such an exceptional *cosmetic* medium was the fact that they were wrought not from earthly materials—gold, silver, gems, pearls, and the like—but from the supremely precious stuff of *logos* (word).”³³ This attitude among the Byzantines explains why the shaped text occurring in the Laurentian codex mattered

in the overall decorative program and how the shaped words may have constituted a sacred medium on par with paint or even precious metals. Given that, as a whole, greater attention was given to the illuminations in the manuscript, it is not clear whether Niketas would have considered text to be a medium that superseded paint or gold, but the very idea that text played a role in adornment and therefore as part of the ransom of Niketas's soul indeed raises the medium to a precious status.

The convention of treating words with particular reverence developed from a theological and philosophical discourse that described words as images and as clothes or garments of thoughts. This convention was notably employed by John of Damascus in his refutation of iconoclasm, but a general reverence for words can also be found in other cultures of the Mediterranean.³⁴ Byzantine theologians who dealt with aesthetics—Dionysius the Aeropagite, John of Damascus, and Maximus the Confessor, among others—formulated their theories of beauty based on the idea that the created world bears witness to or speaks of the transcendent beauty of God. Maximus the Confessor follows this conceptualization when he writes that “creation participates in the beauty and being of God in an iconic or refractive manner, whereby God's own beauty and image are passed through the cosmic order, causing the mind to ‘ascend’ in contemplation of the transcendent.”³⁵ The principle of aesthetics in Byzantium should therefore be understood as an ontologically based conception that bears soteriological implications. Beholding things that are beautiful causes the mind, and therefore the soul or nous, to ascend toward God.

When Niketas has his manuscript adorned with illuminations and decoratively shaped texts, he participates in a soteriological activity that beautifies the work created. In transforming a blank space on parchment into an aesthetic medium, Niketas moves his soul closer to divinity via the senses that behold the manuscript. To put it somewhat more directly, Niketas participates in the sanctification of the created world by his efforts in adorning the manuscript. By his patronage and efforts, the decorative shaped text becomes a soteriological mediator that alludes to and leads the manuscript's reader, as well as its maker, toward the divine beauty, toward God. In this way, theological and philosophical theories of beauty in Byzantium gave decorative elements a purpose and function equivalent to salvific activity. To pen a decorative element onto parchment was to mediate the sanctification of one's soul.

Conclusion

Starting with the Florentine manuscript with its column-like catena, the examples of shaped text discussed in this article provide evidence that written language was employed in Byzantine literary circles as a visual medium that carried potency and meaning in the larger culture. Shaped text relied on both the iconic and aniconic qualities that lent it the status of being its own unique medium. Never entirely independent of the properties of text and image, it nevertheless expressed itself in more fluid ways without certain limitations and constraints. Furthermore, shaped text and especially decorative shaped text carried soteriological significance as mediator of divine beauty and of salvation.

To this end, the patron of the Florentine manuscript, Niketas, expressed his salvific aspirations as being directly linked to his adornment of the manuscript. Most importantly, his dedication provides evidence that the Middle-Byzantine approaches to written language were full of nuance and theological implications. The functional fluidity that shaped text provided for copyists and artists made this a potent medium in Byzantine visual culture with various modalities. Furthermore, situating shaped text in the context of Byzantine aesthetic and philosophical theories explains the function and significance of the catena in the Laurentian codex. The shaped text of the catena is a visual device capable of producing its own set of meanings wholly distinct from literary content and figural representations. As a part of the Laurentian codex's decorative program, the column-like catena embodied the soteriological aspirations of its producer and therefore functioned as a mediator of salvation.

About the Author

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Notes

¹ Byzantine Octateuch manuscript, Florence, Bibl. Laur. MS. Plutei 5.9. See also John Lowden, *Illuminated Prophet Books: A Study of Byzantine Manuscripts of the Major and Minor Prophets* (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1988), fig. 29 (description on 15–22).

² See, for example, Henry Maguire, “How did Early Byzantine Ornament Work?” in *Graphic Signs of Identity, Faith, and Power in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2017).

³ Lowden, *Illuminated Prophet Books*, 14, and fig. 25. The Laurentian codex contains a number of decorative shaped catenae. Notable examples can be found on folios 203r, 279r, 292r, 308r, 314r, 315r, 320r, 333r, and 337v. The copyist also shaped parts of the primary text on folios 126r and 127r. The shape on fol. 126r resembles a cross with triangular upper and lower arms. It seems as if the copyist attempted a similar shape on fol. 127r but had run out of text and left the would-be cruciform incomplete.

⁴ Ibid, 14–22. Lowden agrees with Belting and Cavallo that the Laurentian and Turin manuscripts are related, but he also points out that they are not identical. A third codex at the Kongelige Bibliotek in Copenhagen (cod. GKS 6) also seems to be related to these manuscripts. Together, they constitute the Major Prophets (Florence), Minor Prophets (Turin), and Wisdom Books containing Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom of Solomon, Psalms of Solomon, and Sirach (Copenhagen). See: Hans Belting and Guglielmo Cavallo, *Die Bibel des Niketas* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1979).

⁵ See also: Christopher de Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (London: Phaidon Press, 1994), 92.

⁶ Lowden, *Illuminated Prophet Books*, 14–22.

⁷ Ivan Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion in Later Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *Script as Image* (Leuven: Peeters Leuven, 2014).

⁸ Hamburger, *Script as Image*, 2.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ While medium usually refers to the materials employed by an artist to shape a particular work of art (paint, stone, metal, etc.) the study at hand will consider text to be a medium not unlike any of the other elements. But because text can also carry non-visual or oral forms of expression, in other words, because text is also and usually thought of as the medium of a specifically aural nature and not just visual, instances where text forms additional meaning through textual-visual configurations will be referred to here as “shaped text.”

¹¹ St. John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 2000), 73–8.

¹² İrvin Cemil Schick, “The Content of Form: Islamic Calligraphy between Text and Representation,” in *Sign and Design: Script as Image in Cross-Cultural Perspective (300–1600 CE)*, eds. B. M. Bedos-Rezak and J. F. Hamburger (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks Library and Collection, 2016), 185 and fig. 9.4 (186).

¹³ Elizabeth June Adey’s dissertation concentrates on this topic and provides a comprehensive bibliography. See *A Study of the Iconography of the Lion in Islamic Art* (University of Edinburgh, 1993).

¹⁴ Images in fifteenth-century Islamic productions were employed in certain secular environments but never in the Quran and other religious texts. This tension was played out in secular manuscripts such as the one described here that occupied a position between religious texts and secular works.

¹⁵ Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*, 225. The poem is preserved in Theodore the Studite’s *Refutatio et subversio*, PG 99, cols. 436B–477A, trans. Catto, <https://archive.org/details/patrologicursus60migngoog>

¹⁶ Ibid, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*, 226–7. The translation provided by Drpić follows the definition of *to pathos elpis* as a means, a cause, or incident related to change. See, for example, G.W.H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 992–5.

¹⁷ The iconoclasts at first (late eighth century) argued that the body and blood of Christ consecrated at the liturgy are the only true symbols of Christ. Since this was successfully counter-argued by iconophiles, the iconoclasts changed their position and the cross became their primary accepted symbol; in some cases it replaced images directly on major monumental surfaces in Byzantine churches.

¹⁸ Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*, 226.

¹⁹ The iconodule council that convened in Nicea in 787 explicitly affirmed that images of Christ and the saints are to be regarded with the same dignity and veneration as the cross.

²⁰ The iconicity of this script may even be translatable from text to a different medium as is exemplified by the gilt seventeenth- or eighteenth-century cover of the Curzon Lectionary. The cover replicates the cruciform shape of the text in the codex, complete with decorative florets at the corners.

²¹ This is especially the case on this folio because the copyist had left a blank space—a cavity of absent text—into which the illuminator painted the image. They thus imitated, to a degree, the insertion of a relic into a prepared reliquary that was preemptively shaped to accommodate that relic.

²² Antony Eastmond, “Monograms and the Art of Unhelpful Writing in Late Antiquity,” in *Sign and Design: Script as Image in Cross-Cultural Perspective (300–1600 CE)*, eds. B. M. Bedos-Rezak and J. F. Hamburger (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks Library and Collection, 2016), 220–6.

²³ Ibid, 223. The cross was given by the Emperor Justin to Rome in the sixth century.

²⁴ Ibid. Transcription and figure provided by Antony Eastmond.

²⁵ Ibid, 225.

²⁶ Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*, 201.

²⁷ Ibid. See also Ivan Drpić, “Short Texts on Small Objects,” in *Inscribing Texts in Byzantium: Continuities and Transformations*, eds. Marc Diederik Lauxtermann and Ida Toth (New York: Routledge, 2020), 323. The term “verse-filling asyndeton” was originally phrased as *versefüllendes Asyndeton* by Ernst Robert Curtius. Drpić explains that “this stylistic device involves the elimination of conjunctions between words and phrases so that each line of poetry consists of a sequence of juxtaposed—and indeed, piled-up—rather than connected linguistic units” (“Short Texts on Small Objects,” 323).

²⁸ Lowden, *Illuminated Prophet Books*, 18–21.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion*, 125.

³¹ Ibid, 185.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ The link between material and metaphysical beauty ran deep within many cultures of the Mediterranean, not just the Byzantine. Thus, ornamented shaped texts can also be witnessed in Islamic works—especially, but by no means exclusively, in Fatimid art, as well as in Hebrew manuscripts such as the eleventh-century *Leningrad Codex*. In the Byzantine literary circles, the concept of *kalokagathia* (the co-concepts of beauty and goodness that featured in Aristotle’s ethical works) would have been recognized by the Byzantine beholder, but in its Christianized form *kalokagathia* gained its own prominence as part of Orthodox conceptions of goodness and nobility of character that applied not only to human characteristics but also to material objects. Plotinus’s ideas also featured prominently in Byzantine image theory and aesthetics. See, for example, Archimandrite Patapios, “Images of the Invisible Beauty: Plotinian Aesthetics and Byzantine Iconography,” in *The Sculptor and His Stone: Selected Readings on Hellenistic and Christian Learning and Thought in the Early Greek Fathers*, ed. Archbishop Chrysostomos (Eugene: Pickwick, 2016), 119–30. An excellent outline of the aesthetics of St. Maximus the Confessor is provided by Michael D. Gibson, “The Beauty of the Redemption of the World: The Theological Aesthetics of Maximus the Confessor and Jonathan Edwards,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 10, no. 1 (2008): 45–76, at 48–53.

³⁵ Gibson, “The Beauty of the Redemption of the World,” 50.



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A Haymarket Khozhdenie na osliati: Raskolnikov's Donkey Walk and the Failures of Iconic Performativity

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Kathleen Scollins

A Haymarket *Khozhdenie na osliati*: Raskolnikov's Donkey Walk and the Failures of Iconic Performativity

Abstract

In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Moscow, Orthodox priests and celebrants reenacted Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday in a ritual known as the Donkey Walk (*Khozhdenie na osliati*). Art historian Alexei Lidov has interpreted this reenactment as a "spatial icon," in which city and inhabitants co-create a dynamic, living "Entry into Jerusalem" icon. This paper reexamines the final chapters of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* within the context of this ritual, arguing that Raskolnikov's attempted act of penitence at the Haymarket represents a failed Donkey Walk, in which the city and its inhabitants resist the anticipated transformation, suggesting the impossibility of iconic performativity in Peter's profane city.

Keywords: Donkey Walk, Alexei Lidov, spatial icon, performative, *Crime and Punishment*

Introduction: The Performing Icon, Past and Present

The question of an icon's performativity—its ability to effect change or transformation within a reverent beholder or community—has remained a topic of theological and theoretical debate for over one and a half millennia, from antiquity through the Iconoclastic crisis and beyond, into the postmodern age. Through the ancient and medieval eras, theologians developed various subtle explanations for the divine image's capacity to mediate between God and believer, including essentialist models that implied the presence of the divine prototype within the image and non-essentialist models that carefully distinguished a saint's outer likeness from his divine essence. By the ninth century, Orthodox thinkers had landed on a solution to the iconoclasts' challenge that

carefully excised any hint of spirit from matter; but while their doctrines successfully shielded the devout from charges of idolatry, they failed to account for the icon's miraculous properties. As a result, an uneasy fault line opened up between the dictates of iconoclast-era theology and the draw of popular belief, where legends of icons' miraculous intercessory, protective, or healing performances blurred the fine lines these theologians had so carefully drawn to keep earthly image distinct from heavenly model.¹

Over the past several decades, as visual culture has taken shape as an academic field, the Orthodox icon has reemerged as the site of spirited debate, and an interdisciplinary assortment of scholars—historians, religious and literary specialists, political theorists, and art historians, among others—has sought to reassess Byzantine image theory in light of contemporary intellectual developments. Their reconsideration of the divine image takes place at a particularly lively scholarly crossroads, where the performative turn in the arts of the late twentieth century intersects with the recent material turn in religious studies.

The so-called performative turn of the late twentieth century occurred across multiple disciplines, as scholars sought to reexamine cultural phenomena as diverse as language, gender, and religious ritual through the central metaphor of performance. Artistic works were reconceived not as stable artifacts—independent texts, detached from their creators, ready to be consumed and interpreted by discrete spectators—but rather as ephemeral events, co-constructed and experienced by actors and spectators within a shared physical environment. The dynamic interaction among these participants has the potential to effect transformation in all three: in a work of performance art, for instance, the actor transforms her body, becoming both subject and object of performance; the spectator's embodied response to this performance transforms him into actor and co-creator; and the physical performance space itself is transformed into an unstable and transient communal environment, charged with meanings and possibilities. Such performances routinely disrupt, and ultimately dissolve, traditional boundaries between actor and spectator, being and doing, art and life.² More recently, a material turn in the humanities and social sciences has invigorated a shift within the study of religion from the realm of the intellect—reversing a general Western tendency to prioritize ideas, doctrine, and theology as religion's defining elements—to that of the body, reestablishing the primacy of matter—physical objects, sensory perceptions, enacted and emplaced ritual practices—in constituting, accessing, and experiencing the spiritual.³

Both performative and materialist approaches emphasize corporeality, sensuous experience, and spatial context, establishing perception as a vital and meaning-making encounter between lived, phenomenal bodies and the physical environment. Cultural phenomena, including religious rites or artistic works, are understood to be experienced through the bodily senses—they are touched, smelled, heard, seen, and felt—rather than simply analyzed by a disembodied intellect. These new frameworks thus encourage a refocusing of the critical gaze, from the text or object itself to “its function as a performative and communicative act in a particular cultural situation”;⁴ indeed, the very notion of a stable, fixed text is replaced by that of a fluid and ever-changing performance,

generated through the dynamic interactions among participants within a shared space. Such artistic events generate meaning within the bodies and senses of the spectator, initiating the possibility of transformation in all participants and destabilizing conventional binaries, such that matter leads to spirit, spectator becomes performer, and performance constitutes reality.⁵

It is within this corporeally charged critical context that contemporary scholars such as art historians Alexei Lidov, Bissera Pentcheva, and Nicoletta Isar have undertaken a critical reevaluation of the Orthodox icon.⁶ As the debate has left the church and entered the academy, theological questions have largely been consigned to the Orthodox clergy, allowing scholarly attention to shift from the metaphysical nexus of divinity/icon/holder, so essential to Byzantine thought, to the more material postmodern nexus of image/spectator/environment. This new generation of icon theorists has clearly kept up with the recent material and performative tendencies in cultural studies, traces of which mark their own studies of the divine image. Collectively, their approaches redirect attention from the icon as discrete object to its active role in iconic rituals, from flat surface to spatial emanation; emphasize the environmental context and spatio-material qualities of the divine image; and recognize the critical role of the beholder's sensory response. In contrast to medieval theology, these more recent approaches stress the contextualized nature of iconic performance: the relationship between icon and venerator does not take place in isolation, but within a rich liturgical or ceremonial environment. These readings dramatize the interdependence of spirit, matter, and space: the charged spiritual atmosphere heightens the embodied perceptions of the beholder which, coupled with phenomenal changes in the environment—reverberations of music and chanted liturgy; hazy wafts of intoxicating incense; flickering candlelight, stirred by the breath of prayer—all animate the surface of the image which, in turn, sacralizes the environment and effects a transformation in the observer by facilitating an experience of the divine.⁷ According to these recent reassessments, then, the performativity of the icon is determined not through the presence of the divine essence, but through the image's material apprehension by living, sensing bodies within a sacrally charged environment.

The most influential of the recent frameworks to emerge from this new era of icon scholarship is undoubtedly Lidov's theory of hierotopy, devoted to the creation of sacred spaces. An interdisciplinary field of study spanning anthropology, religion, and art history, hierotopy accounts for the material and performative means (including imagery, light, song, and rite) by which humans produce spatial or architectural links to the sacred; where hierophany refers to the breakthrough of the spiritual into everyday life, hierotopy involves human intention—not a spontaneous breakthrough, then, but an active, purposeful creation of sacred space.⁸ Like other performative approaches to the divine image, Lidov's hierotopic schema ties the icon's "performance"—the active transformation of its surroundings and spiritual transport of its beholder—to the dynamic interaction between image, viewer, and ritual space. Introduced in 2001 and developed in a significant body of research over nearly two decades, Lidov's hierotopic approach has sparked spirited intellectual debate and inspired innovative interdisciplinary methodologies, particularly among art historians, medievalists, and scholars of religious studies. Having made a considerable splash

in these diverse fields, the rich possibilities of this young research discipline have now begun to reach the shores of literary studies.⁹ By now, the artistic strategies by which Orthodox authors like Dostoevsky and Bulgakov weave narrative icons into their texts are well documented, the critical literature replete with analyses demonstrating how literary works might be read “iconically” in order to illuminate new layers of spiritual meaning. As approaches like Lidov’s have broadened the concept of the icon from wooden object to energetic participant in the performance of the sacred, critical studies of such textual icons must likewise widen their analytical lens to encompass extra-pictorial elements of the icon such as ritual, devotional, and otherwise sacralized spaces. While previous scholars have located and identified verbal icons in *Crime and Punishment*, most prominently in the epilogue, the present study will focus on a different, previously unremarked icon in the novel’s final pages: the reenactment of a medieval iconic ritual. It is intended as a case study, illustrating how Lidov’s hierotopy can open sacred possibilities within narrative spaces, allowing literary expressions of performative icons to reveal new spiritual meanings in even the best-known works.

The Gospel according to Dostoevsky, and the Missing Entry into Jerusalem

A century and a half of readers—scholars and students alike—have discerned a familiar narrative pattern underlying Raskolnikov’s redemption plotline in the final chapters of *Crime and Punishment*: the passion and resurrection of Christ. George Gibian notes that the murderer’s taking up the cross and going on his “sorrowful way” to confess his crime are reminiscent of Christ’s path to Golgotha.¹⁰ Jostein Bortnes argues that the Gospel modeling of Raskolnikov’s spiritual regeneration is initiated by Sonia’s reading of Lazarus, and continues through the epilogue, with his “descent into the hell of the Siberian prison,” symbolic victory over death, and eventual resurrection.¹¹ Susan McReynolds detects Raskolnikov’s self-association with Christ much earlier, noting his own conception of the crime as “taking sin and suffering on oneself in order to save others.”¹² Priscilla Meyer has even suggested that the entire novel represents a modern-day revision of Dostoevsky’s beloved Johannine Gospel, in which the hero experiences a series of events that “parody” those recounted by John, including the Passover feast, cleansing of the temple, interrogation, and resurrection.¹³

Notebooks for the novel preserve various possible outcomes for Dostoevsky’s criminal-hero, including the seeds that would eventually mature into the more fully incarnated evangelical design of the final version: within a few pages at the end of the draft, Sonia calls for Lazarus to arise, follows Raskolnikov to Golgotha at forty paces, and hangs a cypress cross around his neck.¹⁴ Clearly, as Gibian points out, the Gospel references—at least those everyone agrees upon, most prominently the raising of Lazarus, Raskolnikov taking up the cross and bowing down at the crossroads, and his Siberian resurrection—are both intentional and intended to be read as a connected whole.¹⁵ Most biblical readings construe Raskolnikov’s scene at the Haymarket as part of his Via Dolorosa: the “sorrowful path” he follows through the streets of Petersburg toward confession, trial, and eventual redemption (in fact, this is how he himself conceptualizes it, noting

that Sonia had “accompanied him all along his walk of sorrows [*skorbnoe shestvie*]”).¹⁶ Perhaps, however, it is worth reconsidering this scene in light of a different episode: Jesus’s triumphant entrance to Jerusalem, the city in which he was to be condemned to death, recorded in all four Gospels as the link between Christ’s raising of Lazarus and the events leading to his own crucifixion and resurrection.

In Christian Orthodoxy, the celebration of Christ’s Entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday completes the Week of Palms, commemorating the death and raising of Lazarus, and marks the beginning of Passion Week, which culminates on Easter Sunday. Situated between the penitence of Lent and the mourning of the Passion, the Feast of the Entry into Jerusalem provides a celebratory transition between Christ’s ministry on earth and his acceptance of death; it points backward to the Lazarus miracle and forward to the resurrection of Jesus, thus signifying the Christian triumph of eternal life. While details vary slightly across Gospel accounts, all four chronicle reverent crowds welcoming Jesus as he enters the Holy City on the back of a donkey.

In *Crime and Punishment*, the Haymarket scene is likewise situated between two resurrections—Sonia’s Lazarus reading and Raskolnikov’s ascent to the police station to confess, leading to his own spiritual rebirth in the Siberian prison. Remembering Sonia’s command, he kneels down in the middle of the marketplace, bows to the earth, and kisses it “with delight and happiness” (*s naslazhdeniem i schastiem*) (405), a sudden moment of jubilation heralding his ultimate embrace of redemption through suffering.¹⁷ He performs his act of penance and near-confession in a public square, before a crowd of onlookers, one of whom remarks aloud, “He’s going to Jerusalem” (*Eto on v Ierusalim idet*) (405). Although the Haymarket scene does not take place on Palm Sunday, Dostoevsky signals their association both structurally and thematically: within the final chapters’ established Gospel framework, Raskolnikov’s bow falls between two resurrections: one rehearsal, and one real. The joy with which he enacts his public repentance indicates that he has freely chosen Sonia’s difficult spiritual path, rather than Svidrigailov’s unrepentant fleshly shortcut; he understands and welcomes the suffering he will endure in hopes of spiritual redemption, just as Christ’s triumphal entrance into the Holy City traditionally marks his acceptance of physical torment/death in return for mankind’s salvation. Ironically, Raskolnikov’s confession is interrupted by the bystander’s explicit allusion to Christ’s entry into Jerusalem—his spiritual renewal will have to wait.

It seems likely that the biblical Entry into Jerusalem would have been on Dostoevsky’s mind at this time. He was already consumed by the composition of *The Idiot* as he completed work on *Crime and Punishment* and, as Michael Finke has observed, Prince Myshkin’s arrival in Switzerland was accompanied by the braying of a donkey in a marketplace, while his later entry into Petersburg society is accompanied by the *story* of that braying donkey.¹⁸ In his reading of the novel’s Christological plane, the donkey—with its strong Gospel associations—heralds Myshkin’s physical and spiritual transformation. Of course, it might also plausibly be argued that, if the braying ass accompanying Myshkin’s arrival in Switzerland signifies Christ’s entry to Jeru-

saalem, then his return to Petersburg represents a *reversal* of that entry, ironically prefiguring that novel's series of failed transformations and redemptions.¹⁹ In *Crime and Punishment*, at least, the Jerusalem reference seems to signal, fairly straightforwardly, Raskolnikov's readiness (after four hundred pages of self-justifying theory) for suffering and, eventually, resurrection. But as a closer reading of the passage suggests, Dostoevsky's evocation of this Gospel episode served another, more political purpose, as well.

In early-modern Russia, the Feast day was celebrated in an annual ritual in which tsar and patriarch reenacted Christ's donkey ride into Jerusalem, in the process transforming Moscow into an icon of the Holy City.²⁰ The Palm Sunday Donkey Walk, considered one of the most important ceremonies of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Muscovy, functioned as a public display of the accord between political and ecclesiastical authorities. The ritual was abolished by Peter the Great in the late seventeenth century as part of his comprehensive subjugation of church to state. As this paper will argue, rereading the Haymarket scene in light of Christ's Entry into Jerusalem not only fills out the Gospel schema symbolically underlying Raskolnikov's path to regeneration, but also reveals a previously overlooked artistic strategy by which Dostoevsky introduced into the final pages of his novel a critique of Russia's post-Petrine schism from the Orthodox Church.

The Icon and the Iconic in Dostoevsky

Over the past half century, Dostoevsky scholarship has expanded its rigorous focus on the *word* to encompass the *image*, and particularly the Orthodox icon. While a full discussion of the theory and theology of the icon lies beyond the scope of this paper, at the most fundamental level it provides a link between material and spiritual worlds, uniting visible and invisible; it reveals the presence of an invisible prototype, drawing the believer into a sacred "iconic space," and thus offering access to the divine.²¹ In his 1966 *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form*, R.L. Jackson argues that for Dostoevsky, art's transformative possibilities—its potential to effect moral or spiritual transformation in its beholder—are tied to beauty, and particularly to the icon, "the visible symbol of the beauty of God" toward which man strives.²² In a superb analysis of Jackson's work, Caryl Emerson remarks that the image reveals such beauty—the ideal type of beauty that Dostoevsky believed might save the world—more clearly and immediately than does the word.²³ Since Jackson's pioneering study, an enormous body of scholarship has developed on the topic of icons in literature, and particularly in Dostoevsky's narrative fiction; the following summary will attempt only to outline its rough form.

The recent explosion of articles and panels—even one full-length book—devoted to the aesthetic dimension of Dostoevsky's verbal art attests to the high level of scholarly interest in the function and interpretation of the visual, and particularly of Orthodox iconography, in his fiction.²⁴ Over the past several decades, literary scholars have scoured various levels of Dostoevsky's fictional universe for suggestions of Orthodox imagery, ranging from references to individual icons on the page to the "iconic" structure of the works themselves. But whether such verbal icons are repre-

sented at the micro- or macro-level of text, they still possess what Valery Lepakhin calls “iconicity” (*ikonichnost*), or iconic function—that is, they still provide a link between physical and spiritual worlds, allowing both characters and readers access to the unseen divine.²⁵ In other words, Dostoevsky’s verbally rendered “icons”—whether in the form of spiritually pure characters like Prince Myshkin and Alesha Karamazov or iconographically organized spaces like Sonia’s room—possess the same redemptive potential as a physical icon.²⁶

Carol Apollonio has noted that in Dostoevsky’s works, icons “work most effectively when masked.”²⁷ In that spirit, several scholars have demonstrated how Dostoevsky uses physical space (including city streets, interiors, etc.) to create a substructure of religious imagery, both cruciform and iconic, beneath the surface of his texts. In these readings, the St. Petersburg of *Crime and Punishment* occupies two planes at once: on a physical level, it remains a gritty urban center, while on the symbolic it becomes, in Janet Tucker’s words, a “giant icon.”²⁸ Others have mined the work for specific icons embodied in major characters: Amanda Murphy recognizes the famous Vladimir Mother of God as Lizaveta backs away from the murderer Raskolnikov, and again as Sonia listens to his confession; Tatiana Kasatkina discerns a composite Mother of God with Christ Child in the novel’s final pages, as Sonia and Raskolnikov silently clasp hands on the bank of the Siberian river.²⁹ The spiritual dimension of Raskolnikov’s regeneration is thus expressed not only verbally (as in Sonia’s reading of Lazarus), but visually, as crowded streets come together in crossroads, filthy rooms reveal the “inverse perspective” of the icon, and characters strike iconic poses, providing a hidden scaffolding of Orthodox imagery for the novel’s Gospel structure.³⁰

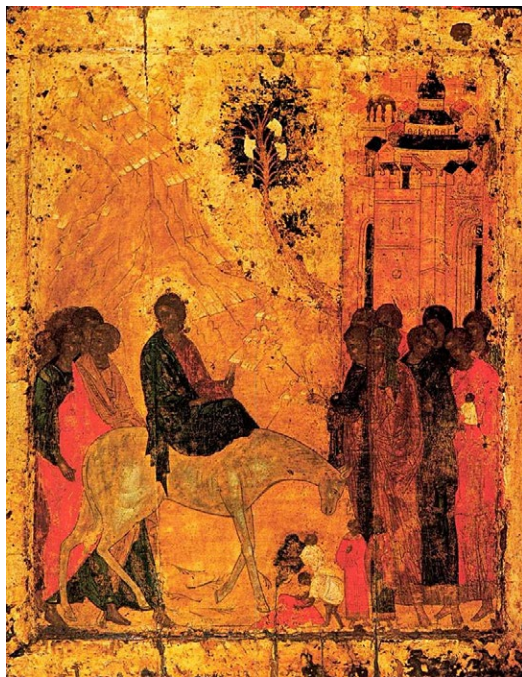


Fig. 1 Icon of the Entry into Jerusalem, 1405, Annunciation Cathedral, Moscow (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons)

Jefferson Gatrall has catalogued the physical icons in the novel, demonstrating how they appear at the most crucial points along Raskolnikov’s moral trajectory—premeditation, crime, and confession.³¹ It seems clear from the evidence above that the “embodied” or concealed icons, too, emerge at Raskolnikov’s most spiritually critical moments—his crime, confession to Sonia, and final reconciliation with her. It would make intuitive sense for such a narrative icon to appear at his moment of confession at the Haymarket. Indeed, several critics have already searched for one: Bruce Foltz reads Raskolnikov’s bow as an act of veneration toward the iconic earth, and Tucker argues that, in kissing the soil, Raskolnikov kisses an “icon of the mother of God.”³² In fact, I believe that the scene refers to a particular icon: Christ’s “Entry into Jerusalem,” one of the most popular icon subjects in Byzantine and Russian Medieval art (fig. 1). The reference is not to the *physical* icon, however, but to its associated ritual.

Over the past two decades, fertile new ground has opened up within the broader field of icon studies, stemming from Lidov's hierotopy, which theorizes the creation of sacred spaces through the dynamic interaction between icons and their physical environment, as well as the heightened performative possibilities within those created spaces. Certain rituals have the power to temporarily transform a corner of the physical world (such as a city street or marketplace) into what Lidov terms a "spatial icon": the energetic reenactment of an icon in the real world, possessing the same miraculous, transporting qualities as a material icon. For example, in the Byzantine "Tuesday rite," a venerated Hodegetria icon was carried through the streets of Constantinople every Tuesday morning in a liturgical reenactment of the Siege of Constantinople of 626 and the miraculous appearance of the Mother of God, whose intercession had famously saved the city. At a crucial moment in the Tuesday rite, as the procession circled the marketplace, the icon appeared to fly on its own, carrying along its own bearer. Through the performance, according to Lidov, the miraculous power of the icon would emanate through the city, transforming profane urban space into an enormous living icon of the Holy City, an "earthly embodiment of [...] Jerusalem."³³ Medieval Muscovites adopted this and other similar rituals from Byzantium, in order to transfer the sacred space to Moscow—in the words of Marie Gasper-Hulvat, to "fashion the Russian city upon the prototype of [Jerusalem]—as if cities could model a prototype in the same way as icons."³⁴ In other words, just as an icon provides access to its unseen prototype, the "living pictures" generated through such rituals had the power to transport worshippers to the Holy City.³⁵

Lidov has written that Dostoevsky's "iconic consciousness" (*ikonicheskoe soznanie*) enabled him to perceive the visible world as an image of another, invisible one; indeed, in recent years, literary scholars have begun to apply his hierotopical approach to the study of sacred *textual* spaces, specifically those found in the works of Dostoevsky.³⁶ Ksana Blank notes that the boundaries of the sacred can be extended "beyond the temple" in the literary text; she is particularly concerned with those Dostoevskian confessions, sermons, or revelations that occur in "underground" or profane spaces, such as taverns or brothels.³⁷ She holds up Raskolnikov's Haymarket repentance as a central example of hierotopy in *Crime and Punishment*, noting the astonishment of the bystanders and the resemblance between Raskolnikov's ritual actions in the Haymarket and Lidov's description of the Tuesday rite in the marketplace of Constantinople: in both instances, she argues, the market is transformed into a place of worship.³⁸ While I agree with Blank's general assessment of the scene's hierotopic potential, I would argue that it more closely resembles a different spatial icon described by Lidov.

The Donkey Walk: The History, Politics, and Art of a Ritual

In early-modern Russia, during the period between the reigns of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, the "Entry into Jerusalem" was just such an icon—its most visible iteration was not as an object of veneration on the wall of a cathedral, but as embodied in an annual ritual known as the Donkey Walk (*khozhdenie* or *shestvie na osliati*).³⁹ The Donkey Walk was a reenactment of Christ's entry into Jerusalem performed every Palm Sunday in Moscow between 1558 and 1693.

In it, the patriarch of the Orthodox Church, representing Jesus Christ, rode on the back of a donkey—a role actually played by a horse in long-eared donkey guise—being led by the tsar to an analogue for Jerusalem. The original procession started at the Uspensky (or Dormition) Cathedral in the Kremlin and ended at Pokrovsky, or St. Basil's Cathedral (formerly known as Trinity), on Red Square (fig. 2). In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Trinity Cathedral was popularly known as “Jerusalem” due to its role in the ceremony, and its western entrance was called the “Entry into Jerusalem.” The procession reversed direction in 1656 under Patriarch Nikon: now, on the return trip from Pokrovsky, the patriarch mounted a horse at Lobnoe Mesto, a platform in front of the Cathedral on Red Square, and was led from there back to Uspensky (fig. 3).

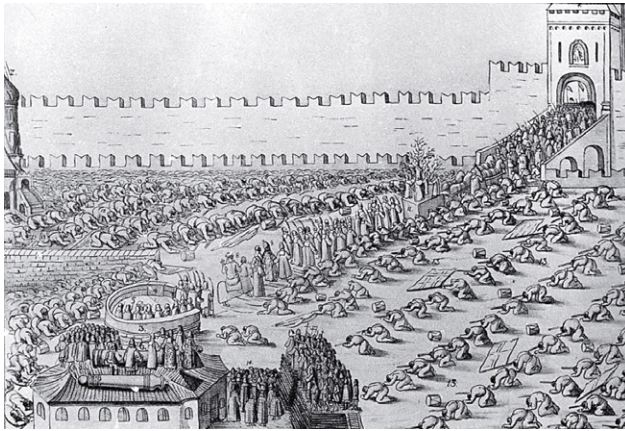


Fig. 2 Dutch engraving of “The Donkey Walk” in Moscow, seventeenth century (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons)

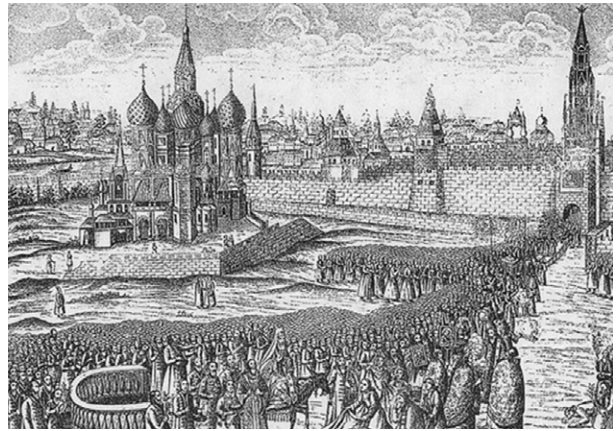


Fig. 3 Dutch engraving of “The Donkey Walk” in Moscow, seventeenth century (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons)

While historians and semioticians have debated the intricacies and interpretations of the ceremony, this study will limit description to the following details, each of which will be relevant to the discussion of *Crime and Punishment*. At Lobnoe Mesto, where the procession began, an icon stand draped in a green shroud displayed the Gospels and various icons, including the Kazan Mother; the horse stood there as well, awaiting the patriarch and tsar. When the tsar arrived at Lobnoe Mesto, he ascended the dais, crossed himself, bowed down to kiss the Gospel, and abased himself by removing his crown. The patriarch mounted the horse, holding a cross in his right hand and the Gospels in his left. The tsar then led the horse to “Jerusalem” while a crowd of believers spread cloth and branches along their route. When the procession arrived at the Cathedral, tsar and patriarch blessed and kissed one another, publicly staging a show of harmony between Russian secular and sacred authority. As one of only two public events in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Muscovy involving both tsar and patriarch, the Palm Sunday ritual was viewed as a performance of the complex power relationship between earthly and ecclesiastical authorities, spotlighting the delicate and shifting balance between the two institutions.⁴⁰ The choreography of the event, in particular the tsar’s performed deference, has traditionally been interpreted as an expression of his submission before the head of the church.⁴¹

Like the Tuesday Hodegetria rite discussed earlier, the Donkey Walk represents a “liturgical performance” adopted from Byzantium and interpreted by Lidov as an attempt to reproduce Jerusalem in central Moscow, generating a “huge spatial icon” and reaffirming the spiritual status of the Russian capital as embodiment of the Heavenly City.⁴² Adopting such rituals was an attempt to “transfer the sacred space” of Constantinople—and, by extension, Jerusalem—to Russian soil, such that Moscow actually became these holy cities in an iconic sense, thus entrenching Muscovy’s capital as “the appropriate geographical location for Christ’s arrival at the End of Days.”⁴³ The mid-sixteenth century, when the Donkey Walk ritual was adopted, was a transformative period for the Russian state and monarchy. With the rise of Muscovy, the Russian state expanded south into the Caucasus and east into the Urals, and principedom swelled into tsardom. The newly anointed Ivan IV, first tsar of all Rus, skillfully employed ecclesiastical art, architecture, and ritual to build a new Russian political culture, project state power, and inspire national unity.⁴⁴ As manifestations of the Orthodox faith, icons—their creation, veneration, and ritual displays—played a fundamental role in the formation and defense of the burgeoning Empire.⁴⁵ In an era of political turmoil and anxiety over the establishment of a new state and national identity, icons and their associated rituals, including the Donkey Walk, served to stabilize and legitimize the expanding Russian empire by solidifying the Muscovite connection to the Holy City. Indeed, Flier writes, the ritual was so popular *because* it “successfully [allowed] medieval Moscow to come into contact with ancient Jerusalem, as well as with the New Jerusalem.”⁴⁶ Within the semiotics of Muscovite culture under Ivan IV, he elaborates, Moscow was equated, not only with the Third Rome on earth, but with the New Jerusalem on the eschatological plane.⁴⁷

At the end of the seventeenth century, eschatological anxieties peaked once again as a young tsar undertook a sweeping program of reforms; recent historians have argued that Peter the Great drew on the era’s apocalyptic apprehensions, envisioning his newborn city of Petersburg as a *new* New Jerusalem on the Neva. Robert Collis has reassessed popular conceptions of Peter’s rational, secular city, suggesting that the tsar initially intended to legitimize his new capital by aligning it semiotically with Jerusalem, thereby usurping Moscow’s spiritual status in the Russian state.⁴⁸ Despite Peter and his officials’ best efforts, however, it proved impossible to map the Holy City onto the western grid of Peter’s capital. Instead, popular associations with the sinful city of Babylon persisted from the city’s very founding; prophecies of its eventual destruction by flood competed with official myths of its miraculous creation, portending a watery doom befitting a Russian Babylon created and ruled by an Antichrist-tsar.⁴⁹ In any case, as Uspenskij and Zhivov have detailed, by the late seventeenth century, the general perception of the Palm Sunday ritual as “emphasizing the greatness of the patriarch and [...] belittling the power of the tsar” had begun to undermine Peter the Great’s efforts to subordinate the church to the state.⁵⁰ As part of his broader reforms, Peter formally abolished the Donkey Walk in 1697, about a quarter-century before eliminating the Patriarchate itself. In its place, he introduced a blasphemous new ceremony that satirized the ritual: on Palm Sundays from now on, a mock patriarch and his retinue now rode through the city “on oxen and donkeys, or in sleighs drawn by pigs, bears or goats.”⁵¹

In the two centuries following Peter the Great's state-mandated overhaul of icon production and his attempts to reseed the artistic landscape with European conventions, the medieval sacred image and its associated processional and devotional expressions receded from the public life of educated, urban Russians.⁵² By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the rise of realism in the verbal and visual arts coincided with a rise in nationalist sentiment, including the spread of Slavophile ideas and a promotion of native "Slavic" ideals over the Western secularism promoted by Peter's eighteenth-century reforms. This tumultuous era of political, cultural, and artistic reevaluation galvanized an impulse to develop a distinct school of visual representation that would identify and elevate national subject matter, honestly represent Russian reality, and facilitate the construction of a new national identity.⁵³ Toward this end, artists sought and emphasized distinctive signifiers of Russianness, drawn from Orthodox imagery, folk culture, and medieval history; the resulting return to the pre-Petrine past led to a renewed interest in religious and historical themes, including a reemergence of icons and iconography in Russian intellectual life.

Viacheslav Shvarts (1838–1869) has been identified as the first visual artist to revive this lost Russian past, producing detailed and accurate scenes from medieval Rus, skillfully reimagined in oil on canvas.⁵⁴ Shvarts's work heralded the broader late-nineteenth-century recovery of subjects drawn from Russia's historical and religious past toward the expression of an emergent national identity; his efforts to develop a mode of pictorial representation corresponding to his return to lost Orthodox traditions anticipated the aesthetic and ideological direction of the following two decades in visual art.⁵⁵ In the fall of 1865, Shvarts's painting *Palm Sunday in Moscow under Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich: The Procession of the Patriarch on a Donkey* was displayed at the Annual Exhibition of the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg, for which he was awarded the title of academician (fig. 4). Correspondence with his father from this period depicts an anxious young artist, impatiently anticipating the upcoming exhibition and public response. Judging had ended on September 8, but the exhibition did not open for over a month after that; his nervous letter home on October 9 frets that it had not yet opened.⁵⁶ By the time he sent his next letter on October 18, however, the exhibition had already received the first of many sharply negative reviews, with a critic from *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti* opining that the exhibit was "lacking in good works."⁵⁷ Shvarts complained to his father that the *Vedomosti* critic had "clearly not even taken the trouble to walk through the exhibition" before reviewing it.⁵⁸ Despite the disparaging reviews of the exhibit, however, the critics unanimously praised Shvarts's *Palm Sunday* for its "accurate," "precise," and "archeological" restoration of ancient Russian life.⁵⁹



Fig. 4 Viacheslav Shvarts, *Palm Sunday in Moscow under Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich: The Procession of the Patriarch on a Donkey*, 1865, oil on canvas, 60 cm x 122 cm. St. Petersburg, State Russian Museum (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons)

Given Dostoevsky's activities and interests during this period, it is quite likely that he would have seen Shvarts's *Palm Sunday* at the Academy Exhibition. Having spent the summer of 1865 in Germany, where he had begun working on the drafts that would eventually grow into *Crime and Punishment*, the writer returned to St. Petersburg on October 15, just before the opening of that year's exhibition.⁶⁰ Dostoevsky's strong interest in and views on visual art are well attested: when he was still in exile, he had proposed a treatise on its Christian mission, to be titled *Letters about Art*. While that book was never completed, by the early 1860s Dostoevsky had begun to produce polemical assessments of the contemporary art scene, including reviews of the Annual Exhibitions of the Academy of Arts.⁶¹ In an anonymously published review of the 1860–61 Exhibition in the journal *Vremia*, Dostoevsky accused gold-medal-winning painter V. I. Iakobi of "straining for photographic truth," and in so doing producing "a lie."⁶² The author calls instead for a realism that goes beyond such a mechanical reproduction of surface reality: truthful art, he writes, must endeavor to discover a deeper and more essential spiritual truth; it should penetrate the surface to reveal a version of reality transformed through art, giving man an ideal toward which he might strive. His indictment of Iakobi's *Halt of the Convicts*, whose powerful verisimilitude was otherwise celebrated, thus amounts to an artistic statement on the purpose of realism, whether verbal or visual: his call for a transformative, revelatory art corresponds to his own contemporaneous pursuit of a narrative realism "in a higher sense."⁶³ A decade later, in a meditation on that year's Academy Exhibition, Dostoevsky would praise I.E. Repin's *Barge Haulers on the Volga* for dramatizing the essence without idealizing or aggrandizing the subject.⁶⁴ By this time, the Academy's Annual Exhibition, as the country's main venue for new Russian art, had become an indispensable event in St. Petersburg's public life; there is every reason to imagine that Dostoevsky might have viewed—or at least read about—Shvarts's image of the Palm Sunday Donkey Walk ritual upon his return to the capital in 1865, just as his emerging novel was taking a new, spiritual turn.⁶⁵

Particularly at times of upheaval in the political or spiritual landscape of Russia—whether over imperial expansion, radical reform, or millenarian fears—the Orthodox icon has been assigned a central role in the formation, protection, and projection of a unified Russian identity; in this sense it has become a political, as much as a spiritual object. Correspondingly, the history of the Donkey Walk ritual reads like a map of such flash points in the development of a Russian national culture, from the autocratic medieval monarchy through Peter’s revolutionary Westernization and back to the nineteenth-century pan-Slavist movement. In the mid-sixteenth century, icons and their ritual expressions, including the Donkey Walk, played a decisive role in the process of defining the growing empire and establishing Moscow as the site of the New Jerusalem. By the early eighteenth century, Peter had abolished the procession as part of his radical reorientation of the state toward Europe. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a post-Petrine search for a Russian national identity led to innovations in the narrative and fine arts; new forms of visual expression emerged as artists reached to the Orthodox past in search of visible manifestations of the abstract ideal of Russianness, just as Slavophile writers “cobbled together a native Russian tradition through selective study of pre-Petrine history.”⁶⁶ It is in the context of this 1860s return to Orthodox nationalism, and away from Petrine Westernism, that the Donkey Walk makes its artistic comeback, spotlighted at the Academy Exhibition of 1865 (and, arguably, secreted in the final pages of Dostoevsky’s anti-Western redemption novel the following year). Given this political history, perhaps it should come as no surprise that the ritual has recently been resurrected in various cities across Russia. In the revitalized nationalism of the Putin era, the Kremlin has cannily embraced the Church and glorified the nation’s imperial past and traditional values in an attempt to define a new, post-Soviet national identity and reassert Russia on the world stage. The nationalist drift reached its apotheosis in the spring of 2014, when Putin annexed Crimea, an act he justified by invoking Vladimir the Great, whose tenth-century baptism on the peninsula marked the conversion of the medieval Slavic state to Orthodoxy. The peninsula was invaded and annexed in late February and March of 2014; one month later, on April 13, St. Petersburg held its first-ever Palm Sunday Donkey Walk. Since then, Orthodox believers in Petersburg have participated annually in a modernized version of the Donkey Walk: a procession around St. Isaac’s Cathedral, including several thousand worshippers holding icons and palm branches, all headed by a “donkey” (a role still performed by a costumed horse) pulling a cart full of young children (fig. 5). While Moscow might have seemed a more appropriate choice of venue—especially with Putin himself playing the role of tsar—reviving the ritual in Petersburg brings the added satisfaction of reversing the *ukaz* (decree) of the Antichrist-tsar and his Drunken Synod.

Hierotopy in the Haymarket

It is *this* icon—not the painting on a wooden panel, but the living icon, brought to life in the Donkey Walk ritual—that is suggested in Raskolnikov’s final Haymarket scene. As we have seen, the passage’s placement in the text between Sonia’s reading and Raskolnikov’s arrest recalls both the correct Gospel sequence and the liturgical observance of the Orthodox Palm Sunday ritual, between Lazarus Saturday and the Passion Week, bridging Christ’s miraculous ministry on earth



Fig. 5 The Donkey Procession, St. Isaac's Cathedral, St. Petersburg, April 2019 (photo: Anastasiia Volokhova with permission of Blagovest-Info.ru)

and his resurrection. We have also heard the drunken bystander's comment that Raskolnikov is "going to Jerusalem," making the reference explicit. Beyond these details connecting the scene to its corresponding Gospel episode, there are several details in the text suggestive of the ritual: Raskolnikov's act of penance in the Haymarket occurs as he journeys from the sacred space of Sonia's apartment to the police station, just as the Donkey Walk—specifically the revised path set by Nikon, the same version of the procession commemorated by Shvarts—begins at a public place (Lobnoe Mesto) between the Cathedral and the Kremlin. The Haymarket arguably represents the most profane space in the city, a feature consistent with Lidov's description of the Byzantine Tuesday rite, in which the miraculous performance of the Hodegetria icon transformed "the most profane place of a market square [...] into the most sacred."⁶⁷ Indeed, on a symbolic level, Dostoevsky endows the debased space of the Haymarket with spiritual potential: Raskolnikov reaches the crossroads (*perekrestok*) soon after Sonia has crossed them both and hung a cross around his neck. Another vital feature of Lidov's hierotopy is the active involvement of the beholder, who "finds himself within the image [and] participates in creating the spatial imagery"; it is such communal participation that brings spatial icons to life in the city's most public spaces.⁶⁸ Accordingly, Raskolnikov performs his ritualistic bowing and kissing in a crowded marketplace, amidst the loud interjections of bystanders. As he bows down, he notices Sonia standing off to the side; in her green shawl, she recalls the green cloth-draped iconostasis on Lobnoe Mesto—a connection that also evokes her spiritual function in the text: to bear the Gospel and cross, and to embody the Mother of God icon. Raskolnikov's bow to kiss the earth recalls the ceremonial actions of the tsar, who removes his crown to bow and kiss the Gospel. And even Lobnoe Mesto—the "place of the skull," whose name is associated with the forehead—is conjured: the same tipsy passerby who mentions Jerusalem goes on to explain, in marked religious terms, that Raskolnikov is kissing the soil farewell: "on [...] *stolichnyi gorod Sankt-Peter-*

burg i ego grunt lobyzaet" (405, my emphasis).

In the end, what are we to make of this subtextual spatial icon? Is Raskolnikov the tsar in this reenacted ritual, abasing himself to signal his submission to spiritual authority? The patriarch, the "living icon of Christ" who enters Jerusalem in preparation for spiritual resurrection, with Sonia bearing him there? Is he somehow both at once? And what of the donkey in this proposed Donkey Walk? First, readers should not seek a one-to-one analogy between the two events: like the rest of the novel's Gospel design, the Donkey Walk is invoked symbolically, rather than literally. And second: there is no hidden donkey, no *osël* cunningly encoded in Dostoevsky's text.⁶⁹ There is, however, a horse; and while she is long dead by the time of Raskolnikov's marketplace repentance, she is present in this scene on a spiritual level. As many scholars have pointed out, the novel is full of doubles—not only of characters, but of scenes: the murder is rehearsed, as is the confession; the Lazarus reading prefigures the epilogue.⁷⁰ Similarly, Raskolnikov's public penance on the Haymarket can be read as a repetition of his horse dream: where he once fell to his knees in his town's public square and kissed the brutalized nag, he now falls to his knees in the Petersburg marketplace and kisses the earth he has defiled. The dream had prompted a brief renunciation of his plan—a renunciation he quickly abandoned after a detour through the Haymarket, where he overheard the information he needed to carry out the murder. The confession in part VI offers a sort of reversal of his Haymarket detour in part I: a public renunciation of the plan he has attempted to rationalize since the novel's opening pages. The city's geography highlights the thematic parallels between the two scenes: although Raskolnikov approaches his destination from different directions, in both cases he enters the Haymarket by way of the same street, Pereulok Grivtsova, known in Dostoevsky's time as Konnyi pereulok, or "Horse Lane." In short, Raskolnikov takes up the cross and follows the path of the horse to the public square, where he bows down and kisses the earth, metaphorically entering Jerusalem, on his way to accepting his sentence: suffering, repentance, and—ultimately—resurrection; in other words, in both form and function his path evokes the Donkey Walk.

Why would Dostoevsky refer to the Palm Sunday ritual, rather than the Gospel story itself? Perhaps because, in Dostoevsky's "iconic consciousness," the ceremony was powerful enough to transform the profane space of the Russian capital into a performative icon of Jerusalem. In his quest for spiritual absolution in the grimy soil of Peter's city, Raskolnikov, too, is seeking access to the Holy Land. Indeed, as Gibian has detailed, Raskolnikov is abandoning the Socialists' "false" notion of the New Jerusalem (a rationalist utopia), and seeking the true, Christian ideal of the New Jerusalem.⁷¹ Given the icon's intrinsic performativity—its potential to spiritually transform its space and transport its beholder—Raskolnikov's reenactment of this medieval iconic rite should grant him access to the New Jerusalem. But of course, this icon does *not* come to life: the bystanders mock, the horse has been slain, the market is not transformed into a sacred space, and the sinner is not granted the spiritual transport he seeks. Instead, the hero will have to leave the city (physically, that is, not iconically) in order to continue the process initiated in the Haymarket.

A close comparison of this passage and the text's subsequent "living icon" tableau, set on the bank of the Siberian river, reveals marked lexical and physical correspondences; it seems likely that Dostoevsky intended these two scenes—Raskolnikov's unrealized Entry into Jerusalem, followed by the Mother of God with Christ icon he and Sonia enact in the novel's final pages—to be interpreted together.⁷² The failed Haymarket icon opens with a mother and child, as well—as Raskolnikov walks from Sonia's to the police station, he takes a sudden detour toward the Haymarket where he offers a coin to a beggar woman, who blesses him in return. It is there, in the middle of the square, that a sudden sensation took hold of him, gripping him (*zakhvatilo ego*), body and mind. Remembering Sonia's instructions, he began to shake all over (*zadrozhal*) and threw himself into the possibility of feeling whole and new (*rinulsia v vozmozhnost' etogo tsel'nogo, novogo, polnogo oshchushcheniia*). The feeling consumed everything (*okhvatilo*) like fire, softening him until tears poured out (*kblynuli slezy*) and he fell (*upal*) to the ground where he stood. He knelt, bowed to the earth, and kissed the dirty earth with joy and happiness, then did it once again. He turned and saw Sonia in her green shawl, but the comments of the crowd held him back, and the words of confession froze (*zamerli*) within him. Sixteen pages later, in Siberia, Sonia approached Raskolnikov in her familiar green shawl and offered her hand; suddenly, something swept him up (*podkhvatilo*) and hurled him (*brosilo*) to her feet where he wept (*plakal*), embracing her knees. In shock, Sonia shook all over (*zadrozhav*), her face frozen (*pomertvelo*) in terror, then her eyes lit up with eternal happiness (*schast'e*) as she grasped his conversion. Tears (*slezy*) stood in both their eyes, and in their faces glowed "the dawn of a renewed future, of full resurrection into new life" (*zaria obnovlennogo budushchego, polnogo voskreseniia v novuiu zhizn'*). In the Haymarket, his desire for spiritual renewal makes him shake, weep, and fall to the ground, where he kisses the earth with happiness. In Siberia, he is thrown to Sonia's feet, where he weeps and embraces her; it is she who shakes and radiates happiness. He is finally truly ready for the redemption he sought for so long, and their faces—pale and thin, with luminous eyes—now shine like sacred images. While both scenes begin with some force seizing and physically overwhelming Raskolnikov, the shift from active to passive constructions to describe his response ("he threw himself," "he fell," vs. "he was thrown") indicates a change in agency: while he might have performed the Donkey Walk in an unconscious attempt to access the divine, the Siberian Mother of God icon will perform itself upon him when he is spiritually ready to apprehend it. He left the Haymarket untransformed, but the riverbank scene will exert a powerful, transformative effect on him, finally resuming the process initiated and arrested in Petersburg.

Dostoevsky's novels are replete with such potential transformations, only some of which are successfully fulfilled (if not always convincingly represented).⁷³ Why do some of his sinners attain salvation, while others fail?⁷⁴ While some readers remain unconvinced by Raskolnikov's ultimate redemption, Dostoevsky clearly intended to portray his hero's salvation into a new life; but why does his spiritual transformation progress in Siberia, where it had faltered in the Haymarket? Many readers have attributed the failure of his Petersburg confession to his lack of remorse: his bow in the Haymarket reads as a ritualized act of repentance, devoid of true penitence.⁷⁵ While it is undoubtedly true that Raskolnikov does not yet truly repent, either on the square (where his

words are inhibited) or at the station (where he confesses without contrition), there is another element impeding Raskolnikov's spiritual regeneration: his physical surroundings. As Lidov has argued, an icon's "performance"—its power to spiritually revitalize beholder and environment alike—depends upon the active cooperation of image, viewer, and space. On both Haymarket and riverbank, each of the necessary participants—an icon or iconic ritual, a willing body in a defined material environment—is textually present. One primary distinction between the novel's unfulfilled Donkey Walk and its final, fully embodied icon of Mother and Child, however, involves the space within which characters enact each icon: the profane crossroads of Peter's Western capital versus the Siberian district (*okrestnost'*, literally the area around the cross), geographically remote from Europe and symbolically associated with the biblical age of Abraham (421). While all the elements of the medieval ritual would appear to be present in the Haymarket, then—from the symbolic donkey to the hero's public abasement—the city's stone walls and Western origins prove inimical to the spirit.⁷⁶ In short, Raskolnikov's incipient spiritual conversion is inhibited by Petersburg's stubborn non-participation in the iconic act he is attempting to stage, suggesting the fundamental impossibility of iconic performativity within the space of this secular Western capital. Perhaps this should come as no surprise in a Russian city where the Window on the West has replaced the iconic Window to Heaven—as though to open this new window to Europe, Peter had first sealed the older one shut.

Ultimately, the reference to the Entry into Jerusalem—and specifically to the Palm Sunday ritual—serves two purposes: it elaborates the invisible Gospel scaffolding supporting Raskolnikov's spiritual journey, and at the same time allows Dostoevsky to offer commentary on the political dimension of the novel. Peter abolished the Donkey Walk ritual in his violent Western turn, and the resulting schism—a hacked-out window to Europe replacing the iconic window to heaven, a Socialist New Jerusalem on earth in place of the eternal New Jerusalem of Revelation—is etched like a scar in the very soil of Petersburg. Bruce Foltz has read the Dostoevskian act of kissing the earth (in *Crime and Punishment* as well as *The Devils* and *Dream of a Ridiculous Man*) as the ultimate rejection of Western materialism—an act of veneration toward the iconic earth, inviting the possibility of spiritual redemption.⁷⁷ This insight illuminates Raskolnikov's act in the Haymarket, with its allusion to the "living icon" abolished by Peter himself, as an attempt to reconnect with the Orthodox past: to heal the schism preserved within himself, as well as the urban landscape, in order to return to the pre-Petrine soil and access the true Jerusalem. The city's failure to respond to his iconic performance, however, suggests that it is not only the novel's hero whose Western ideals delay any possibility of redemption, but the environment that facilitated Russia's contamination in the first place.

Conclusion: Icons, Art, and the Possibility of Resurrection

As we have seen, visual and verbal artists of the late nineteenth century, in their quest for a new style rooted in medieval and folk art forms, shared a vision of a Russian society reborn and spiritually regenerated through art, which might serve as a "source of spiritual renewal even for West-

ern Europe.”⁷⁸ This declaration of Russian artists’ urgent spiritual mission reflects what Dostoevsky sought to do on a narrative level: teach his readers to see—or at least intuit—something that could not be spoken in words; a world transformed by art which, once perceived, would lead to the reader’s—and eventually the world’s—own spiritual regeneration. In Dostoevsky’s fiction, the divine is generally expressed in gesture or image, rather than words; the reader’s challenge is to discern and interpret the silent icons he has embedded in his texts.⁷⁹ Although Dostoevsky wrote remarkably little about icons outside of his novels, it is clear that they stood at the center of his aesthetic, philosophical, and religious principles during this period.⁸⁰ A December 1868 letter to the poet A. N. Maikov—the same letter in which he articulated his famous doctrine of a “fantastic realism” that reaches beyond the surface of reality to grasp a hidden ideal—expresses admiration for the poem “At the Chapel,” in which a poet stands before an illuminated icon, gazing from darkness into a bright eternity. Dostoevsky takes issue with the poet’s hesitation to proclaim his faith (“You seem to apologize for the icon, to justify it”), but then struggles to express his own deep, almost inarticulable reverence for the icon; perhaps, in fact, he conceals his narrative icons precisely because the essential truths they convey cannot, or should not, be spoken.⁸¹ In an iconic reading of *The Idiot*, which Dostoevsky was finishing around the same time as this important letter, Amy Adams identifies two Mother of God icons in the novel’s final pages, the recognition of which shifts the ending’s primary association from death to resurrection. She argues convincingly that Dostoevsky’s unseen verbal icons teach his readers “how to look”:⁸² that is, how to read iconically by looking beneath the verbal surface of a text to perceive its essence, just as an icon’s beholder must look through the material image to meet the divine. Recent scholars—drawing on both ancient image theory and performance studies—have much to say about vision and its transformative power: the embodied vision of the beholder animates the icon which, in turn, liberates the beholder’s vision from its earthly, flesh-bound limitations, enabling a heavenly, transcendent, multidimensional perspective.⁸³ Dostoevsky’s narrative art offers the same possibilities if one learns how to perceive the divine visual order lying just beneath the messy verbal surface of his fiction.

The icon acts as a link between earthly and heavenly—more than an inert, discrete object of veneration, it is a performer, actively facilitating such transformations of vision and space, spirit and beholder. For several decades, scholars of literary icons have surveyed the eruption of the sacred into literary spaces: iconic moments with the potential to transform literary spaces and characters, as well as readers. Following the performative turn in the arts, as our understanding of icons has expanded to encompass the hierotopic phenomena identified by Lidov—spatial images, whether architectural or ritual, that mediate between the earthly and the heavenly in the same way as the paradigmatic flat image—scholars must in turn learn to discern and analyze literary reenactments of such iconic spaces and rituals.⁸⁴ Raskolnikov’s confession at the Haymarket, with its hidden allusion to iconic ritual, offers an exemplary case for the hierotopic approach: the self-abasement of a repentant sinner in the crowded marketplace evokes an old Palm Sunday rite whose purpose was the transformation of the Russian capital into an icon of the Holy City, offering its participants access to the divine. An iconic reading of the scene demonstrates how the perception of

such narrative spatial icons—textual expressions of the dynamic interaction between man, image, and space—can illuminate works of literary art. Lidov’s hierotopy enables us to perceive two linked icons in the final pages of *Crime and Punishment*, as in *The Idiot*: one unrealized iconic ritual that fails to transport either hero or reader from Petersburg to the New Jerusalem, and a second of the Bogoroditsa and Christ clasping hands, fully realized on the bank of a Siberian river. The juxtaposition of the two icons suggests that an icon’s textual “performance”—its transformation of space, its transportation of character or reader—depends, as it would in the physical world, upon the cooperation of image, beholder, and environment. Where the anti-iconic space of Petersburg proves unreceptive, resulting in a failed transformation, the final iconic image offers a triumphant response: renewal is possible, though the rational West is not yet spiritually prepared for such profound transformation. While the bulk of the novel takes place in Petersburg—with only a childhood dream and Siberian epilogue offering relief from the oppressive city—the final lines suggest that Raskolnikov’s Petersburg years will ultimately account for only a fraction of his lifespan: a brief, disastrous detour between provincial Orthodox upbringing and Siberian regeneration. The progression at novel’s end from failed iconic ritual in the Haymarket to triumphant Siberian icon implies that Russia’s own path to regeneration lies similarly in its Orthodox past; closing its window to the West will curtail its own disastrous Petrine period, reopening the window to heaven. The revelation of these icons affirms Dostoevsky’s first post-Siberian novel, often considered his “simplest,” as a sophisticated work of art whose objective, in part, is to teach his audience exactly how to approach his fiction: like an icon, the novel retrains our readerly vision, guiding us through complex verbal thickets before, at last, revealing a divine world beyond the text—and, in so doing, enabling the spiritual transformation of reader and Russia alike.

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Notes

¹ For a more detailed introduction to icon theology and practice, see Moshe Barasch, *Icon: Studies in the History of an Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1992); Alain Besançon, *The Forbidden Image: An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Bissera V. Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010); St. John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, trans. Andrew Louth (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003); and Torstein Tollefsen, *St. Theodore the Studite's Defence of the Icons: Theology and Philosophy in Ninth-Century Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

² For a discussion of a specific performance that demonstrates the pivot from textual to performative culture, see Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. Saskya Iris Jain (London: Routledge, 2008), 11–23. For a general introduction to contemporary performance theory, see also Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002); and Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2004).

³ For more on the new materiality of religious studies and the vital connection between the corporeal and the spiritual, see Manuel A. Vasquez, *More Than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2011); Tim Hutchings and Joanne McKenzie, *Materiality and the Study of Religion: The Stuff of the Sacred* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁴ Carlson, *Performance*, 14.

⁵ Fischer-Lichte, “The Performance as Event,” in *Transformative Power of Performance*, 161–180.

⁶ See Alexei Lidov, *Ierotopiia: sozdanie sakral'nykh prostranstv v Vizantii i drevnei Rusi* [*Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*] (Moscow: Indrik, 2006); Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Sensual Icon* and “The Performative Icon,” *The Art Bulletin* 88, no. 4 (2006): 631–55; Nicoletta Isar, “The Vision and Its ‘Exceedingly Blessed Beholder’: Of Desire and Participation in the Icon,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 38 (2000): 56–72.

⁷ Pentcheva, *Sensual Icon*, 1–2 and “Performative Icon,” 631–32; Lidov, “Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a Form of Creativity and Subject of Cultural History,” in *Ierotopiia*, 32–58.

⁸ Judith Kornblatt, discussant's notes, “Performative Icons and the Arts” panel, National ASEEES Convention, Boston, Massachusetts, 2018.

⁹ For an example of a hierotopic literary analysis, see Ksana Blank, “Ierotopiia Dostoevskogo i Tolstogo,” in *Ierotopiia: Sravnitel'nye issledovaniia sakral'nykh prostranstv*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2009), 323–40.

¹⁰ George Gibian, “Traditional Symbolism in *Crime and Punishment*,” *PMLA* 70, no. 5 (1955): 990. Similarly, Gary Cox notes that this Via Dolorosa leading Raskolnikov through the Haymarket to the police station in the final chapter is the reverse of his path to murder in the first; see *Crime and Punishment: A Mind to Murder* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 125.

¹¹ Jostein Bortnes, “Religion,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Classic Russian Novel*, ed. Malcolm V. Jones and Robin Feuer Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 111.

¹² Susan McReynolds, *Redemption and the Merchant God: Dostoevsky's Economy of Salvation and Antisemitism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 128.

¹³ Priscilla Meyer, “Dostoevsky's Modern Gospel: *Crime and Punishment* and the Gospel of John,” *Dostoevsky Studies* 2, no. 1 (1998): 2–3. See also 2n10 for a summary of scholarship on Dostoevsky's use of the Gospel in his fictional works.

¹⁴ F.M. Dostoevsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, 30 vols, ed. V.G. Bazanov (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972–1990), 7:127, 129 (hereafter, all volumes of the *Polnoe sobranie* cited as *PSS*).

¹⁵ Gibian, “Traditional Symbolism,” 991.

¹⁶ Dostoevsky, *PSS*, 6:406. Hereafter, references to volume 6 of the *PSS* will be included parenthetically in the body of the paper by page number only. Unless otherwise noted, translations are adapted from Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992) and Oliver Ready (New York: Penguin Books, 2014).

¹⁷ “‘Поди сейчас, сию же минуту, стань на перекрестке, поклонись, поцелуй сначала землю, которую ты осквернил, а потом поклонись всему свету, на все четыре стороны, и скажи всем, вслух: «Я убил!» Тогда бог опять тебе жизни пошлет [...] Страдание принять и искупить себя им, вот что надо” (322–3).

¹⁸ Konstantin Barsht, “Defining the Face: Observations on Dostoevskii’s Creative Processes,” 23–57 (43), in *Russian Literature, Modernism and the Visual Arts*, eds. Catriona Kelly and Stephen Lovell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Michael C. Finke, *Metapoesis: The Russian Tradition from Pushkin to Chekhov* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 90.

¹⁹ Amy Adams, private correspondence. On the novel’s failed or otherwise absent resurrections, see also McReynolds, *Redemption and the Merchant God*, 139–42.

²⁰ On the hierotopic transformation of urban environment into icon, see Lidov, “Spatial Icons: The Miraculous Performance with the Hodegetria of Constantinople,” in *Ierotopia*, 349–57.

²¹ For an introduction to the Orthodox icon, see Léonide Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978); Léonide Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1982); Michel Quenot, *The Icon: Window on the Kingdom* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1991); Pavel Aleksandrovich Florensky, *Iconostasis* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996) and *Beyond Vision: Essays on the Perception of Art*, ed. Nicoletta Misler, trans. Wendy R. Salmond (London: Reaktion, 2002).

²² Robert Louis Jackson, *Dostoevsky’s Quest for Form: A Study of his Philosophy of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 47.

²³ Caryl Emerson, “Word and Image in Dostoevsky’s Worlds: Robert Louis Jackson on Readings that Bakhtin Could Not Do,” in *Freedom and Responsibility in Russian Literature: Essays in Honor of Robert Louis Jackson*, eds. Robert Louis Jackson, Elizabeth Cheres Allen, and Gary Saul Morson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 250.

²⁴ Katalin Gaal’s *Iconic Representations in Dostoevsky’s Post-Siberian Fiction* (Melbourne: Plenum Publisher, 2015) examines the redemptive role played by iconic beauty in the author’s later works. For a detailed summary of scholarship related to the icon and its transformative function in Dostoevsky’s art from “A Gentle Creature” through *The Brothers Karamazov*, see 14–34.

²⁵ In Stephen Hutchings’s widely cited definition, a verbal icon involves the translation of iconic systems of representation, including inverse perspective, into narrative form. See *Russian Modernism: The Transfiguration of the Everyday* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 37; 240n79. On the iconicity of such verbal icons, see Valerii Lepakhin, *Ikona i ikonichnost’* (St. Petersburg: Uspenskoe Podvor’e Optinoi Pustyni, 2002); see also “Basic Types of Correlation Between Text and Icon, Between Verbal and Visual Icons,” trans. Margaret Tejerizo, *Literature and Theology* 20, no. 1 (2006): 20–1.

²⁶ In Orthodoxy, word and image represent equivalent, interconnected means of revealing truth or accessing the divine; contemplation of an icon facilitates spiritual transformation as surely as reading scripture. Dostoevsky’s characters’ spiritual renewal might thus be effected through divine encounters both verbal and visual, whether reading the Gospel, interacting with an “iconic” character, or inhabiting iconographically constructed physical or textual spaces. See Gaal, *Iconic Representations*, 10–12.

²⁷ Carol Apollonio, “Dostoevsky’s Religion: Words, Images, and the Seed of Charity,” *Dostoevsky Studies* 13 (2009): 29.

²⁸ Janet G. Tucker, “Iconic Images in *Crime and Punishment*: Russia’s Western Capital,” in *Profane Challenge and Orthodox Response in Dostoevsky’s Crime and Punishment* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 100. Tucker suggests that

Dostoevsky incorporates Orthodox values into the profane world of St. Petersburg by embedding “an actual Orthodox novel [...] beneath the surface of the novel form inherited from the West” (101). For a discussion of the novel’s cruciform imagery, see also Antony Johae, “Towards an iconography of *Crime and Punishment*,” in *Dostoevsky and the Christian Tradition*, ed. George Pattison and Diane Oenning Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 173–88.

²⁹ Amanda Murphy, “Compassion as Grace Incarnate: Sonia Marmeladova’s Iconic Role in Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*,” AAASS National Conference, Washington, DC, 2006; T.A. Kasatkina, “Ob odnom svoistve epilogov piati velikikh romanov Dostoevskogo,” *Dostoevskii i mirovaia kul’tura* 5 (1995): 18–36. Kasatkina locates narrative icons in the epilogues of Dostoevsky’s four “great novels”; her analysis of Sonia and Raskolnikov’s silent scene on the Siberian river indicates that their pose can only encode two icons of Mother of God with Christ Child: the *Sporuchnitsa Greshnykh* (Intercessor of the Sinful) or the *Kievo-Bratskaia ikona Bozhiei Materi* (Icon of the Mother of God of Kiev-Bratsk), both miracle-working Hodegetria-type icons in which the hands of mother and child are joined.

³⁰ Tucker postulates that the novel’s narrative construction according to the rules of inverse perspective functions to draw the reader in verbally, as the icon would visually (*Profane Challenge*, 95; 109). For a discussion of how the visual system of inverse perspective shapes both the interior space of Sonia’s room and the novel’s overall narrative structure, see Roger Anderson, “The Optics of Narration: Visual Composition in *Crime and Punishment*,” in *Russian Narrative and Visual Art: Varieties of Seeing*, eds. Roger B. Anderson and Paul Debreczeny (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 87–98. For an iconographic approach to the novel’s geographical, thematic, and narrative construction, see also Jacqueline A. Zubeck, “Bakhtin’s Ethics and an Iconographic Standard in *Crime and Punishment*,” in *Bakhtin: Ethics and Mechanics*, ed. Valerie Z. Nollan (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2004), 33–55.

³¹ Jefferson J. Gatrall, “The Icon in the Picture: Reframing the Question of Dostoevsky’s Modernist Iconography,” *Slavic and East European Journal* 48, no. 1 (2004): 9.

³² Bruce V. Foltz, “Nature Godly and Beautiful: The Iconic Earth,” *Research in Phenomenology* 31, no. 1 (2001): 113–55; Tucker, *Profane Challenge*, 126.

³³ For Lidov’s first print elaboration of his 2001 theory of hierotopy, see “The Flying Hodegetria: The Miraculous Icon as Bearer of Sacred Space,” in *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance: Papers from a Conference Held at the Accademia di Danimarca in Collaboration with the Bibliotheca Hertziana (Max-Planck Institut für Kunstgeschichte)*, eds. Erik Thunø and Gerhard Wolf (Rome: Erma di Bretschneider, 2004), 291–321.

³⁴ Marie E. Gasper-Hulvat, “The Icon as Performer and as Performative Utterance: The Sixteenth-Century Vladimir Mother of God in the Moscow Dormition Cathedral,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 57, no. 1 (2010): 181.

³⁵ Lidov, “Creating the Sacred Space: Hierotopy as a New Field of Cultural History,” in *Spazi e percorsi sacri: I santuari, le vie, i corpi*, eds. Laura Carnevale and Chiara Cremonesi (Padova: Libreriauniversitaria.it, 2014): 76.

³⁶ Aleksei Lidov, *Ikony: Mir sviatykh obrazov v Vizantii i na Rusi* (Moscow: Feoriia, 2013), 32–33. In addition to Ksana Blank’s “Ierotopiia Dostoevskogo i Tolstogo,” see Katya Jordan, “The Meek One and Her Icon: Hodegetria’s Presence in Dostoevsky’s ‘Krotkaia,’” *Toronto Slavic Quarterly* 56 (Spring 2016).

³⁷ Blank, “Ierotopiia Dostoevskogo i Tolstogo,” 311.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 313–14.

³⁹ For detailed descriptions and analyses of the ritual, see Elena Vladimirovna Skripkina, “Obriad ‘Shestvie na osliati’ v kontekste tserkovno-gosudarstvennykh otnoshenii vo vtoroi polovine XVII v.,” *Omskii nauchnyi vestnik* 6, no. 102 (2011): 15–18; Michael Flier, “Breaking the Code: The Image of the Tsar in the Muscovite Palm Sunday Ritual,” in *Medieval Russian Culture*, vol. 2, eds. Michael S. Flier and Daniel Rowland (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 213–42; Michael Flier, “Obraz gosudaria v Moskovskom obriade Verbnogo voskresen’ia,” in *Prostranstvennye ikony: Performativnoe v Vizantii i Drevnei Rusi*, ed. Aleksei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2011), 533–62; B. A. Uspenskij and V. M. Zhivov, “Tsar and God: Semiotic Aspects of the Sacralization of the Monarch in Russia,” in *“Tsar and God” and Other Essays in Russian Cultural Semiotics*, ed. Marcus C. Levitt (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press,

2012), 50–54; Paul Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great: The Struggle for Power, 1671–1725* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 21.

⁴⁰ In addition to the Palm Sunday procession, both tsar and patriarch participated in the blessing of the waters at Epiphany (Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great*, 21).

⁴¹ See Paul A. Bushkovitch, “The Epiphany Ceremony of the Russian Court in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *The Russian Review* 49, no. 1 (1990): 3. Recently, Michael Flier has reconstrued the tsar’s role in the ritual as a physical enactment of the earthly and spiritual duties of an ideal monarch, “at once humble and powerful, capable of leading his flock to salvation both before and after the end of the world” (Flier, “Obraz gosudaria,” 553). In his reading, the annual procession deliberately recalled Ivan the Terrible’s triumphant return to the Kremlin after his 1552 victory over Kazan, symbolically linking that political triumph both to Christ’s Entry into Jerusalem and to the anticipated Second Coming, when the tsar would lead his people to salvation in the New Jerusalem (see Flier, “Breaking the Code” and “Obraz gosudaria”).

⁴² Lidov, “Creating the Sacred Space,” 77. As Lidov and Andrei Batalov explain, in the medieval Orthodox imagination, the earthly Jerusalem presented “an icon of the Heavenly City,” the future New Jerusalem that would descend from Heaven (Rev. 21–22), providing Christian believers a site of eternal reconciliation with God at the end of human history. Moscow’s connection to the gated city of Revelation was reinforced through church architecture, iconography, and ritual of the period, particularly after the fall of Constantinople, when the Russian city “was interpreted with increasing frequency as an icon of the New Jerusalem.” See Batalov and Lidov, eds., “Introduction,” *Ierusalim v russkoi kul’ture* (Moscow: Nauka, 1994), 1–2.

⁴³ Gasper-Hulvat, “The Icon as Performer,” 180–1.

⁴⁴ For more on the role of art and ritual in building a new Russian national political culture, see David B. Miller, “Creating Legitimacy: Ritual, Ideology, and Power in Sixteenth-Century Russia,” *Russian History* 21, no. 3 (1994): 289–315; Michael S. Flier, “Filling in the Blanks: The Church of the Intercession and the Architectonics of Medieval Muscovite Ritual,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 19 (1995): 120–37; and Sergei Bogatyrev, “Reinventing the Russian Monarchy in the 1550s: Ivan the Terrible, the Dynasty, and the Church,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 85, no. 2 (2007): 271–93.

⁴⁵ Michael Flier (discussant): “Icons and Identity: Defending Orthodoxy in Muscovy,” panel at the National ASEEES Convention, 2018, Boston, Massachusetts, Dec. 7, 2018.

⁴⁶ Flier, “Obraz gosudaria,” 538.

⁴⁷ Michael S. Flier, “The Church of the Savior on the Blood: Projection, Rejection, Resurrection,” in *Russian Culture in Modern Times*, eds. Robert P. Hughes and Irina Paperno (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 30.

⁴⁸ For a detailed account of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century attempts to associate Petersburg with the Holy City politically, culturally, and artistically, see Robert Collis, *The Petrine Instauration: Religion, Esotericism and Science at the Court of Peter the Great, 1689–1725* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 385–403; see also Grigorii Kaganov, “As in the Ship of Peter,” trans. Sidney Monas, *Slavic Review* 50, no. 4 (1991): 755–67, and “Jerusalem on the Neva,” *Rossica International Review of Russian Culture* (Spring/Summer, 2003), 38–51.

⁴⁹ The biblical rival of New Jerusalem, Babylon was corrupt, sinful, and oppressive, a site of avarice and consumption. In Revelation, the dazzling, doomed city is associated with carnality, idolatry, and the Antichrist. On Petersburg’s association with Babylon, see Sidney Monas, “Unreal City: St. Petersburg and Russian Culture,” in *Russian Literature and American Critics: In Honor of Denting B. Brown*, ed. Kenneth B. Brostrom (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1986), 381–91. Dostoevsky’s apocalyptic vision of a sinful Western city where spiritual transformation is difficult or impossible (*Notes from Underground*, *The Idiot*) sets him clearly in the Babylonian camp: the Petersburg of his fictional world is a corrupt, spiritually bankrupt slum presided over by whores and moneylenders and dominated by the Crystal Palace, which the author had explicitly identified as “something out of Babylon” in his “Winter Notes on Summer Impressions” (*PSS*, 5:70). For more on Dostoevsky’s Petersburg as a Babylonian city awaiting judgment, see William

J. Leatherbarrow, "Apocalyptic Imagery in Dostoevskij's *The Idiot* and *The Devils*," in *Shapes of Apocalypse: Arts and Philosophy in Slavic Thought*, ed. Andrea Oppo (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2013), 122–33.

⁵⁰ Uspenskij and Zhivov, "Tsar and God," 52.

⁵¹ Ibid., 54.

⁵² It should be noted that while post-Petrine artists were trained in European techniques at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts and in the West, the heritage of iconography remained present beneath this Western veneer; as James West has convincingly argued, "the residual iconic vision [never] entirely lost its force in Russian art." See "The Romantic Landscape in Early Nineteenth-Century Russian Art and Literature," in *Russian Narrative & Visual Art: Varieties of Seeing*, eds. Roger B. Anderson and Paul Debreczeny (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 36. For more on the persistence of sacred imagery in post-Petrine Russia, see James Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Imagery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 294–305.

⁵³ See Rosalind P. Blakesley, *The Russian Canvas: Painting in Imperial Russia, 1757–1881* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 241–69.

⁵⁴ Camilla Gray notes that Shvarts was "the first painter to apply himself to the pictorial reconstruction of medieval Russia" (*The Russian Experiment in Art, 1863–1922* [New York: H.N. Abrams, 1971], 21–2), and Molly Brunson credits him with taking "the first steps toward reinventing the history painting" by accentuating the distinctively Slavic elements of his paintings, from the Orthodox imagery to the accurately drawn *realia* ("Painting History, Realistically: Murder at the Tretiakov," in *From Realism to the Silver Age: New Studies in Russian Artistic Culture: Essays in Honor of Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier*, eds. Rosalind P. Blakesley and Margaret Samu [DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014], 97).

⁵⁵ His historical representations anticipated the work of Vasily Surikov, Viktor Vasnetsov, and other well-known artists of the influential Peredvizhniki School of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.

⁵⁶ V.G. Shvarts, *Viacheslav Grigor'evich Shvarts: Perepiska, 1838–1869: k 175–letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia* (Kursk: Izdatel'stvo Polstar Kursk, 2013), 115.

⁵⁷ *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti* no. 271, Oct. 16, 1865. Other reviews were equally critical: one noted that the exhibition is "not particularly rich" (*Russkii invalid* no. 234, Oct. 24, 1865), another that it has everyone in town "complaining" (*Sovremennik* no. 10, Oct. 1865), and a third that it "is so poor, even with mediocre things, that it amazes everyone" (*Illiustrirovannaia gazeta* no. 44, Nov. 11, 1865).

⁵⁸ Shvarts, *Perepiska*, 115.

⁵⁹ The review in the *Invalid* praised Shvarts for conveying "the conditions of ancient Russian life (*byt*) [...] with remarkable diligence and accuracy," while the *Illiustrirovannaia gazeta* proclaimed, "Shvarts has precisely restored before us ancient Russian life [...], for which patriots should be grateful to him. Only the reviewer for the *Vedomosti* remained lukewarm, observing that Shvarts's paintings were "not incurious from an archaeological point of view."

⁶⁰ His letter to the publisher Mikhail Katkov in September of 1865 describes the novella he had been working on for two months, focusing on the psychological aftermath of a crime committed by a young man under the seductive influence of certain Western ideas "in the air"; letters from two months later indicate that the novella had grown into a novel (*PSS*, 28/II:136–38; September, 1865). Evidence from the Notebooks suggests that the Wiesbaden drafts, containing the material that would become Part II of the novel, correspond to what Dostoevsky had referred to in his September letter to Katkov. The novel transformed dramatically following his return to Petersburg in October, as new aspects of Raskolnikov and his spiritual journey emerged.

⁶¹ *PSS*, 28/I:229, April, 1856 letter to A.E. Wrangel. For a detailed discussion of Dostoevsky's positions on art and its socio-political implications, particularly as articulated in the 1861 article "Mr. –bov and the question of art," see Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: A Writer in His Time* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 304–16.

⁶² *PSS*, 19:151–68. See G.M. Fridlender on the inclusion of this unsigned letter among his collected works, *PSS*, 19:314–21.

⁶³ PSS, 27:65.

⁶⁴ PSS, 21:72–77. See Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet, 1871–1881* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 110–12.

⁶⁵ As Katia Dianina writes, “The annual exhibitions of Russian painting at the Academy of Fine Arts were among the most popular subjects for feuilletons in the second half of the nineteenth century. The 1863 exhibition, for instance, was marked by a veritable explosion of public discourse in the press.” See Dianina, “The Feuilleton: An Everyday Guide to Public Culture in the Age of the Great Reforms,” *The Slavic and East European Journal* 47, no. 2 (2003): 201.

⁶⁶ Rosalind P. Blakesley and Susan Emily Reid, eds., *Russian Art and the West: A Century of Dialogue in Painting, Architecture, and the Decorative Arts* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007), 62.

⁶⁷ Lidov, “Spatial Icons,” 351.

⁶⁸ Lidov, “Creating the Sacred Space,” 77–8.

⁶⁹ The past tense *osel*—or in this case *osela*, “she sank to the ground”—does nevertheless appear at two crucial moments: the murder of Alena Ivanovna, and Raskolnikov’s dream of the murdered horse (49, 63).

⁷⁰ See Edward Wasiolek, “On the Structure of *Crime and Punishment*,” *PMLA* 74, no. 1 (1959): 131–6; “*Crime and Punishment*,” in *Fyodor Dostoevsky’s Crime and Punishment: A Casebook*, ed. Richard Peace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 70.

⁷¹ Gibian, “Traditional Symbolism,” 992. As Gibian explains, Dostoevsky’s interpretation of the Socialists’ New Jerusalem (a utopian, utilitarian paradise on earth) was starkly at odds with the Christian New Jerusalem of Revelation. Dostoevsky builds his critique of such 1860s radicalism into several works from this period, including *Notes from Underground* and *Crime and Punishment*, explicitly contrasting the two ideas (see Porfiry and Raskolnikov’s opposing references to the New Jerusalem, 201). Gibian notes the deep irony of the Haymarket scene, in which Raskolnikov “is taking farewell of his false ideal of the New Jerusalem. In another sense, he is now about to embark on a search for a new ideal, another New Jerusalem—and in this sense he will be a pilgrim, seeking personal regeneration which is to replace his earlier social-rationalistic ideal” (992).

⁷² See Kasatkina for details of the Mother of God with Christ Child icons she discerns in the epilogue (“Ob odnom svoistve epilogov,” 18–36). See also Ksana Blank, *Dostoevsky’s Dialectics and the Problem of Sin* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 37, for a different iconic possibility depicted in this scene.

⁷³ See McReynolds, *Redemption and the Merchant God*, 27–30, on the ambiguous representations of Christian redemption in Dostoevsky’s post-Siberian novels.

⁷⁴ Scholars have identified various obstacles to Dostoevskian resurrection, including “education, egoism, and high culture” (Joseph Frank, summarized in McReynolds, *Redemption and the Merchant God*, 28); the author’s own “heretical ambivalence” toward Crucifixion as the vehicle to individual redemption (McReynolds, *Redemption and the Merchant God*, 28); and characters’ non-linear development (Robin Feuer Miller, *Dostoevsky and the Idiot: Author, Narrator, and Reader* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981], 51). Cf. Julie de Sherbinin, “Transcendence through Art: The Convicts’ Theatricals in Dostoevskij’s *Zapiski iz mertvogo doma*,” *SEEJ* 35, no. 3 (1991): 339–51, for the argument that some of these failed resurrection narratives may not be failures, after all.

⁷⁵ In this sense, Raskolnikov’s is similar to other “unrepentant confessions” in Dostoevsky, from the Underground Man through Fyodor Karamazov. See Robert L. Belknap, “The Unrepentant Confession,” in *Russianness: Studies on a Nation’s Identity: In Honor of Rufus Mathewson, 1918–1978*, ed. Robert L. Belknap (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1990): 113–22.

⁷⁶ Perhaps the forsaken Donkey Walk of *Crime and Punishment* is thus akin to the failed resurrections scholars have identified in Dostoevsky’s other great Petersburg novel, *The Idiot*—despite the expectations raised by the braying donkey that heralds Myshkin’s entrances. (On the illusory Petersburg resurrections of *The Idiot*, see McReynolds, *Redemption and the Merchant God*, 139). Or perhaps, as Amy Adams has suggested, that braying donkey in the Swiss

marketplace provides the missing donkey from the Petersburg Haymarket, bringing *Crime and Punishment's* icon to delayed resolution. Such connections across the author's works can be discerned, she argues, when we view them as an integrated body, rather than discrete texts (private correspondence) (Amy Adams, personal communication, December 6, 2018). Molnar, for instance, has argued that the iconic image of Christ that never fully manifests in *The Idiot* eventually attains full, triumphant expression in *The Brothers Karamazov* (Istvan Molnar, "One's faith could be smashed by such a picture": Interrelation of Word and Image [Icon] in Dostoevsky's Fiction: Holbein's 'Christ in the Tomb' in the Ideological and Compositional Structure of the Novel *The Idiot*," *Acta Litteraria Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 32 [1990], 245–58).

⁷⁷ Foltz, "Nature Godly and Beautiful," 113–55.

⁷⁸ Savva Mamontov, founder of the Abramtsevo artistic circle of the late nineteenth century, quoted in Eleonora Paston, "The Abramtsevo Circle: Founding Principles and Aesthetic Direction," in Blakesley and Samu, *From Realism to the Silver Age*, 61.

⁷⁹ Amy Singleton Adams, "Learning to Look. The Meaning of the Unseen Icon in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*," *IKON* 9 (2016): 363–74. As she writes, "The actual ending of *The Idiot* challenges the reader to see the word icon that the writer perceives and presents" (371). In fact, her iconic analysis of the novel challenges its common misperception as a "failed masterpiece."

⁸⁰ According to Gatrall, "Dostoevsky's few extra-literary pronouncements on the icon are devoted to matters of religious belief, not to aesthetics" ("The Icon in the Picture," 7).

⁸¹ PSS, 28/II:329, 333. Around the same time, just as he finished work on *The Idiot*, Dostoevsky was considering writing a novel in which an icon would play a more explicit role (though this never materialized): in a May, 1869, letter to Maikov, he described scenes from a planned work about the fall of Constantinople and Orthodoxy's eventual renewal of the world. His plan features the emperor praying for the intercession of the Blachernae Hodegetria Icon of the Mother of God, famous for her miraculous protection of the city in 626 (PSS, 29/I:40). After this miracle-working Blachernae icon was transferred from Constantinople to Moscow in 1653 as a gift to Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, it was placed in Uspensky Cathedral, and participated every year in the city's Palm Sunday Donkey Walk.

⁸² Adams, "Learning to Look," 364–5.

⁸³ See Pentcheva, *Sensual Icon*, 1–6. See also Clemena Antonova, who has traced the line of twentieth-century Russian icon theory, from Florensky through Uspensky, in order to formulate an alternative explanation for inverse perspective, suggesting that it developed to represent the perspective of God, allowing the beholder to transcend human limitations and adopt this divine, unbound perspective. In *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon: Seeing the World with the Eyes of God* (Farnham, England: Ashgate Pub. Ltd, 2010) 29–62, 103–52. Nicoletta Isar draws on the doctrines of Plotinus, Theodore, Nicephoros, Gregory, and other Hellenic and early Christian theorists of the Byzantine image in order to construct an alternative model of "iconic vision," which draws the beholder into sacred space, allowing him to participate in and identify with the divine. In contrast to linear, post-Renaissance vision, which separates and isolates, iconic vision dissolves the separation between self and image, uniting beholder and prototype. In "The Vision and Its 'Exceedingly Blessed Beholder,'" 56–72.

⁸⁴ Lidov, "Icon as 'Chora': Spatial Aspects of Iconicity in Byzantium and Russia," in *L'icône dans la pensée et dans l'art*, eds. Kristina Mitalaité et Anca Vasiliu (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2017), 423–47.



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The Visual Polemic in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*: Icons and Oil Paintings

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Marcus C. Levitt

The Visual Polemic in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*: Icons and Oil Paintings

A picture is worth a thousand words.

- Attributed to Napoleon

Abstract

The phenomenon of Napoleon and Napoleonism that Tolstoy attacks in *War and Peace* is not only—arguably, not even primarily—a textual phenomenon. The cult of Napoleon was to a great extent a phenomenon created by the visual arts; portraits of Napoleon and of key moments in his career played a central role in promoting him as a “Great Man.” *War and Peace* contains numerous direct and indirect references to these images, and Tolstoy uses them to build his narrative. This paper analyzes two key pairs of scenes in which Tolstoy explicitly invokes Napoleonic visual images and undercuts them by juxtaposing them to Russian icons.

Keywords: Tolstoy, Napoleon, *War and Peace*, icons, visual propaganda

Recent critics have drawn attention to various aspects of the visual and visual art in Tolstoy's works,¹ but the role of paintings as what we may call “visual subtexts” has to the best of my knowledge never been discussed. This paper analyzes two of the most important and explicit of such cases, key scenes in *War and Peace* in which Tolstoy juxtaposes paintings on the French side with images of icons on the Russian side, explicitly undercutting Napoleonic visual propaganda.² Such an analysis deepens our understanding of *War and Peace* and its artistic, intellectual, and cultural context, as a response to a long European philosophical and historiographical tradition which portrayed Russia as backward and barbarian and in need of civilization.³ It also offers unique insight into the nature of Tolstoy's “iconological” art.

The phenomenon of Napoleon and Napoleonism that Tolstoy attacks in *War and Peace* is not only a textual one, although scholars have described the large number of memoirs, diaries, histories, and other written sources which Tolstoy used in writing *War and Peace*.⁴ In its day, however, and even long after, Napoleon's celebrity was to a great extent a phenomenon of the visual arts. Portraits of Napoleon played a central role in promoting key moments of his career as he wished to portray them.⁵ Napoleon created what Albert Boime has described as a phenomenally successful "propaganda machine," enlisting the talents of a cohort of painters whom he commissioned to create and spread his public image. The most famous of these were Jacques-Louis David, Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson, François Gérard, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, and Antoine-Jean Gros.

Prince Andrew, Napoleon, and the Amulet

The first cluster of images under consideration concerns Prince Andrew, whose view of Napoleon is shaped by visual images of him. In *War and Peace*'s opening scene, at Anna Scherer's salon, Andrew recalls a series of central moments in the Napoleonic myth as reflected on canvas that shape his own imagination. A heated debate over Napoleon between Pierre and an émigré French vicomte serves as an overture to the work's larger ideological issues. It focuses on Napoleon's execution of the Duc d'Enghien and whether this killing may be justified or not. On the one hand, the vicomte describes Bonaparte's despicable personal motives and dishonorable behavior; Napoleon eliminated a rival for the favors of Mlle. George (who turns up later in *War and Peace* giving performances that extol the virtues of incest). During the discussion Andrew quotes Napoleon's words admiringly several times, and then concludes the discussion on a conciliatory note, suggesting the difference between public and private morality. He argues that:

in the actions of a statesman one has to distinguish between his acts as a private person, as a general, and as an emperor. So it seems to me. . . . One must admit . . . that Napoleon as a man was great on the bridge of Arcola, and in the hospital at Jaffa where he gave his hand to the plague-stricken; but . . . but there are other acts which it is difficult to justify. (18; 9: 26)⁶

The conflict between public and private morality sounded here at the very start of *War and Peace*, as Ronald Sampson has noted,⁷ holds the seed of Tolstoy's later pacifism and his insistence that there be no separation between the two, or rather, that personal morality is the single viable kind. Here, notably, Andrew defends public morals in the person of Napoleon, and cites two images basic to his myth, both depicted by Antoine-Jean Gros: *Napoleon on the Bridge at Arcole, 17 November 1796* (1796–1801) and *Napoleon Visits the Plague-Stricken in Jaffa [in the Pest House]* (1804). (I say myth because, as we will see, both paintings were imaginative and propagandistic rather than documentary truth).

For Andrew, Arcola (Arcole) and Toulon are code words for individual heroic military action,



Fig. 1 Antoine-Jean Gros, *Napoleon on the Bridge of Arcole* (*Bonaparte au Pont d'Arcole*), 1796, oil on canvas, 130 × 94 cm. Versailles, Château de Versailles (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons)

emblemized by *Napoleon on the Bridge at Arcole* (fig. 1). Toulon was Napoleon's first victory in the French revolutionary wars, when a siege forced the Anglo-Spanish fleet's withdrawal from the city on December 17, 1793, for which he was promoted to the rank of brigadier general; in *Crime and Punishment* Raskolnikov refers to it as Napoleon's first step toward greatness. Arcole is a town in Italy through which the French army passed during Napoleon's Italian campaign of 1796. Apart from its being a portrait, *Napoleon on the Bridge at Arcole* offers no other documentary information; together with David's painting of Napoleon crossing the Alps, it is arguably one of the two most famous images glorifying Napoleon as a military hero. The Arcole painting was a triumph for Gros and brought him to Napoleon's attention; it secured his career. He went on to work as an official painter to Napoleon, accompanying him on his campaigns, and was appointed member of the commission to select works of art from Italy for the Louvre.

The painting associates the heroic both with bridges (crossing bodies of water), and with carrying a flag or banner on a standard into battle; and Tolstoy repeatedly plays with both elements in *War and Peace* (for example, during Nicholas' "baptism of fire" on the Bridge at Enns, a debunking of military heroism, or at the slaughter at the Augesd Dam). Prince Andrew recalls *Napoleon on the Bridge at Arcole* as he repeatedly imagines his own heroic moment leading the troops into battle with a standard in his hands—and this is what he actually does at Austerlitz (229–30; 9: 323–24; cf. 9: 198, 218). In *War and Peace*, standards are not only the mark of the heroic, but also the mark of death.⁸ After the Battle of Schon Grabern, for example, when Tushin, the actual savior of the day, is summoned to the command center to account for having abandoned a canon, he symbolically stumbles over a standard. Prince Andrew, who alone appreciated Tushin's true merit, nevertheless, at Austerlitz "could not look calmly at the standards of the passing battalions. Seeing them he kept thinking, 'That may be the very standard with which I shall lead the army'" (238; 9: 335). Later that morning, as Andrew and a group of generals peer through the fog with a field glass trying to catch a glimpse of the enemy in the distance, the French suddenly appear right under their noses, charging up the hill at them. Andrew tries to stem the sudden panic this causes and rushes forward to save the day:

"Forward, lads!" he shouted in a voice as piercing as a child's.

"Here it is!" thought he, seizing the staff and hearing with pleasure the whistle of bullets evidently aimed at him. (300; 9: 343)

This is a truly heroic moment—but an ephemeral one, because in Tolstoy’s “real” world (as opposed to heroic imaginings) bullets “meant for” the hero actually do cause suffering and death.



Fig. 2 Antoine-Jean Gros, *Napoleon Visits the Plague-Stricken in Jaffa* (*Bonaparte visitant les pestiférés de Jaffa*), 1804, oil on canvas, 532 × 720 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons)

The second image Prince Andrew mentions at the salon—*Napoleon Visits the Plague-Stricken at Jaffa* (1804, also known as *Napoleon in the Pest House at Jaffa*)—was Gros’ first state project (fig. 2). While not precisely comparable to Arcola as a model for emulation, it also clearly shapes Prince Andrew’s heroic view of Napoleon. As we saw, Andrew admires Napoleon’s grand gestures, even as he acknowledges his morally questionable acts: “One must admit that Napoleon as a man was great on the bridge of Arcola, and in the hospital at Jaffa where he gave his hand to the plague-stricken; but . . . but there are other acts which it is difficult to justify” (18; 9: 96). Andrew here responds to his wife’s mention of the massacre of prisoners that Napoleon carried out during the Egyptian campaign. In fact, *Napoleon Among the Plague-Stricken* was a very purposeful propaganda ploy to sway public opinion and to draw attention away from the mass killings that had taken place in March 1799. In *Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France*, Thomas Crow remarks on the task facing Gros:

The artist’s new commission was both risky and shrewd. The French conquest of the Palestinian city had been followed by a ruthless execution of the surrendering Turkish troops, most of them hacked to death on the beach to save ammunition. The order had been rationalized on grounds of military necessity—many of them, it was said, had been released from earlier captivity on the pledge that they would not fight again—but the massacre remained one of the few atrocities of the Middle Eastern campaign that had

never been successfully hidden or explained away. So for murder Gros substituted healing, using the painting to transform the most damaging element of Bonaparte's reputation into an asset. Exploiting the outbreak of plague which had spread from the city's Arab defenders to the victorious French . . . he showed the general fearlessly bringing the inspiration of his person to the victims. While an aide anxiously holds a handkerchief to his face, Bonaparte fearlessly extends his hand to touch the sore of one of his suffering soldiers.⁹

There were also rumors that during the plague the French had themselves poisoned the sick so as not to have to deal with them. We know from Tolstoy's notebooks of 1857 that he was well aware of the Jaffa incident; he notes that 4,000 men were slain.¹⁰ Crow and other analysts note how *Napoleon Among the Plague-Stricken* was purposefully aimed not only at spreading the Napoleonic myth (the fearless leader, his Christ-like healing of the sick), but also aimed at reassuring its French audience, including French troops who were themselves sick with the plague.¹¹ The painting plays upon the familiar Enlightenment visual discourse of the triumph of science and medicine over barbarian ignorance and fear, and also makes use of the visual language of orientalism.¹²



Fig. 3 Jacques-Louis David, *Bonaparte Crossing the Alps at Mt. St.-Bernard, May 20, 1800* (also known as *Napoleon at the Saint-Bernard Pass* or *Bonaparte Crossing the Alps*; and as *Le Premier Consul franchissant les Alpes au col du Grand Saint-Bernard*), 1801, oil on canvas, 261 × 221 cm. Rueil-Malmaison, Château de Malmaison (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons)

Although not explicitly mentioned in *War and Peace*, Jacques-Louis David's *Bonaparte Crossing the Alps at Mt. St.-Bernard, May 20, 1800* (1800–01) (fig. 3) was the greatest image of the Napoleonic myth and most famously displayed the Enlightenment theory of the Great Man, which Tolstoy's novel set out to debunk. There were five versions of David's monumental equestrian portrait, with differing colorations, of which four survive. Napoleon commissioned this "frankly propagandistic" work¹³ from David and it is generally considered both his "most brilliant and successful" and "uncompromisingly heroic."¹⁴ Four years later, David, by that time the most famous painter in France, was appointed "artistic director to the First Consul" and led a whole cohort of artists to help shape Napoleon's mythic image.¹⁵ He not only worked "on demand" and earned large commissions, but also made changes in his completed works as requested by Napoleon and his advisors (e.g., in the case of the coronation painting, although Johnson suggests that David was moving "from homage to subversion"¹⁶).

Bonaparte Crossing the Alps at Mt. St.-Bernard was David's first and most famous image of Napoleon; the idea for the painting was Napoleon's own, and it was explicitly meant as an expression of the theory of the Great Man, to which David subscribed.¹⁷ The painting depicts Napoleon's crossing of the Alps before the victory of Marengo in June 1800, literally and figuratively the

high point of his military successes. Boime sees “hybridized tension” between “realistic” and mythical-magical elements in this obviously propagandistic oeuvre.¹⁸ Even in its title, *Bonaparte Crossing the Alps at Mt. St.-Bernard*, May 20, 1800 clearly pretends to be a history painting, yet the story it tells of Napoleon mastering nature and his wild-eyed stallion, representing him as the greatest of Great Men, is largely fictional. Napoleon actually crossed the Alps on a mule with the rear guard and was led by a peasant guide; further, historians attribute the victory of Marengo to a stroke of luck that followed a series of French blunders.¹⁹



Fig. 4 Jacques-Louis David, Drawing of Falconet's Peter the Great. Paris, Musée du Louvre (image from Dorothy Johnson, *Jacques-Louis David: Art in Metamorphosis* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993])

Curiously, David's paean to the Great Man theory of history had a Russian source: Etienne Falconet's famous equestrian statue of Peter the Great in St. Petersburg (the *Bronze Horseman*, 1766–68; erected 1782). Falconet was one of the contributors to the philosophical and artistic discourse of the *grand homme*, and he saw the glorification of great men as the most noble goal of sculpture.²⁰ According to Dorothy Johnson the *Bronze Horseman* was the most important model for David's painting.²¹ Although David never visited St. Petersburg, there exists his sketch of Falconet's work, evidently based on other depictions of the famous monument (fig. 4). The theory of the “Great Man of History” became extremely topical again in 1860s Russia, at the time when Tolstoy was writing *War and Peace*, as one of the questions that sharply divided Russian thinkers.²² The issue—briefly—was: is the “Great Man” the creator of morality or subject to an absolute, universal ethical standard? The so-called “radical thinkers” (who laid the ideological foundation for the revolutionary movement) argued

that morality is something historically conditioned and relative; one source for this idea was Napoleon III's *Histoire de Jules César*, 1865, published in Russian in the same year.²³ Dostoevsky famously treated this question in *Crime and Punishment* (1866), in which Raskolnikov, a proto-Nietzschen *Übermensch*, justifies himself repeatedly as a Napoleon, and tests the possibility of going beyond good and evil by committing murder.²⁴ Tolstoy goes even further in the same direction and puts the actual historical Napoleon himself under the microscope as one of the major characters in *War and Peace*.

This brings us back to Prince Andrew, and the moment when he finally meets Napoleon in person. This is probably the most explicit moment when the Great Man theory is “made strange,” to use Viktor Shklovsky's term, as well as (we may add) made evil. After Andrew falls wounded at the Battle of Austerlitz, we find him half dead, lying beside his coveted standard (described again as a *drevko znameni*, or flagstaff) now shorn of the banner, which the French have taken as a trophy. Napoleon looks over the Russian dead and wounded. Notably, it is the anniversary of his coronation as emperor, and he wears the same blue cloak that he had worn at Arcole during the

Italian campaign (237; 9: 334). He strolls the blood-soaked field:

“Fine men!” remarked Napoleon, looking at a dead Russian grenadier, who, with his face buried in the ground and a blackened nape, lay on his stomach with an already stiffened arm flung wide. . . . [H]aving gone a few steps, he stopped before Prince Andrew, who lay on his back with the flagstaff that had been dropped beside him. (The flag had already been taken by the French as a trophy.)

“That’s a fine death!” said Napoleon as he gazed at Bolkonski.

Prince Andrew understood that this was said of him and that it was Napoleon who said it. He heard the speaker addressed as Sire. But he heard the words as he might have heard the buzzing of a fly. Not only did they not interest him, but he took no notice of them and at once forgot them. His head was burning, he felt himself bleeding to death, and he saw above him the remote, lofty, and everlasting sky. He knew it was Napoleon—his hero—but at that moment Napoleon seemed to him such a small, insignificant creature compared with what was passing between [his soul] and the lofty infinite sky with the clouds flying over it . . . (253; 9: 356–7)

Prince Andrew sees the sky and experiences a paradigmatic Tolstoyan epiphany.²⁵ The heroic Napoleon of Gros’ depictions and Andrew’s imagination is now contrasted to the “actual” Napoleon (that is, Tolstoy’s Napoleon)—whom Andrew now sees (in the narration’s scathing *erlebte Rede*) as “that little Napoleon [who] had suddenly appeared with his unsympathizing look of short-sighted delight at the misery of others” (255; 9: 360). To Andrew, Napoleon’s petty, earthly vanity—the vanity of the heroic—is contrasted with the heavens, which alone “promised peace” (*ibid.*).

Napoleon is thus sharply devalued by Prince Andrew’s new vision, emblemized on the one hand as the sky before which he realizes the insignificance of earthly greatness, and on the other, connected to an icon. After Napoleon visits Andrew, the French soldiers return to him a “little gold icon” (*zolotoi obrazok*) on a fine gold chain which they had stolen from him as he lay unconscious, thus symbolically reiterating his return to life, and the return, or discovery, of a true (or truer) understanding of existence. Andrew muses:

“It would be good,” thought Prince Andrew, glancing at the icon his sister had hung around his neck with such emotion and tenderness, “it would be good if everything were as clear and simple as it seems to Mary. How good it would be to know where to seek for help in this life, and what to expect beyond the grave! How happy and calm I should be if I could now say, ‘Lord, have mercy on me!’ . . . But to whom should I say that? Either to a Power indefinable, incomprehensible, which I not only cannot address but which I cannot express in words,—the Great All or Nothing—” said he to himself,

“or that God who has been sewn into this amulet by Mary! . . .” (255; 9: 359)

Andrew is referring back to the scene when, as he left for war, Princess Mary had given him this icon, which she says their father and grandfather had worn in battle, and which she begs him never to remove. Hence the return of the icon also returns to Andrew his paternal legacy, and his family, which he had been ready to trade away for a moment of glory.

Prince Andrew ironically refers to “that God who has been sewn into this amulet (*zashit, v etoi ladonke*) by Mary.” Etymologically, an amulet or “little sack” (*ladonka*, also: *ladanke*) derives from *ladan*, incense (labdanum or ladanum in English), used during Orthodox mass, but commonly denotes a small bag used to hold an icon and worn around the neck together with a cross. The practice thus has various specific Orthodox religious associations. In the earlier scene which Prince Andrew recalls, Princess Mary’s gift is described as an “ancient little oval icon of the Savior with a black face in a silver frame on a silver chain of fine work” (91; 9: 131). Curiously, the French steal a *silver* framed icon on a finely worked *silver* chain and return a *gold* icon on a fine *gold* chain. Perhaps Tolstoy thought of the icon and chain as gold in the second scene to better dramatize the object’s theft and return, or perhaps to underscore Andrew’s epiphany (insofar in the Orthodox tradition gold represents “the absolute metaphor for light” and light is “the absolute metaphor for God”²⁶). Or perhaps Tolstoy simply dozed. His description of an “ancient little oval icon of the Savior with a black face” does not refer to a specific icon type; the epithet “with a black face” (*s chernym likom*) is repeated later in *War and Peace* both in reference to the icon of the Mother of God Natasha later sees in church (585; 11: 70) and to the Smolensk Mother of God paraded before the troops (discussed below). Icons as having dark or black faces are somewhat of a cliché in Russian culture, referring to the fact that, as with the icon Natasha sees in church, they collected soot from the innumerable lamps and candles burned in front of them.

The question of which specific icon of Christ the Savior Princess Mary presents to Andrew fades before Mary’s revelation of its divine force and before Mary’s own person as itself transfigured by love.

“Against your will He will save and have mercy on you and bring you to Himself, for in Him alone is truth and peace [istina i uspokoenie],” said she in a voice trembling with emotion, solemnly holding up in both hands before her brother a small, oval, antique, dark-faced icon of the Saviour in a silver setting, on a finely wrought silver chain. She crossed herself, kissed the icon, and handed it to Andrew.

“Please, Andrew, for my sake! . . .”

Rays of gentle light shone from her large, timid eyes. Those eyes lit up the whole of her thin, sickly face and made it beautiful. Her brother would have taken the icon, but she stopped him. Andrew understood, crossed himself and kissed the icon. There

was a look of tenderness, for he was touched, but also a gleam of irony on his face. (91; 9: 131)

Princess Mary's stance, gestures, and especially the gentle rays of light emanating from her eyes clearly suggest an icon, as do her physical features, transformed (transfigured) by the inner spiritual force shining through them, overcoming physical weakness to reveal inner beauty. Similarly, Mary's statement to Prince Andrew—"Against your will He will save and have mercy on you and bring you to Himself, for in Him alone is truth and peace"—is both saturated with biblical and patristic echoes and traceable to no single source.²⁷ Furthermore, the theme of peace—*uspokoe-nie* (comfort, solace, pacification, calm) clearly reinforces that of peace—*mir* (the "peace" of the novel's title, which has multiple meanings and associations) that, as critics have argued, forms the center of the work's entire conception.²⁸

The King of Rome and the Mother of God

A second juxtaposition of French and Russian images occurs on the eve of the Battle of Borodino when the Russian army's veneration of the icon of the Smolensk Mother of God is set against François Gérard's portrait of Napoleon's son, the so-called "King of Rome" which is simultaneously displayed before Napoleon's troops. In Tolstoy's depiction, the icon procession and the Russian soldiers' veneration of the icon are seen through Pierre's naive, defamiliarizing eyes, as he attempts to understand what war is about. In watching the faces of the soldiers at prayer, Pierre learns something special about war and the spirit of the Russian people, something he had begun to realize at Mozhaishk, and which Prince Andrew interprets for him later that night. Andrew explains why one army wins and another loses: despite all calculations, preparations, and rational material advantages, what counts is the men's inner, spiritual strength (688–91; 11: 207–210; this view is shared by Kutuzov [718; 11: 247]).



Fig. 5 Dionisy (Dionisius), Smolensk Mother of God, 1482, tempera on panel, 135 x 111 cm. Moscow, State Tretyakov Gallery (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons)

The icon in this case is a very specific one, and of very special importance—the "Smolensk little mother" (*Smolenskaia matushka*, 679; 11: 195) as one soldier calls it, correcting another who calls it the "Iverskaia" (fig. 5). The Smolensk Mother of God is also referred to earlier as "the wonder-working icon of Smolensk" (622; 11: 117) that had been rescued from the city when it fell to the French. It is described here as a "big icon in a frame with a black face" (*bol'shuiu, s chernym litson v oklade, ikonu*, PSS 11: 194); one French memoirist refers to it as the "Black Virgin," rescued from the flames of Smolensk.²⁹ As noted, the image of icons as dark-faced was widespread. That the icon was believed to have miraculous salvational power is grounds for French memoirists' irony regarding Russian "idolatry." They describe

the icon procession and General Kutuzov's patriotic speech to the troops and use it as opportunity to denounce Russian peasant soldiers as ignorant fanatics and idol-worshippers. For example, the Comte de Ségur remarks deprecatingly that "Heaven is the only country left to the enslaved,"³⁰ and Napoleon himself is quoted as saying to Rapp: "Good, they're occupying themselves with tomfoolery and won't escape us any longer."³¹ In the Orthodox tradition, all icons, of course, are holy and thus potentially miraculous, but in the Russian tradition, this specific icon was seen as the protector of the city, and by extension, of Russia. "Little mother" not only refers to Mary but also suggests "mother Russia," and connects to the novel's web of references to mothers and to Russia as a feminine principle (on which more below).

In Russian church tradition, the Smolensk Mother of God icon is associated not only with the very beginnings of Christianity but also with the origins of icon painting.³² It is of the Byzantine "Hodigitria" type, meaning "she who points the way," named after the imperial Byzantine monastery of Hodegon. Tradition maintains that it was based on an original portrait of the Virgin by St. Luke which came to be kept there; Luke is supposed to have sent the icon along with the text of his gospel to Antioch, from where it was transferred to Constantinople in the fifth century.³³ The icon was believed to have been brought to Russia by Anna, daughter of the Byzantine emperor, whose marriage to Grand Prince Vladimir sealed Russia's conversion to Christianity in 988, or, alternately, as the possession of another Anne, who married Prince Vsevolod of Chernigov in 1046.³⁴ According to legend, Grand Prince Vladimir Monomakh gave it to the Smolensk cathedral in 1101. However, when we speak of the icon "the Smolensk Mother of God" we are referring to an icon type, or series, not one particular icon: the earliest surviving icon of this sort is dated to the fourteenth century.



Fig. 6 *The Battle Between the Men of Novgorod and Suzdal*, 1460s, tempera on panel, 165 x 120 cm. Novgorod, The Museum of History, Architecture and Art (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons)



Fig. 7 Detail of fig. 6, *The Battle Between the Men of Novgorod and Suzdal*

It is a very solemn, imperial image: Mary is standing, holding the baby Jesus in her arms (he is not sitting in her lap); she wears royal clothing, with gold trim and decoration. Her cowl (maphorion) with three stars symbolizes perpetual virginity; baby Jesus is in a himation woven of gold; Archangels Michael and Gabriel are to her right and left. As noted, the icon was considered an historical protector of the city of Smolensk, and by extension, of Russia. This aspect of the icon's rich associations is illustrated by the well-known late-fifteenth-century Novgorod school icon called *The Battle Between the Men of Novgorod and Suzdal* (fig. 6, fig. 7). The icon symbolizes or personifies the city, so that to attack the icon is equivalent to attacking the city; and as the icon in question is of the Virgin and child, to attack the city is also an assault on God, an act of iconoclasm.

In 1812, the Smolensk Mother of God thus became a symbol of national liberation. In French memoirists' descriptions of the icon being brought before the Russian troops, Kutuzov gives a ferocious and violent speech to the troops; in Tolstoy's version of the scene Kutuzov is silent, and we hear only a few words of the service intoned by the priest and his subordinates. Through Pierre's eyes we see the soldiers' serious concentration; Kutuzov appears among them as one of the prayerful host; the soldiers make way for him but "continued their prayers without looking at him," nor does Kutuzov pay attention to anything but his devotions (680; 11: 197). He sinks to the ground on his knees before the icon when the service is over and has trouble rising "on account of his weakness and weight" (ibid.). He is thus clearly contrasted to Napoleon in the following scene who pays great attention to his pampered, scented, corpulent body, with false modesty and pretentious attempts at attention-getting.



Fig. 8 François Gérard, *Portrait of Napoleon II as an Infant* (*Portrait de Napoléon II, enfant*), or *Napoleon-François, King of Rome* (*Napoléon-François, roi de Rome*), 1812, oil on canvas, 60 x 49 cm. Versailles, Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons)

The veneration of the Smolensk Mother of God also parallels and recalls Natasha's salvation before another "dark-faced icon of the blessed Virgin" in Moscow. Her seduction and near abduction by the incestuous, Frenchified Anatole Kuragin, followed by an attempted suicide, parallel the fate of Russia: its near seduction by Napoleonism, subsequent invasion and the destruction of Moscow. This reflects both two contrasting female images, one Russian (virginal, chaste, motherly, agapic) and one Western (involving evil sexuality: incest, rape, adultery; or disingenuously sentimentalized),³⁵ and the working out of an allegory. Like Natasha, a woman who has lost her virtue but not her chastity, Moscow (Russia) is taken but not violated, and the evil principle is overcome.³⁶

Both French memoirists and Tolstoy juxtapose the veneration of the Smolensk Mother of God to Napoleon and his army's veneration of another painted image on the eve of Borodino: François Gérard's *Portrait of Napoleon II as an Infant*, also known as *Napoleon-François, King of Rome* (1812) (fig. 8). The memoirist M. de Bausset (also

known as Beausset or Baron Louis-François-Joseph de Bausset-Roquefort) has brought this painting to Napoleon all the way from Paris to the headquarters at Valuevo as a present from the Empress Maria Theresa. Shklovsky analyzes the scene in some detail, giving its various sources (Thiers, Bausset, Ségur, Chambray) in parallel columns.³⁷ He basically sees it as another example of *ostranenie* (“making strange”)—Tolstoy depicting Napoleon at his most affected, creating an archly “historic” moment, feigning paternal tenderness. Napoleon then offers the picture for his troops’ admiration; the old guard’s shouts of “*Vive l’Empereur!*” and “*Vive le Roi de Rome!*” recall the suicidal Polish Uhlans whose act of insane self-destruction, drowning in the attempt to cross the Niemen in order to impress Napoleon, had signaled the start of the invasion. In contrast to the humble Russians, the symbolism in both cases is that of a false communion around an anti-Christ, an ersatz “King of Rome,” leading to death and perdition. The title apparently refers to the short-lived “Republic of Rome” that Napoleon had established in 1798, but which lasted less than two years. It suggests both papism (insofar as popes had been the kings of Rome for most of the previous several hundred years, and subsequently up through 1870, when Rome became the capital of a united Italy)³⁸ and a usurpation of spiritual authority, whether by Napoleon or by popes.

Gérard’s painting later hung in Napoleon’s room in the Kremlin but was lost during the retreat; Gérard made several copies, one of which survives at Versailles. This is how Tolstoy describes the picture in *War and Peace*:

It was a portrait, painted in bright colors by Gérard, of the son borne to Napoleon by the daughter of the Emperor of Austria, the boy whom for some reason everyone called “the king of Rome.” (870; 11, 213)

For some reason underscores the uncertainty of the title, more honorific than real. The portrait was “of the son borne to Napoleon by the daughter of the Emperor of Austria,” that is, from Tolstoy’s perspective, of the illegitimate fruit of Napoleon’s second marriage to “the daughter of the Austrian Emperor” (i.e., not the Empress of France, insofar as Josephine had retained that title). Earlier, Tolstoy noted that on May 29, 1812, Napoleon left Dresden, “having, as his historian tells us, tenderly embraced the Empress Marie Louise—who regarded him as her husband, though he had left another wife in Paris—[and] left her grieved by the parting...” (539; 11, 80). The description of Gérard’s painting continues:

A pretty, curly-headed boy with a look of the Christ in the Sistine Madonna was depicted playing at stick and ball [*igraiushchim v bil’boke*]. The ball represented the terrestrial globe and the stick in his other hand a scepter.

Though it was not clear what the artist meant to represent by depicting the so-called King of Rome spiking the earth with a stick, the allegory apparently seemed to Napoleon, as it had done to all who had seen it in Paris, quite clear and convincing.

“The King of Rome!” he said, pointing to the portrait with a graceful gesture.
 “Admirable!” (694-95; 11, 213)



Fig. 9 Charlie Chaplin as a Jewish barber who finds himself taken for the dictator Adenoid Hynkel (i.e. Adolf Hitler) in *The Great Dictator*, 1940. He does a graceful ballet with the globe until it pops in his face (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons)

Comparing Gérard's portrait to Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* (1513) underscores the theme of the boy as a pseudo-Christ, suggesting the blasphemy of Napoleonic pretensions. The assertion that the boy is playing at spike and ball (Fr., *bilboquet*) with the earthly sphere might be taken at first as another example of shrewd Tolstoyan ostranenie, conjuring up the famous scene of Charlie Chaplin in *The Great Dictator* (fig. 9), but again we find that this reference comes from the French sources. Nevertheless, Tolstoy's sardonic comment (“Though it was not clear what the artist meant to represent . . . , the allegory apparently seemed to Napoleon, as it had done to all who had seen it in Paris, quite clear and convincing”) drives home the point.



Fig. 10 Raphael, *The Sistine Madonna*, 1512–13, oil on canvas, 265 × 196 cm. Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister (artwork in the public domain; photo: Wikimedia Commons)



Fig. 11 Detail of Raphael, *The Sistine Madonna* (fig. 10)

Icons and Oil Paintings

However, Tolstoy seems to draw no *stylistic* juxtaposition between icons and paintings, apart, perhaps, from the contrast between the “dark faces” of the icons and in the case of *Napoléon-François, King of Rome* its “bright colors.” Tolstoy, typical for his age, considered icons primarily as symbols or objects of veneration; the “discovery” of icons as aesthetic artifacts only began in the early twentieth century.³⁹ Tolstoy's comparison between Gérard's *King of Rome* and Raphael's *Sistine*

Madonna (fig. 10, fig. 11) relates specifically to the boy's facial expression and serves as criticism of the former work's ethical vacuity rather than its aesthetic value. As Francis Randall has noted, for nineteenth-century Russians Raphael's *Madonna* "represented the greatest and most important painting in the world . . . for most Russians, it stood alone."⁴⁰ Novalis and Hegel had defined it as the zenith of aesthetic perfection and it served as "a kind of icon of Russian romanticism," the highest achievement and symbol of Renaissance culture.⁴¹ Even Belinsky in his later radical left Hegelian phase, while denying the existence of (as he put it) "pure, abstract, unconditional, or, as the philosophers say, absolute art," was nevertheless prepared to admit that the sixteenth-century Italian school of painting as exemplified by the Sistine *Madonna* "in some degree approximated the ideal."⁴² The "radical critics" of the 1860s, however, with their unconditional rejection of "absolute" art, did not spare Raphael, and turned his name into a buzzword for false aesthetic authority. In Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* (1861), for example, the nihilist Bazarov declares that "Raphael is not worth a brass farthing (*mednyi grosh*)" and in 1865 Pisarev, the *enfant terrible* of the radical critics, wrote Raphael off as "lackey of luxury" who "very willingly prostituted his creative thought."⁴³

While Tolstoy scorned the radical critics, his comparison between Gérard's *King of Rome* and Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* does not suggest that he was taking sides in this debate. Yet there was, perhaps, a latent contrast of the type made by Pavel Florensky between the fleshly, material nature of oil painting (epitomized in the Renaissance)⁴⁴ and the immaterial, spiritual art of the icon. In *What is Art?* (1899), the culminating statement of Tolstoy's aesthetic views, he names Raphael among the false authorities of Western art, along with Michelangelo, Dante, Shakespeare, Bach, Beethoven, and others (Tolstoy 1982: 113, 158-9; Pearson [1981: 363] notes the similarity to the radical critics). While I have found no statements by Tolstoy in *What is Art?* or in his other works concerning icons, Amy Mandelker has convincingly argued that Tolstoy's view of art and his literary output of both the pre- and post-conversion periods embody his "iconological" and "Eucharistic" aesthetics. Tolstoy, she argued, valued

the effectiveness of an art work in conveying and arousing Christian love—its success as a sacrament . . . [A]rt as inhabited by *ousia* [higher essence, true being] becomes the conveyor of grace, and, by divine guidance, transforms its recipients into communion (*koinonia*) with one another and through the development of brotherly love, into the body of Christ.⁴⁵

In other words, for Tolstoy, "good" works of art function like icons, and in some sense may themselves be seen as icons.

From this perspective, the two scenes involving icons examined in this article—Prince Andrew's recovery of his "little gold icon" on the field of Austerlitz and the veneration of the Smolensk Mother of God before the battle of Borodino—suggest just such a "conveyance of grace." In the first case, Prince Andrew's perception of "the lofty infinite sky" and the possibility of divine

mercy from “the God Mary sewed into the amulet” indicate the presence of *ousia* and the promise of eternal life. In the second, an actual communion of soldiers and their leader enacted before the Smolensk Mother of God displays the spiritual fortitude that allow them to withstand and overcome evil. In sharp contrast, the portraits of Napoleon and his son, however visually striking, are examples of “bad art”⁴⁶ in several respects: they convey wrong, false feelings; they serve selfish, personal pleasure (“Admirable!”); they are examples of exclusive, upper-class art; they require interpretation and do not reflect universally-held values;⁴⁷ and they divide rather than unite people. In sum, the scenes we have considered in this paper may serve as both a microcosm of *War and Peace* and an illustration of Tolstoy’s view of art in both its good and bad manifestations.

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Notes

¹ E.g., Amy Mandelker, *Framing Anna Karenina: Tolstoy, the Woman Question and the Victorian Novel* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1993); Thomas Seifrid, "Gazing on Life's Page: Perspectival Vision in Tolstoy," *PMLA* 113, no. 3 (May 1998): 436–48; Sarah Beth Mohler, *The Prosais of the Mind's Eye: Reader Visualization, Perspectival Engagement, and the Visual Ethics of Tolstoy's War and Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Molly Jo Brunson, "The War (and Peace) Between the Verbal and the Visual in Russian Literary and Painterly Realism" PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2009.

² Other works of Napoleonic history painting apart from those discussed in this article that may also be alluded to in *War and Peace* include those depicting: Tilsit (the meeting of Alexander and Napoleon on the raft, Napoleon awarding the Legion of Honor to a Russian soldier—see Jean Tulard with Alfred Fierro and Jean-Marc Léri, *L'Histoire de Napoléon par la peinture* [Paris: Belfond, 1991], 107, 109); the invasion (the crossing of the Niehmen by the Polish uhlans that started the war; Napoleon's men, e.g., Murat "King of Naples"; Napoleon in Moscow and during the retreat: Napoleon's philanthropy (ibid., 145, 177); the Moscow fire; the Battle of Berezina and the French retreat (ibid., 247).

³ See Albert Lortholary, *Le Mirage russe en France au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Boivin, 1951); Carolyn H. Wilberger, *Voltaire's Russia: Window on the East. Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 164 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1976), 199–273; Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 373–4; Marcus C. Levitt, *Early Modern Russian Letters: Texts and Contexts* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2009), 339–57. It is very possible, even probable, that Tolstoy saw the paintings discussed below during his various visits to France (1857, 1860–61) during which he visited the Louvre, Versailles, and Fontainebleau. In any case, most or all these paintings were famous and widely reproduced. In the case of Gérard's portrait of Napoleon's son, there is also the possibility that the description of the painting in *War and Peace* was based on de Ségur's memoirs and other descriptions of the painting.

⁴ Viktor Shklovskii, *Mater'ial i stil' v romane L'va Tolstogo "Voyna i mir"* (Moscow: Federatsiia, 1928; rpt. The Hague: Mouton, 1970); N. N. Ardens (Nikolai Nikolaevich Apostolov), *Tvorcheskii put' L. N. Tolstogo* (Moscow: Akademiiia nauk SSSR, 1962); Kathryn B. Feuer, *Tolstoy and the Genesis of "War and Peace,"* eds. Robin Feuer Miller and Donna Tussing Orwin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Michael A. Pesenson, "Napoleon Bonaparte and Apocalyptic Discourse in Early Nineteenth-Century Russia," *The Russian Review* 65, no. 3 (2006): 373–92; here 375; Dan Ungurianu, "The Use of Historical Sources in *War and Peace*," in *Tolstoy On War: Narrative Art and Historical Truth in "War and Peace,"* eds. Rick McPeak and Donna Tussing Orwin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 26–41.

⁵ Edgar Munhall, "Portraits of Napoleon," *Yale French Studies*, no. 26 (1960): 3–20.

⁶ Page numbers in parentheses refer to: 1) Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace. The Maude Translation, Backgrounds and Sources, Essays in Criticism*, ed. George Gibian, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996); and 2) the volume and page from Leo Tolstoy, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1929–1958), hereafter cited as PSS.

⁷ Ronald Victor Sampson, Tolstoy: *The Discovery of Peace* (London: Heinemann, 1973), 140, 144.

⁸ Cf. Alyssa W. Dinega, "Bearing the Standard: Transformative Ritual in Gorky's *Mother* and the Legacy of Tolstoy," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 42, no. 1 (1998): 92.

⁹ Thomas E. Crow, *Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 243–4.

¹⁰ PSS 47: 205.

¹¹ Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Bonapartism, 1800–1815*. Vol. 2 of *Social History of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 86.

¹² Crow, *Emulation*, 245.

¹³ Boime, *Art in an Age of Bonapartism*, 39.

¹⁴ Dorothy Johnson, *Jacques-Louis David: Art in Metamorphosis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 179, 183.

¹⁵ Johnson, *Jacques-Louis David*, 175.

¹⁶ Ibid., chapter 4.

¹⁷ Ibid., chapter 2.

¹⁸ Boime, *Art in an Age of Bonapartism*, xxvi, 38.

¹⁹ Ibid., 40–1.

²⁰ On Falconet's pursuit of greatness, see Marcus C. Levitt, "O 'velikosti' Ekateriny," *Literaturnaia kul'tura Rossii XVIII veka*, 6: *Petra Philologica; Professoru Petru Evgen'evichu Bukharkinu ko dniu shestidesiatiletiia*, eds. N. A. Gus'kov, E. M. Matveev, M. V. Ponomareva (St. Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriia, 2015), 41–56. To appear in English as "On Catherine's Greatness" in *The Enlightened Gaze: Gender, Power, and Visual Culture in Eighteenth-Century Russia*, ed. Asen Kirin. Athens, GA: Georgia Museum of Art, forthcoming.

²¹ Johnson, *Jacques-Louis David*, 76–7.

²² For an idiosyncratic recent discussion of the issue in *War and Peace*, see Jeff Love, "The Great Man in *War and Peace*," in *Tolstoy On War: Narrative Art and Historical Truth in "War and Peace"*, eds. Rick McPeak and Donna Tussing Orwin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 85–97.

²³ Adele Lindenmeyer, "Raskolnikov's City and the Napoleonic Plan," *Slavic Review* 35, no. 1 (1976): 37–47; reprinted in Robert Louis Jackson, ed., *Dostoevsky: New Perspectives* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984).

²⁴ On this and other images of Napoleon in Russian literature, see Robert L. Jackson, "Napoleon in Russian Literature," *Yale French Studies* 26 (1960): 106–18 and Molly W. Wesling, *Napoleon in Russian Cultural Mythology* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001); cf. Pesenson, "Napoleon Bonaparte and Apocalyptic Discourse."

²⁵ Cf. Richard F. Gustafson, *Leo Tolstoy, Resident and Stranger: A Study in Fiction and Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 63–4.

²⁶ Iu. A. Fedorov, "Besedy o tserkovnom iuvelirnom iskusstve: Beseda 5. Simvolika zolota i serebra v tserkovnom iuvelirnom iskusstve," <https://feodorov.ru/public.htm>.

²⁷ For example, Matt. 11:28, 30: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest . . . For my yoke is easy (*Priidite ko Mne, vse truzhdajushbhesia i obremenennye, i Ia uspokoiu vas... Ibo igo moe blago, i bremia moe legko*)"—by the way, often accompanying icons; and the start of Ephrem the Syrian's commentary on the Diatessaron: "For our Lord was to be the abode of all blessings . . . so that all people, as if on wings, would ascend to Him and find peace in Him alone (*Ibo Gospodu nashemu nadlezhalo byt' pristanishbhem vsekh blag . . . daby vse ljudi, kak by na kryl'iah, vzosnolis' k Nemu i v Nem odnom nahodili uspokoenie*)," <http://jesus-portal.ru/truth/efrem-sirin-chetvero-evangelii/glava-1/>.

²⁸ See Gustafson, *Leo Tolstoy, Resident and Stranger*, 40–1n. for the literature on this question.

²⁹ Paul Britten Austin, 1812: *The March on Moscow* (London: Greenhill Books; Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1993), 265.

³⁰ Philippe-Paul de Ségur, *Napoleon's Russian Campaign (Histoire de Napoléon et de la Grand-Armée pendant l'année 1812 [1824])*, trans. J. D. Townsend (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), 60.

³¹ My initial presumption in looking at the contrasts between Western paintings and Russian icons in the text of *War and Peace* was that Tolstoy was setting up a binary contrast for maximum effect. As in the case of the amulet, he contrasts a profane Western image to a sacred Russian one. On examination of the source materials (French memoirs of 1812), however, I found that the ideological bias manifested itself even more strongly here than in Tolstoy. Clearly, what Tolstoy did was reproduce the basic historiographical opposition but reverse the axiological signs.

³² T.M. Bogoslovskii, "Tikhvinskaia i Smolenskaia ikony Bozhiei Materi," *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, no. 1 (1945): 37–40; for more scholarly background, see the many references to the icon in the *Pravoslavnaia entsiklopedia* (Moscow: Tserkovno-nauchnyi Tsentr "Pravoslavnaia entsiklopeidiia", 2000). The appearance of Bogoslovskii's article (and the inaugural issue of the journal in which it appeared) were obviously connected to another invasion of Russia.

³³ Images of "St. Luke Painting the Virgin" are common in both the Eastern and Western Christian traditions. They are among the most famous of what we may call "meta-icons," icons that provide confirmation of their divine status.

³⁴ Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, trans. G. E. H. Palmer and E. Kadloubovsky, 2nd ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), 81.

³⁵ As in Napoleon's desire to dedicate charitable institutions in Moscow to his mother or Mlle. Bourienne's self-serving references to her "pauvre mère."

³⁶ My colleague Alik Zholkovsky noted that Tolstoy likens Moscow to a hive abandoned by a queen bee, and that the word for queen bee (*matka*) may also refer to a human womb or uterus. It may also serve as a colloquial synonym for *matushka* ("little mother").

³⁷ Shklovskii, *Mater'ial i stil'*, 182.

³⁸ The papacy, however, did not acquiesce to this situation until 1929.

³⁹ On the change in the Russian perception of icons that began in the early twentieth century, see Natalia Murray, "The Role of the 'Red Commissar' Nikolai Punin in the Rediscovery of Icons," in *Modernism and the Spiritual in Russian Art: New Perspectives*, eds. Louise Hardiman and Nicola Kozicharow (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2017), 213–28; see also Wendy Salmond, "Pavel Tretiakov's Icons," in *From Realism to the Silver Age. New Studies in Russian Artistic Culture. Essays in Honor of Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier*, eds. Rosalind P. Blakesley and Margaret Samu (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014), 123–40. Hans Belting analyzes the "non-aesthetic" approach to icons, seen in a historical perspective (Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Andrew Spira traces the interconnection between icons and modern Russian art (Andrew Spira, *The Avant-Garde Icon: Russian Avant-Garde Art and the Icon Painting Tradition* (Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries, 2008).

⁴⁰ Francis B. Randall, *Vissarion Belinskii*. Russian Biography Series, 12 (Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1987), 99.

⁴¹ James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe; An Interpretive History of Russian Culture*. New York: Knopf, 1966.), 348, 738; cf. Irene Pearson, "Raphael as Seen by Russian Writers from Zhukovsky to Turgenev," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 59, no. 3 (1981): 346–69.

⁴² Randall, *Vissarion Belinskii*, 102.

⁴³ Pearson, "Raphael," 363–4.

⁴⁴ Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis*, trans. Donald Sheehan and Olga Andrejev (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), 101–2. Yet elsewhere in the same essay Florensky discusses Raphael's "belief that spiritual revelation was the only true ground of icon painting" (i.e. his painting of the Madonna) (76–8).

⁴⁵ Mandelker, *Framing Anna Karenina*, 125–6.

⁴⁶ As defined in *What is Art?*; their moral deficiencies are clear from *War and Peace* itself.

⁴⁷ E.g., "Though it was not clear what the artist meant to represent . . . , the allegory apparently seemed to Napoleon, as it had done to all who had seen it in Paris, quite clear and convincing."



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Book Review

Visual Thought in Russian Religious Philosophy: Pavel Florensky's Theory of the Icon

Clemina Antonova (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 110 pp.

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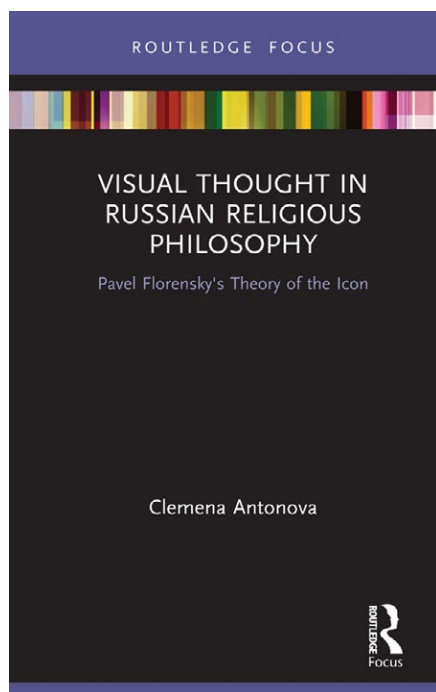
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Visual Thought in Russian Religious Philosophy: Pavel Florensky's Theory of the Icon

Clemena Antonova (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 110 pp.

Pavel Florensky is undoubtedly one of Russia's most fascinating intellectuals. An accomplished mathematician who wore a priestly cassock to electrical engineering conferences, Florensky was born to irreligious parents in 1882 in the midst of the Russian "Silver Age." Best known by theologians for his *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth* (1914), and by art historians for his essay "Reverse Perspective" (1919; pub-

lished posthumously in 1967), Florensky has attracted much attention (and skepticism) for his ability to fuse an appetite for scientific pursuits to a deeply mystical worldview. It is this aspect of his thought that receives special attention in Clemena Antonova's slim volume *Visual Thought in Russian Religious Philosophy: Pavel Florensky's Theory of the Icon*. Building on earlier studies, including her book *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon* (2010), Antonova situates Florensky's oeuvre at the crossroads of religious studies, art history, theology, and philosophy. Yet, as she observes, Florensky is not really an "interdisciplinary" polymath, in the sense of a thinker who collides observations from various domains to create a synthetic conceptual whole. Rather, as she notes, Florensky treats individual themes as belonging to a greater transcendental unity. It is this insight that drives the methodology of the book, which divides neatly into four case studies of Florensky's thinking about visuality: man and God (chapter 1); the icon in space (chapter 2); faith and reason (chapter 3); and church ritual (chapter 4). In the course of these chapters, Antonova's choice of themes ranges from the icon's symbolic economy to its agency in *theosis*, from its spatial

ontology to its organic relation to the liturgy. For all this apparent diversity, a single historical context guides the discussion, namely, the philosophy of “all-unity” (*vseedinstvo*) which suffused fin-de-siècle Russian religious thought. As Antonova demonstrates, this theoretical school exerted a strong influence on Florensky. While firmly anchoring him in this relatively ephemeral intellectual phase, throughout her study Antonova touches on issues of broader interest to scholars of the icon. It is these aspects that I shall highlight in what follows.

In chapter 1 Antonova raises a long-debated question in the study of the late medieval icon: How exactly did Hesychasm change the way people saw an image? Placing Florensky within the Russian spiritual movement of “name worshiping,” Antonova draws a comparison between the Russian thinker and the fourteenth-century theologian Gregory Palamas. Palamas’s followers famously taught the Jesus Prayer where God’s name is softly repeated over and over again alongside several invocations. Name worshipers, who flourished on Mount Athos in Florensky’s day, believed that God inhabited his name. Hence, to utter God’s name was to experience him concretely. Drawing a parallel with this theory of naming, Antonova observes that Florensky considered the image to be “a symbol in the sense that it ‘contains’ the presence of the depicted being or figure. The symbol *is* the symbolized. Thus, the icon of Christ (immanent) *is* Christ (transcendent)” (22). Said differently, for Florensky, who rejected Saussure’s doctrine of arbitrary signs, the icon, in a sense, transcends its material particularity. While Antonova aligns Florensky’s semiotics with that of Byzantine iconophiles (many art historians would challenge this point), her evaluation of the icon as an “energetic symbol”—that is, an energy that “contains” the divine essence—is a thoughtful contribution to the study of Palamas’s nineteenth- and twentieth-century reception. As Antonova notes, Florensky’s crucial insight was to apply Palamas’s key theological distinction (that between God’s essence and his energy) to the icon. While Palamas himself never took this step, it sheds light on scholarly debates involving medieval image theory, including, for instance, whether the medium of the icon (wood, gesso, paint, etc.) is negligible. Does the image reveal the signified like a windowpane? Discussing Florensky’s use of this analogy, Antonova writes: “once we are able to see the light through [a window], then it becomes ‘that very light itself’ and not just ‘like the light’” (29). Exploring how Florensky, to say nothing of the Symbolists (capital “S”) that he knew, understood symbols, Antonova shows that he used Byzantine ideas to whet the edge of a new aesthetic project. Crucially, it involved vaunting the icon to programmatically reject naturalism’s claim to truth.

It is this thesis that Antonova examines in detail in chapter 2 which deals with space in the icon. Here, Antonova builds upon her conclusions in *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon*, a book that is suggestively subtitled “Seeing the World with the Eyes of God.” In the present volume Antonova re-reads Florensky’s famous essay “Reverse Perspective.” There, Florensky proposes that “distortions” in how iconographers represent space, including, for example, multiple viewpoints, convey something of God’s eternal, omniscient perspective. In other words, when an icon painter shows you both the top, the side, and a bit of the underside of a footstool all at once, he (and it is usually a he) is providing you with a mental representation that approximates, however faintly, what God,

who is not bound by any single place or time, sees when he looks at the same footstool. Extending a claim that she first made in her 2010 book, Antonova argues that Florensky means to say that the icon actively participates in the viewer's *theosis*, which is to say, her sanctification, as she draws closer to a beatific vision beyond natural vision. This is a provocative insight, and it is one that offers a subtle, but telling, revision of her earlier study. There, she pointed out that Florensky in fact argued that "reverse perspective remains closer to the way vision functions" (36)—that is, to the way vision *naturally*, not *spiritually*, functions. To put the point differently, Florensky, who was never one to shy away from a polemic, asserted that Albertian perspective in fact gets the geometry of the natural world wrong. For space is actually structured according to a non-Euclidean order. Claiming that it is this non-Euclidean reality that the iconographer depicts, Florensky flipped common sense on its head, measuring Renaissance naturalism by the yardstick of icons. In essence, he argued that they offer a more scientific worldview than a realist canvas. In Antonova's words, Florensky "explained away ... distortions" by "denying them" (56–57). However, in *Visual Thought*, she arrives at a different conclusion, and it is one that has profound implications for how we understand the icon painter. Is the artist's use of reverse perspective an attempt to burrow down to absolute empirical reality? Or is it a way of disclosing the heavenly vision of the saints? Here, Antonova decides it's the latter.

Chapter 3 elaborates on Florensky's interest in non-Euclidean geometry. The argument here involves showing that Florensky's visual thinking provides an alternative to the "Western" binary of a sacred or profane, a religious or secular worldview. With the spread of fashionable "Orientalisms" in late nineteenth-century Europe, intellectuals began looking for new aesthetic paradigms. It was then that the icon stepped forward as a genuine alternative to Renaissance naturalism: "For Florensky, drawing a link between non-Euclidean geometry and iconic space was much more than an intriguing notion, as it ultimately came down to the implied claim that the icon in its embeddedness in a religious worldview could offer a viable counter-model of visibility to the one that had been dominant since the Renaissance and especially the Enlightenment" (57). In this sentence, Antonova points to one of the great ironies of Florensky's aesthetic philosophy. In his hands, a deeply conservative visual tradition becomes a hallmark for freedom. The icon implies liberation from the conceptual strictures underpinning the status quo.

Finally, chapter 4 examines Florensky's essay "Church Ritual as a Synthesis of the Arts" (1918). Of all the chapters, this one perhaps provides the most illuminating vantage point from which to survey contemporary scholarly debates concerning the icon. In these pages, Antonova addresses the question of whether a complete art historical account of the icon ought to consider the contribution of all five senses as well as a phenomenological analysis of church space. Protesting the Bolshevik campaign to "preserve" icons by subjecting them to scientific conservation, Florensky claimed that they can only be understood within their liturgical setting. Only when the viewer has seen the image submerged in candlelight, as a choir sings and the walls grow cold with night, can she understand what the painter has accomplished artistically. Identifying this view with the German idealist pursuit of the "total work of art" (*Gesamtkunstwerk*), Antonova shows that the

Russian thinker offered a prescient reinterpretation of this aesthetic model. In contrast to Wagner, who located the total work of art in the ancient Greek city-state, where tragedy was born, and to the twentieth-century avant-garde, which often located it in the technologically advanced future, Florensky located it the medieval Christian world.

Antonova has written an engaging, clear, and well-organized book. In each chapter, she finishes off with a section entitled “Conclusions and Implications.” In these passages, she abstracts out from the minutiae of close readings to address topics of concern within the art historical (and theological) study of icons. This allows each chapter to be read independently. It also has the virtue of making the book’s forays into icon theory, which will be unfamiliar to many readers, accessible to a broader audience. For all these reasons, the book will likely be of interest to scholars beyond the narrow sphere of Orthodox studies. Indeed, Florensky adds much to our understanding of visuality. He offers a glimpse into how a highly unconventional and strikingly modern way of looking at icons can be cast as if it were traditional and medieval.

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Book Review

Framing Mary: The Mother of God in Modern, Revolutionary, and Post-Soviet Russian Culture

Amy Singleton Adams and Vera Shevzov, eds.
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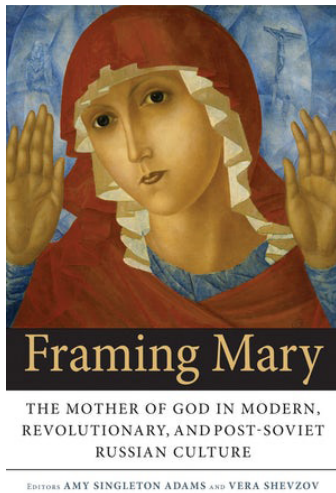
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Framing Mary: The Mother of God in Modern, Revolutionary, and Post-Soviet Russian Culture

Amy Singleton Adams and Vera Shevzov, eds. (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2018), xii + 344 pp., illus.

In *Framing Mary: The Mother of God in Modern, Revolutionary, and Post-Soviet Russian Culture*, Amy Singleton Adams, Vera Shevzov, and their collaborators contribute fresh perspectives and substan-

tial new scholarship on the diverse religious, cultural, and artistic meanings of the Marian figure in Russia. The Mother of God's "frames"—the volume's master metaphor—extend from the rituals, narratives, and topographies of icon veneration to problems of theology, gender, aesthetics, and national identity. The volume includes an introduction and twelve chapters as well as an afterward and a helpful glossary of Mary icons and narratives. The chapters are arranged chronologically, from the seventeenth century to the present, yet the volume as a whole does not conform to conventional periodization. As Adams and Shevzov observe, the lived history of Mary in Russia—with her miraculous appearances and forced hidings, popular revivals and conceptual reframings—necessitates its own temporal demarcations. The turbulent "revolutionary" years (ca. 1910–30) are well represented in *Framing Mary*, as contributors examine how such major modernist writers and artists as Gorky, Tsvetaeva, Goncharova, and Petrov-Vodkin engage Mary in her myriad forms as Virgin, Madonna, Birth Giver, Intercessor, and Jewish Maiden. The volume further explores a range of Orthodox perspectives on the Mother of God (Bogomater), from priests, nuns, pilgrims, and parishioners to such twentieth-century religious thinkers and icon-painters as Elizaveta Skobtsova, Pimen Sofronov, and Tatiana Goricheva.

Several contributors examine the relations between icons, origin narratives, and sacred geography.

Elena N. Boeck (chapter 1) analyses a fascinating early-eighteenth-century compendium of East Slavic texts about the Mother of God that was discovered near Briansk in the early 1970s. The compendium includes thirty-one texts and dozens of hand-painted illustrations that chronicle, in an encyclopedic fashion, Mary's known miracles, including at sites in Constantinople and Ukraine as well as across Catholic Europe and the Spanish New World. At the same time, as Boeck argues, the compendium privileges Russia's own "geographies of the sacred" and implicitly delineates its expanding borders. Christine D. Worobec (chapter 2) analyzes tensions between lay image cults and clerical authority in the case of the Akhtyrka Mother of God, an icon that—according to its origin narrative—appeared to a local priest in 1739 and later cured his daughter's fever. While Holy Synod authorities initially viewed the icon's alleged healing powers and Italian painterly style with suspicion, they eventually relented to the popular demands of parishioners and pilgrims and approved the Akhtyrka as "a radical new prototype" for Russian Mother of God icons. In the context of contemporary Russia, Stella Rock (chapter 11) demonstrates the continuing sway of Marian icons and their miraculous apparition narratives for the faithful. She explores mass pilgrimages to two sacred sites with special claims to the grace of the Mother of God's presence. The first—a remote and long-abandoned shrine in Gorokhovo, Tver Oblast—houses a copy of the Kazan Mother of God icon that, like its prototype, appeared by seeming miracle. In the second case, Rock analyses what she terms a "contact relic," namely, Mary's purported footsteps, which pilgrims can retrace along the walls of the Holy Trinity-Saint Seraphim Diveevo Convent.

Other contributors focus on the normative models of womanhood that the Marian image exemplified in different historical contexts and across varying social strata. William G. Wagner (chapter 4) reconstructs the ways in which the Mother of God permeated the lives of women at the Convent of the Exaltation of the Cross near Nizhny-Novgorod in late Imperial Russia. From public icons and personal devotional images to liturgical music and icon processions, the convent's nuns were not only surrounded on all sides by the Mother of God's presence; as Wagner meticulously documents, the Mother of God would have been virtually the only female image on display within the convent. In a chapter on the Russian émigré community in Paris, Natalia Ermolaev (chapter 8) examines the Silver Age revival of Orthodox Mariology in the writings of theologian Sergei Bulgakov, religious philosopher Nikolai Berdiaev, and nun and activist Elizaveta (Maria) Skobtsova. While Bulgakov and Berdiaev articulate the relationship between Mary and the Divine Sophia in theological and anthropological terms, respectively, Skobtsova, who was later glorified as a saint, departs from their gendered assumptions on motherhood and sexuality through her notion of "Godmotherhood." For Skobtsova, as Ermolaev shows, the whole Orthodox Church, both women and men, are called to imitate the Mother of God through radical compassion and active social work. Finally, Elizabeth Skomp (chapter 10) explores the writings of Tatiana Goricheva, the cofounder of an independent woman's religious club Mariia and an associated journal in the 1980s. Goricheva and other members from her circle propagated Mary as an ideal for a New Soviet Woman based on spirituality, humility, creativity, and motherhood. Provocatively, Skomp argues that Goricheva's Marian ideal, despite its traditional gendering, constituted an important oppositional feminism within the context of the late Soviet Union, where

the equality of the sexes, like atheism, was an official, top-down state ideology.

Sarah Pratt (chapter 3), Adams (chapter 5), and Alexandra Smith (chapter 6) examine the ekphrastic means and heterodox meanings through which secular writers appropriated the Marian image in their poetry and prose. In a playful chapter on Pushkin's Mary, Sarah Pratt provides a fresh reading of his notoriously blasphemous *Gavriiliada* (1821), a long-suppressed narrative poem in which Mary—a young Jewish woman—is seduced by Satan, Gabriel, and God in turn. Pratt also explores the Italian Renaissance roots of Pushkin's more reverent Marian tropes in the poems he addresses to women. Gorky, by contrast, often compares female characters to Orthodox icons of the Mother of God. As Adams argues, Gorky portrays mother figures standing at windows in such early works as "Twenty-Six and One" (1899) and *Mother* (1906). Within this visual framing, female characters may appear constrained by the domestic sphere of church and tradition; or they may look outward in the guise of Revolutionary Madonna for the sons of the proletariat. In her chapter, Smith examines Marina Tsvetaeva's poetic self-identification as a Mother of God figure—a compelling counterpoint to the masculine appropriations of Mary found in Pushkin and Gorky. In the cycle "Poems of Moscow," Tsvetaeva contemplates the city as both a sacred and aesthetic object, one that is as open and dynamic as a medieval icon. She further stylizes her own persona as the city's visionary and truth-seeking voice.

Wendy Salmond (chapter 7) and Roy R. Robson (chapter 9) explore the meaning and iconography of Mary in the paintings of Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin and Pimen Sofronov, respectively. Salmond interprets *1918 in Petrograd*, better known as the "Petrograd Madonna," as a new form of icon-painting that embodied Petrov-Vodkin's "science of seeing." It also offered his audiences potential hope during the time of troubles that followed the 1917 Revolution. The painter's nuanced balance between the sacred and secular nevertheless soon became untenable in the new Soviet State. As Salmond poignantly observes, the Petrograd Madonna was among the last paintings of Mary "to be created in Soviet Russia for other than anti-religious purposes." The craft of icon-painting did endure and even flourish in exile, however, as Robson demonstrates in his article on Sofronov, an icon-painter whose supporters in Western Europe and the United States honored him as "the Madonna painter." Employing the methods and materials of Old Believer icon traditions, Sofronov, a collector of *prorisi* (loosely akin to patterns or stencils) transferred the outlines of Marian images onto boards as negative imprints. At the same time, he incorporated Catholic elements and modernist styles, bringing the modern and ancient and East and West together in creative tension.

Taken together, the volume's contributors offer an extraordinarily diverse range of perspectives, including Orthodox clergy, laity, freethinkers, Communists, artists, and theologians. The volume does, however, tend to privilege voices sympathetic to Mary over those for whom her image proved alienating. Prior to 1917, the Mother of God represented a near-ubiquitous emblem of the state church of a major colonial power, one that helped consign the religious images of *inoverty* (adherents of other faiths) to the political and cultural margins. In the volume's final

chapter, Vera Shevzov provides a welcome, tour-de-force analysis of the politics of the Marian image. In a process that she aptly terms the “Marianization of post-Soviet Russia,” Shevzov examines the ways in which the Russian Orthodox Church promotes the Marian image in public media and political discourse. Tatar Muslims, for example, have objected to the Church’s pronouncements connecting Russian’s newly established Unity Day on November 4 with the feast day of the Kazan Mother of God, an icon whose origin narrative coincides with the conquest of Kazan. As Shevzov argues, the Marian image is deeply entangled in cultural politics, from the “memory wars” over Soviet legacies to Pussy Riot’s punk anthem in the Cathedral of the Christ the Savior.

As Shevzov, Adams, and their contributors demonstrate, the field of Mariology remains highly relevant for understanding Russian modernity and contemporary Russia. In the volume’s introduction, the editors provide rich and readable background on the Mother of God in medieval Russia and succinctly outline the kinds of cultural, political, and artistic “frames” that surround modern Marian images. In their respective chapters, the volume’s contributors not only support the volume’s overarching narratives but also offer valuable scholarship for specialists on individual artists, writers, and thinkers. *Framing Mary* should serve as an authoritative resource for scholars of modern Russian and East European religion, visual art, literature, and gender studies.

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