Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository

5-21-2019 11:00 AM

The Medieval Genesis of a Mythology of Painting

Colin Dorward, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Glabush, Sky., *The University of Western Ontario*
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree
in Visual Arts
© Colin Dorward 2019

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd

Part of the Painting Commons

Abstract: The Medieval Genesis of a Mythology of Painting.

This dissertation attempts to enrich awareness of the late antique and early medieval preconditions of art which fortified today's capacity for painted representations to fulfill a demand for the presence of absent individuals, such as in the case of portraiture. Chapter one contextualizes this program of research in terms of my practice as an oil painter, where figuration plays a prominent role. Key aspects of my studio work are introduced, such as my commitment to working from observation, as well as more current methods where figuration is achieved through the accumulation of successive layers of paint. A selection of my paintings is analysed to illuminate interconnections between the studio practice and the program of historical research.

Chapter two presents a historical survey of concepts and events which contributed to a mythology asserting painting's capacity to evoke the presence of missing individuals. The study begins in antiquity with key Old Testament sources that were to become vital in the formulation of Christian dialogue of representation. Next, the emergence of images in the Christian Church is reviewed and then brought to bear against a crisis of images which occurred in eighth and ninth-century Byzantium, known as the First Iconoclastic Controversy. In this complex political moment, the image's efficacy as an aid to devotion and ability to present the divine was called into question. The iconophilic factions who eventually became the chroniclers of these debates incorporated a special type of image (that had already been in development for some four centuries) in their dogma. These legendary images, the so-called *achieropoieta,* were not made by human hands. Instead, they were of divine origin, usually formed by direct contact with a holy person (especially Christ, who left no corporal remains). The history of the prototypical *acheiropoieta,* known as the Image of Edessa, which first appeared in fourth-century legends, is closely examined. The survey of the *acheiropoietic* visage concludes with the surviving *Mandylions* of Christ, which are of uncertain origin, but nevertheless represent our closest

link to what had become the preeminent portrait of Christ by the end of the first millennium.

At the core of this study lies the proposal that medieval traditions of imaging Christ fortified painting's potential to evoke the presence of one who is not there, a condition of the medium which today feels axiomatic. In light of this proposal, chapter three looks beyond images of Christ, and an ancillary tradition, which commenced as the Image of Edessa entered its twilight at the beginning of the second millennium, is examined. It was then that a new kind of picture was introduced to the Christian milieu: that of the common-man who had died, but then returned to interact with the living, as a ghost. Like the visage of Christ which typically required the material substrate of a cloth to make its miraculous appearance, ghosts were also made visible by a piece of fabric, which in this case was their final vestment: the burial cloth. Following an examination of this iconographic continuity, a conclusion is offered in the presentation of a peculiar, and perhaps humorous, modern collision of the parallel iconographies of Christ and the ghost.

Table of Contents.

Chapter One: An Artistic Practice.

1. Introduction, Motives.

My process of painting is governed by intuition, emotion, and other inarticulable phenomena and is generally a private affair. The goal is to find self expression, a way to imprint psychic energies and cultural sensibilities onto a canvas. Though painting may be one of my primary voices of expression, it is no more or less than one aspect of my multifaceted life. It comes and goes; sometimes it is a daily project, and at other times it falls away to make space for producing music, designing and building analog synthesizers, or running. Since becoming a PhD candidate, painting has also, once again, come to share its space with my scholastic work. These are the life projects that define me as an artist and provide me arenas where I find my identity.

To separate out these core, life-projects from one another (painting, running, scholastics, music, and its extension into electronics) befits this PhD dissertation, but does not accurately depict my identity as an artist, since each project forms an integral part of the whole. The mobility of running advises me how to use narrative in my compositions; my time afoot provides unbroken, meditative headspace to negotiate design problems in writing and electronics; the incremental assembly of synthesizer circuits, and the long turnaround from design to fabrication, informs my willingness to embrace patience as part of my painting-craft. My experiments with paint remind me to expand my sonic palate.

Of the many interdisciplinary interactions that could be detailed in this introduction, that which occurs between my obsession with music and my painting practice deserves special mention. Above all else, music keeps a brush in my hand. It gives me the energy to stay in the studio a little longer, and the confidence to solve upset paintings. I wish I could claim that I am receptive to all genres of music, but

it is primarily the rave-spawn of acid, jungle, and breakbeats that feed me while painting: the hardcore continuum, if you will.[1] These sounds have become part of my conception of feeling alive, and they help me to connect my intellect with my emotions, which facilitates self-expression while painting. And yet, I chose late antique and early medieval art as the topic of research for my PhD dissertation. This is a field where I have little expertise, a small chance of making meaningful contribution, and where a discussion of what most significantly impacts my painting (music) will not occur. This inclination is predicated on a few simple tenets.

Part of many artists' methods is to find, personally, what works in a given medium. Through trial and error, the artist attempts to understand how a medium will respond to energy invested in its use. Those "responses" then inform the decisions that follow. When working effectively, the process can feel like a resonance between oneself and the medium. (Of course, this feeling is familiar to many and by no means the exclusive territory of artists.) Because writing is the primary mode of expression within the academic milieu, I needed to find a resonance with the medium, a way of working with words that gave back to me as I invested in its use. To this end, what might be described as an analytic, objective voice emerged, a way of writing which returned on my investment by clarifying and organising muddied thoughts. This form of expression is derived from the field of art history, in the traditional sense, as a mode of thinking that is anchored by known events and artifacts. I will mention now that as my writing transitions out of this autobiographic discursion, and into chapters two and three (which constitute the bulk of my research) my readers may perceive a shift (or an attempt thereof) towards a more objective voice.

Besides an attraction to the formal side of art history, its writing craft, if you will, the field of study was chosen for the obvious reason of being hungry to understand what came before. I want to

---

[1] Reynolds.

enjoy the artworks that have been left to us. If paintings are documents that transmit psychic energy across time and space, then, for me, its practice is inseparable from the study of history. The bulk of the work in this dissertation is, in fact, reviews of sources which I believe were key in the development of painting. As a prospective teacher, I feel some responsibility to formally educate myself in areas that I perceive were weak in my own undergraduate studies and master's degree.

This brings us, finally, to the political motivations. Foremost is the fact of the medieval's underrepresentation in visual arts institutions across Canada. We have too much to gain from exposure to its visual culture for its study to be excised from our educations. This was a time of rich, multicultural exchange and unrivaled commitment to exquisite craftsmanship. This paper is not an insistence that we learn all the who, what, and where's of medieval history, but rather an opportunity taken to grapple with their images. The second political agenda is, perhaps, more wide reaching, though it is far from my field of expertise. I must put forward, however, the possibility that perhaps today there is a special need to query painting's history.

The process of selecting one's influences is an ongoing project for all artists. Endless series of decisions must be made, both consciously and unconsciously, to resolve the question of what is inside and what is outside their purview. The question asked by painters, whether consciously or not, of how to receive images bequeathed by their predecessors is central to their practice, and by necessity a significant part of the tradition of painting. Which pictorial sentiments should be incorporated into one's painting practice? Which should be rejected?

We now have access to images sourced from across time and space, perhaps to a greater degree than any before. Artists might select their "parentage" from any number of the many cultural histories accessible through online sources, travel, *et cetera*. One might be drawn to certain image-types for personal or emotional reasons, and others for political reasons. One may feel a resonance with images produced in a time and/or place very far from their own, but nevertheless attempt to assimilate those

ideas into their practice.

But in an age of increased awareness of damages wrought through colonialisms, important questions are being asked about authenticity and entitlement to cultural production. Should an artist select from prototypes to which it is perceived they are unentitled, they may invite unwanted scrutiny for having implicated themselves in the continued suppression of marginalized peoples. The power dynamics at work in the appropriation of a historically oppressed peoples' cultural voice has entered public awareness and it is presently incontestable that artists need to avoid infringing upon the opportunities of under, or less-privileged people through the occupation of their cultural space. This increasingly widespread societal awareness will, hopefully, expand and improve the cultural representation of minority and/or marginalized groups. When artists concede to the demand for authenticity, they face the new challenge of delineating their cultural purview; they must understand what histories they are entitled to engage and recognise the boundaries beyond which is territory that should be reserved for others to explore and express their identity through. To delineate their cultural purview, artists must therefore negotiate the histories of their mediums.

This dissertation is an exploration of just one thread in a much wider history of the development of portrait painting, as it has come to be known in western European traditions. My research focuses on the influence that medieval Christians had through their interpretation of portraiture as a viable means to connect with the presence of Christ. Although I do not wish to engage in a discussion of personal matters, I must admit that the work here is part of a personal project to find ways to educate and immerse myself in traditions that, for better or worse, are part and parcel of my identity politics.

2. The Studio Work.

The relationship between my research and painting is somewhat casual. Although they each

benefit from cross-pollination, neither is beholden to ideas generated in the other. These are parallel and independent streams which influence one another, but never converge, even if occasionally it looks as though they will on the horizon. The flows of both streams, however, are often guided by the same questions: Why the rectangular, mobile panel? Why figuration? Why portraiture? One question, in particular, has drawn the focus of this dissertation: how did we arrive at our present understanding of painting's capacity to evoke the presence of a missing individual?

My studio practice has engaged the phenomenon of life-like presence, through figuration, in several ways, beginning with prolonged attempts at traditionalist portraiture. These paintings were predicated on the belief that if enough detail was "captured" from life, the painting might become another person in the room, as it were. More recently, my work has departed from a program of strict observation. These paintings no longer depict the "here and now" space that prior works depended on, though the necessity of figuration has remained. The evocation of human presence is now achieved through layers of fragmented observations which are applied one upon another. Through this process of accumulation, figurative forms gradually emerge, sometimes quite by accident, and sometimes through careful selection and encouragement. This shift towards what some might call abstraction has de-prioritised the painter/subject relationship that previously dominated works made under a program of strict observation. The aim, instead, has been to emphasize the relationship between the viewer and the painting's materials of representation. If the figures emerge in the eye of the beholder, then perhaps the viewer/presence relationship has greater opportunity to become personal. The result of this methodology tends towards amorphous figures that come and go from the compositions, depending on the viewer's perspective.

At times, the paintings' figures become players in broader themes, which may or may not be legible to viewers. Generally, however, the expressive nature of the work typically leads viewers down certain paths. Without wishing to limit the scope of potential interpretations, perhaps two rather

dominant threads can be identified: uncertainty of our ecological sustainability, and contemplation about humanity's role in the cosmos, both of which are aspects of spiritual wellbeing. It has been said by the electronic music guru Richard D. James (aka Aphex Twin) that "we are living in a mega dark spiritual age", a statement that was made as a call to artists "to drag ourselves out of it and dream up new mind expanding music & art".[2] While I cannot attest to my ability to dream up new mind-expanding art, perhaps my paintings are visual contemplations of our spiritual predicament. It is my hope that they might contribute to the amelioration of spiritual impoverishment, if only my own.

3. Case Studies

A description of a selection of my paintings should elucidate some of the cross-pollinations that occur between my practices. *Nicaea X* (fig.1) presents two parties in conflict, perhaps a verbal dispute. The title obviously indicates a setting in or near the city of Nicaea (present-day İznik, just outside Istanbul,) which was the site of two church councils that contributed to the codification of Christianity and would eventually become legendary in painting's history. The dispute could be over anything, but with the site in mind, it could be imagined as having coalesced over divisive spiritualities. Given the 462 years between the first (325) and second (787) Nicaean councils, one could further imagine almost any date, past or future, for the fictional tenth council implied in the painting's title. The painting is thus situated in a fantastic, or mythological terrain. The Roman numeral also echoes the corner to corner "X" which marks the painting's composition: an appropriate insignia to orchestrate an image of dispute. Divided vertically, the left side of the painting evokes urban habitation, and the right, rural. The mythological debate of images can hence be contextualized by the idiom of the town mouse and country mouse. This is an image of two worldviews coming into conflict, each informed by distinct

---

[2] Syrobonkers interview, part 1.

ecological habitats.

Expats (fig.2) was developed over a period of 30 months and visualizes anxieties of our future by depicting an imaginary, dystopic worldview, populated by masses of spiritually-lost humans overtrodden by giant, sky-blue legs. The painting parodies the subtext of the term "expat" (privileged, white professionals, gainfully employed in foreign locations) by casting a group of white, transitory refugees as tormented, lost, blundering. The painting's central region of disorder is presided over by an abstracted overlord, head assembled from detritus, and white-robed arms outstretched like a snowy mountain range, who signals, or perhaps passes judgement with two yellow, dish-gloved hands. To organise regions of chaos, the composition uses strong structural elements (flanking pillars, overhead arch) which are derived from Byzantine illuminations.

Present-day notions that travel promotes spiritual growth are indebted to ancient and medieval ideals of pilgrimage. *A Pilgrim's Life* (fig.3) is a thinly painted image of a traveller crossing a threshold, be it geographic or spiritual. One side of the canvas is occupied by a dark, starlit sky, and the other a bright, yellowish and probably dry landscape. On both sides, the figure inverts the tone of its ground: it is lightly coloured under dark skies, and darkly coloured over the bright, desert-scape. The figure's hat is adorned by a scallop shell, an iconographic reference to the pilgrim's route known as the Camino de Santiago.

Corpus Integrum, pt.2 (fig.4) depicts an abstracted body emerging from a purple robe formed into a bun at its top. The image is derived from late medieval iconography of ghosts, and its title references a notion that the partial remains of a body might exude the presence of a whole, such as in the case of holy relics. Below the layers of paint which make up the ghostly figure is an older painting (2009) of a hand making a gesture of benediction, painted after a medieval arm reliquary.

In 2017 I staged an exhibition ominously titled *Onward Cirri Mould*, which is an anagram for "Colin Muir Dorward". This was a showing of *plein-air* paintings that were developed locally on the

thickly forested banks of the Thames River, and consisted predominantly of paintings of those tightly-packed, tangled thickets. For me, the works are meditations on our place in earth's ecology (fig.5). What are our responsibilities to the planet? What do we expect it to provide? How must our relationship with it change, moving into the future? Included in the exhibition were two figurative pieces, titled *Prepers,* 1 and 2 (fig. 6). These works depict a fantastic breed of future-people who have outlived an apocalyptic era by loosing their humanity. By realising themselves as continuous with their environment, they have dissolved the distinction between figure and landscape - and idea which separates today's humans from their ecological habitat. In these works, the problems of figure/ground relationships, which are idiomatic to painting, become analogous to greater concerns about humankind's place on Earth.

Night/Water Codex (fig.7), also included in *Onward Cirri Mould* is a composition which spreads across two canvases, each forming two pages of an open book, a symbol of contemplation and learning. The painting is developed through patches of impasto renderings which depict the sticks and undergrowth that line the banks of the Thames River outside our Visual Arts building, where the work was painted. On each "page" is centred a mandorla form, which has been used in Christian iconography to suggest the intersection of earthly and spiritual worlds. One contains a depiction of the surface of water, and the other, a starlit sky. The effect of the mandorla's positions is that each canvas takes the form of a bust, or portrait painting. A human element is thus located in a terrain of nature, and learning. Portraiture, it seems, continues to haunt my work, even in cases where landscape comes to the fore.

Chapter Two: The Genesis of a Mythology.

W. J. T. Mitchell has proposed that "we are stuck with our magical, premodern attitudes toward objects, especially pictures" (1996).[3] Today's mythology of the Mona Lisa's eyes, which are widely believed to follow viewers around the room, for example, is a testament to a broad cultural willingness to anthropomorphize paintings. The painter, especially of portraits, must eventually ask themselves why these representations are so widely understood to evoke the presence of a living body. Of course, portraiture is complex, and this is only one of its many functions. But that we are at all capable of ascribing a lifelike quality to a picture is remarkable. Evidently, we *want* to believe in a lifelike presence offered by an inanimate, flat representation. To this end, painting is unable to escape its potential to be occupied by the logic of portraiture. That the presence of an absent individual might manifest itself, through paint, is a veritable axiom of the medium.

This essay is an attempt to understand the preconditions of art which fortified today's tradition of using paint to propose the presence of an absent individual. The history I trace perhaps does not follow the same path that a historian of art might achieve, it may seem bumpy. This is, no doubt, partially because I am a studio artist attempting the work of a scholar. The methodology I apply in my scholarship is not unlike what I have habituated myself to in studio; the work is guided by creative interpretations, and tangential questions. The resultant selection of histories that have been "curated" will hopefully bring into focus the overarching question already discussed.

The history I chart begins in antiquity with the Old Testament sources that informed later dialogs of absence and presence. I then navigate early portrayals of Christ, which I have singled out as critical examples in the tradition of painting's capacity to evoke the missing. The utility of such

---

[3] Mitchell, "What do Pictures 'Really' Want," 72.

portraits is examined and brought into the context of the crisis of images which occurred in eighth and ninth-century Byzantium. Finally, I trace iconographic continuity between the traditions of the early images of Christ and early depictions of shrouded ghosts, which arrived by the eleventh century from a need to depict the common man who had died, but then returned in spectral form to interact with the living.

1. An Ancient Opposition to Images.

Traditions of absence and presence in painting have been informed by ancient models of thought that problematized the use of images to convey a god who had no material presence yet was to be felt everywhere. In particular, it was the ancient Jewish question of images' capacity in this regard that manifested an aniconic ideology which was transmitted to the newer religion, Christianity.

1a. Aniconism, in Degrees.

Aniconism can be understood simply as an ideological opposition to images, usually based on insecurities about ambiguous relationships between prototype and model. As Jaś Elsner has succinctly stated, at the root of it lies the question of if an image "is not the same as its referent and thereby expresses the absence of that referent even as it refers to it, or whether it is a site for the real presence of its prototype, embodied in the image."[4] How does this ideological concern play out, in practices of worship? For the Old Testament scholar Yitzhaq Feder, it simply becomes "worship without the use of

---

[4] Elsner, "Iconoclasm as Discourse," 370.

iconic (anthropomorphic and/or theriomorphic) symbols."[5]

The reality is that in all the Abrahamic religions, aniconism describes a wide spectrum of disinclinations towards images. While it may be true that images of God are less than common, the outright rejection of representations of the natural world has never, to my knowledge, been substantially realised. Even Islam, which is often interpreted as being profoundly aniconic, has generated a rich pictorial tradition that includes exquisite representations of the natural world. Aniconisms can therefore be organised by the severity of the degree to which images are tolerated. For scholars of the Hebrew Bible, the terms *de facto* and programmatic have come to the fore as categorical distinctions.

De facto aniconism constitutes an ambivalence through non-engagement with images, while programmatic aniconism constitutes a more severe rejection which includes iconoclastic tendencies. Programmatic aniconism tends to elicit the greatest fascination for the historian, since, unlike *de facto* aniconism, it produces material precipitates, for example the obliterated face of an otherwise unscathed figure. But it must be noted that such aniconism does not necessitate the outright abandonment of visual aids in worship. Nobody, it seems, is capable of completely exorcizing images from their practices of worship.[6] Take, for example, what Tryggve N. D. Mettinger refers to as "empty space aniconism." This is the phenomenon whereby visual accoutrements are used to frame a region of unoccupied space, which is intended to represent the presence of that very thing which problematizes its own representation (*i.e.* God.) The widely recognised ancient example of this phenomenon is the so-called Cherubim Throne. This is the empty throne, supported by winged Cherubims, which is described in ancient sources, and is intended to represent a seat for the invisible god (and therefore implies a

---

[5] Feder, 253.

[6] But if they did, would a historian of visual culture notice? It would be difficult for a student of images to historisize a culture which produced none.

humanoid form.)[7] Though there is no surviving ancient prototype, the legendary cult statue is presumed to have been intended to sit on top of the Ark of the Covenant, but also is said to have inhabited the Holy of Holies in the now lost Solomonic Temple in Jerusalem.

1b. The Ancient Sources.

The aniconic theories that complicated and mystified images in the Middle Ages had already taken shape in antiquity. Programmatic aniconisms, transmitted especially through writings known in Hebrew as the Torah, and for the Christians, by their Greek name, the Pentateuch, had profound and complex impact on Christianity.[8] The composite work, assembled across several centuries, comprises the first five books of the Old Testament. Of its books, Exodus and Deuteronomy provide the most overt contributions to aniconic theories.

The events told in Exodus, of Moses and the Israelites' departure from Egypt, are probably familiar to readers of this essay, but let us now review a few points, and draw focus to the promulgations which pertain specifically to the aniconisms which eventually transmitted to Christianity.

Following their escape from Egypt, the Israelites wander the desert and eventually arrive at Mount Sinai, where God initiates a prolonged conversation with Moses about the rules of their covenant. God presents himself, amorphously, as clouds, fire, and thunder, and communicates through voice and in the written word. The Decalogue's oft-cited Second Commandment, which was inscribed by God onto a stone tablet reads:

> You shall not have other gods besides me. You shall not make for yourself an idol or likeness of anything whatever is in heaven above and whatever is in the earth beneath and whatever is in the waters beneath

---

[7] Mettinger, *No Graven Image?,* 19.
[8] Feder, 274.

the earth. You shall not do obedience to them, nor are you to serve them, for I am the Lord your God, a jealous god, repaying sins of fathers upon children up to the third and fourth generation to those who hate me, and doing mercy unto thousands, for those who love me and keep my ordinances. (Ex. 20:3-6) [9]

Moses also receives verbal instructions for how to construct the Tabernacle, an altar, a courtyard for the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle's furnishing, decadent priestly attire (28:1-42) and many more accoutrements of worship. The most puzzling promulgation, which seems outright to contradict the Second Commandment, is the detailed description for the fabrication of the Ark and the aforementioned Cherubim Throne (aka Mercy Seat):

> And you shall make a propitiatory as a cover of pure gold, the length of two and a half cubits and the width one and a half cubits. And you shall make two cheroubim engraved in gold, and you shall position them at both sides of the propitiatory. They shall be made – one cheroub on this side and one cheroub on the second side of the propitiatory. And you shall make the two cheroubim on the two sides. The cheroubim shall be stretching the wings above, overshadowing with their wings the propitiatory and their faces towards one another. Towards the propitiatory shall the faces of the cheroubim be. And you shall place the propotiatory on the ark above, and in the ark you shall deposit the witness, whichever I give you. And I will speak to you from above the propitiatory in between the two cheroubim that are on the ark of the witness, even in accord with all that I may command you for the sons of Israel. (Ex. 25:16-21)

God proceeds to explain how he gifted Bezalel (of the tribe of Judah) with a special ability "to be designing and to construct, to fashion the gold and the silver and the bronze and the blue and the purple and the spun scarlet and the twisted linen and the stone works and for works crafted from wood,

---

[9] The Old Testament sources are from *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, being the texts used in the Greek East during the Middle Ages.

to fashion according to all the works." He then states, furthermore, that he has granted the ability to realize the designs of the propitiatory (Tabernacle), the Ark, *etc*, to all skilled labourers. (Ex. 31:1-11) The Second Commandment, it seems, was not intended to be followed universally.

On his descent from the mountain, bearing the two stone tablets engraved by God each on both sides, Moses discovers that the Israelites had apostatized, and erected the idol of the Golden Calf, around which they reveled in debauchery. Aaron, who had catalysed the creation of the monument, counselled Moses, "Do not be enraged, lord. For you know the impulse of this people. For they say to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us'." (Ex. 31: 23-24) Enraged, Moses smashes the tablets and many Israelites are slain for their disobedience. Moses then returns to the mountain and acquires a newly inscribed Decalogue before returning to his people who renew their covenant with God.

A parallel source to Exodus is Deuteronomy, which has been dated to the sixth century BC, in Palestine. The text is, in large part, a recapitulation of the Mosaic covenant established at Mount Sinai.[10] The book is composed as a series of sermons, told mostly in the first person from the perspective of Moses. It tells the history of the Israelites' invasion of the Promised Land, and throughout, pronounces laws to govern the Israelites including punishments for idolatry, dietary restriction, rules for war, and social conduct. Its title comes from the Greek, *deuteros* (second) and *nomos* (law), underscoring one of the book's key themes, the Second Commandment, which expands upon what was included in Exodus:

> And guard your souls closely, because you did not notice a likeness on the day the Lord spoke to you at Choreb in the mountain from the midst of the fire. Do not act lawlessly and make for yourselves an engraved likeness, any kind of icon – a likeness of male or female, a likeness of any animal of those that are on the earth, a likeness of any winged bird that flies under the sky, a likeness of any reptile that creeps on the ground, a likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth. And do not, when you

---

[10] Kennet, 500.

look up to the sky and see the sun and the moon and the stars, even any ornament of the sky, be led astray and do obedience to them and serve them – those things that the Lord your God has allotted to all the nations beneath the sky. (Deut 4:15-20)

A further thread, written in the Book of Numbers, which narrates the Israelite's departure from Sinai, draws interest as it similarly begins with God's instruction to craft specific holy objects. Following an extended period of desert wandering, the Israelites become dissatisfied with their leadership and speak out against God and Moses, which invites retaliation from God, who plagues them with poisonous snakes. The Israelites repent, and after begging Moses to intercede, God instructs him to "Make yourself a snake, and set it on a sign. And it shall be that if a snake bites a person, everyone who is bitten when he looks at it shall live. And Moyses [Moses] made a snake of bronze and put it upon a sign, and it came to pass that when a snake bit a person and he looked at the bronze snake, then he lived." (Num. 21:8-9)

The Brazen Serpent is mentioned one further time in the book of Kings (Reigns, in the Septuagint.) King Hezekiah "removed the high places, and smashed all the steles and utterly destroyed the sacred groves and the bronze snake that Moyses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel had been making incense offerings to it, and he called it Neesthan" (4 Reigns18:4). The impulse to commit idolatry which was observed earlier, by Aaron, during the episode of the Golden Calf, seems to be ubiquitous and to require constant correction.

Having surveyed three primary sources, we now turn to their reception into Christianity, where they played a central role in an ongoing dialogue of iconoclasm.

1c. Reception of the Ancient Sources into Christianity.

The Old Testament texts (which, one must remember, were collated across several centuries)

oscillate between chastisement for the misuse of images, and pronouncement of their correct use. The condemnation of those who worship idols stands at odds with God's many commands to produce material objects of worship. It is therefore no surprise that we find a continued interrogation of the old sources throughout the entirety of Christian history, in search of the correct theory of images. In the Middle Ages, images' apologists and detractors were both able to locate their arguments in terms of the Old Testament. Although many iconoclastic arguments were lost to redaction by the iconophilic politicians who came out victorious following the eighth and ninth-century Byzantine iconoclasms, it is generally understood that virtually all oppositions to the cult of images begin with the Old Testament understandings of God's uncircumscribability.[11]

John of Damascus (c.645-c.750) was a late church father and apologist of images who became renowned for his comprehensive examination of Old Testament sources. Writing from Syria (a safe distance from the iconoclastic regime in the Byzantine center) near the beginning of the eighth-century iconoclasms, he formulated a comprehensive argument against the iconoclasts in his *Three Apologies Against Those Who Attack the Divine Images*. John's stance was predominantly theological and is replete with painstakingly mined Old Testament citations to support his cause, as well as quotes from apocrypha generated by the church fathers who preceded him, especially those from the fourth century (by which time the cult of images had begun to strengthen its foothold within the institution), to establish a longstanding tradition of image veneration.

Although it had inherited the centrality of the written word from Judaism, Christianity reconceptualized the ancient models of aniconism by superseding the text with God's living incarnate. The arrival of Christ thus reconceptualized the philosophies of imaging God that were present in the ancient texts. The coming of Christ had, to a degree, allowed the Second Commandment to be

---

[11] Kessler, "Pictures," 59.

circumvented. Christ's materialization had affected a clarification of the mysterious laws issued in the

pre-apostolic era, resolving the "enigmas of the biblical prophecies" that had confounded interpretation

of the ancient texts.[12] To Christians, seeing God was a privilege that distinguished them from Jews.

John of Damascus argued that what had been impossible for the Jews (seeing the image of their god)

was ratified by the arrival of God's living incarnate, who was himself a kind of image of God. The

expanded logic of what constitutes images is set forth in John's six (esoteric) types of images. For

John, the written word could operate on the same playing field as images. To back these claims, John

cites the legendary portrait known as the Image of Edessa, which was presented by Christ to a court

painter who had been unable to capture his likeness in paint. This miraculous image had allegedly been

captured on a cloth after Christ had impressed it upon his face.

As will be seen in subsequent sections of this essay, images' quasi-legality would become

internalized by the religion, and as such, the production of a visual culture with one foot in aniconism,

and the other in iconism, commenced. It was under these conditions that the image of Christ,

miraculously imprinted on a cloth, was formulated - an image that was unique in its ability to meet the

demands for material indexes of divinity while respecting anxieties about its representation.

---

[12] Kessler, "Pictures," 58.

2. Byzantine Iconoclasms.

2a. The Onset of Images in the Christian Church.

To have an iconoclasm, there must already be a cult of images in place to oppose. It took some time, however, for images to be incorporated into the church. Early Christianity is generally perceived to have been more aniconic than it would be by the middle of the first millennium.[13] By appearances, the Old Testament prohibitions had indeed discouraged, or at least slowed the production of material expressions of the faith. Furthermore, the impossibility of permanent places of worship in the first two centuries made collective engagement with works of art unlikely. Our earliest Christian images are found in the Callixtus Catacombs, which date to the very beginning of the third century. Their frescoes depict Biblical figures and show us that at least some early Christians included images as part of their faith.[14]

In 305, roughly coinciding with the end of the Christian persecutions under the rule of Diocletian (reigned 286-305), the Council of Elvira was held in the Roman province of Hispania Baetica (now southern Spain). This pre-ecumenical council, which provides our earliest surviving canons, marks an early instance where anxieties about material aids to worship came under institutional regulation (though the canons' primary function appears to have been to regulate sexual conduct). Several canons report on the appropriate punishments for the worship of "false idols"[15] and one clarifies that idol-breakers who are killed for their actions are not to be listed as martyrs.[16] Canon 36 stipulates that "there should be no pictures in church, lest what is reverenced and adored be painted on

---

[13] Kuryluk, 23.
[14] Noble, 14. Finney, 145.
[15] (canon 1, 6, 17, 41, 55, 59)
[16] (canon 60)

the walls."

Diocletian was succeeded by Constantius Chlorus, and Chlorus by his son, Constantine I, whose rule brought the Edict of Milan in 313 (jointly-issued with his co-emperor in the Balkans, Emperor Licinius), which declared toleration to all religions within the Roman Empire and ended imperial persecution of Christians. In 325, Constantine I congregated the so-called First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea to attempt a resolution of the Arian controversy, which had brought a conversation about the material connections between God and Christ to the fore. The council drafted the first version of the Nicaean Creed, which would regulate theories of imaging divinity in its formulation of the Holy Trinity. In 380, Emperor Theodosius I (along with his co-emperors in the west, Valentinian I and Gratian) issued the Edict of Thessalonica, which made Nicaean Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire and declared all non-Nicaean sects heretical.

The aniconic-interpretation of early Christianity tends to characterize the faith, up to the Edict of Thessalonia (380) as generally rejecting material props.[17] This theory persisted into the twentieth century, as presented in Ernst Kitzinger's essay "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm" (1954). Kitzinger conceived of the early church as "uniconic" and laid out the notion that iconoclastic and iconophilic ideals have persisted, in conflict, throughout the entire history of the church.[18] Recent scholarship, however, has shifted perception and the aniconic-origins theory is now less accepted.[19] Regardless of the interpretations of the evidence, by the fifth century, portraits of saints were familiar to travelers in Jerusalem, [20] and images' institutional acquisition of ritualistic treatment and magic powers

---

[17] Kitzinger, 89. Kuryluk, 23.
[18] Kitziner, "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm," 84.
[19] See, for example, Paul Corby Finney, who works hard to debunk the aniconic-origins theory in *The Invisible God* (1994). Finney comprehensively examines early Christian writings about and uses of images, from its apologists and its detractors. Through his study of the oldest surviving artifacts, especially the early third-century wall painting in the Callixtus catacombs outside of Rome, which are among our oldest Christian doctrinal images, he shows that there is little evidence to prove early aniconism.
[20] Kitzinger, 99-101.

had certainly occurred by the reign of Justinian in the sixth century.[21] In 692 the Quinisext Council, held in Constantinople, established a preference for representations of Christ in human form in place of the preceding convention of his depiction as a lamb.

2b. A Chronology of the Iconoclastic Controversies, 726-843.

Ernst Kitzinger opened his seminal essay "The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm" (1954) by stating "In the entire history of European art it is difficult to name any one fact more momentous than the admission of the graven image by the Christian Church." He contextualized this assertion by summarizing the aniconisms of the early church, which, from the outset, worked to inhibit images' utility within the church. The agitation between the forces of aniconism and iconism, he continued, "finally erupted in an explosion of well-nigh world-import."[22] This explosion was, of course, the so-called Byzantine iconoclastic controversies of the eighth and ninth centuries.

The integration of the Byzantine iconoclasms into an understanding of painting's medieval genesis must begin by recognising that the iconoclastic controversies cannot be reduced to an art historical discussion. Images are, after all, ideal sites on which political agendas can be visibly exerted. The questions of images' spiritual utility and/or the need for their preservation or destruction is only part of a complex political moment that evades concise summary. That the cult of relics (which had established itself prior to the cult of images) did not elicit the same outcry, suggests to me the possibility that the iconoclasms were largely politically motivated.[23] Would a theological protest not have equally challenged relics, which served a common and overlapping purpose as images in the first

---

[21] Kitzinger, 99-101. See also Belting, *Likeness*, 19, 145.
[22] Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," 3.
[23] Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images, " 118

millennium? It was not until the Reformation, some 800 years later, that relics came under suspicion from within the institution to the degree that images did during the Byzantine iconoclasms. And yet, for the modern scholar of Late Antiquity, Peter Brown, the eighth and ninth-century crises were a conversation about the "position of the Holy in Byzantine society."[24]

A chronology of the iconoclasms reveals some of the complexity of its politics. The events came to a head with Byzantine Emperor Leo III's 726 decree against the representation of religious figures, which precipitated the removal of the icon of Christ Antiphonetes (c.730) from the entrance to the Sacred Palace (the Imperial Residence) known as the Chalke Gate, in Constantinople.[25] The removal of this image was protested with some ferocity by locals who evidently held the image in high regard: a soldier tasked with the deposition is cited to have been murdered by an angry mob.[26] The murder became attributed to Saint Theodosia, who is said to have cast down the ladder whereon the soldier was positioned to remove the icon. After her affiliates were beheaded, Theodosia was killed with an ox or ram's horn at the nearby Forum of the Ox. According to legend, this site hosted an ancient, sinister bronze in the form of an ox, or ox's head. The construction had been relocated from Pergamon (near modern-day Izmur) where it had been employed for spectacles of public torture and execution by placing victims inside the bronze's hollow body and heating it externally with fire until they perished. During the reign of Nero (54-68), Christians were martyred therein, including Saint Antipas. Theodosia would later be sainted and by the second millennium a cult had developed around her relics.[27]

---

[24] Brown, "A Dark Age Crisis," 5.
[25] Does it matter if this event was fabricated? There is some question as to the legitimacy of the claim to an icon of Christ at the gate. See "Life of St.Theodosia of Constantinople," in Talbot, *Byzantine Defenders*, 1.
[26] *Ibid*, 6.
[27] *Ibid*, 3.

The question of what motivated Leo III to issue the prohibition cannot be answered with precision.[28] If the empire needed evidence of God's wrath for having fallen into idolatry, it had a submarine volcanic eruption in the Aegean Sea in 726 as well as Arab invasions to consider as potential proofs. Furthermore, aniconisms of Islam could not be ignored. In 721, the Caliph Yazid II issued an edict which forbade figuration and promoted the destruction of existing representations, coinciding with an intensification of Arab raids (following a hiatus after their retreat from the Siege of Constantinople in 717-718.)[29] But since it is understood that anti-iconic agendas had appeared within Christianity well before the onset of Islam, the "external influence" theory that was written into history by the iconodules is not widely accepted. Two essays, (Brown, 1973, and Henry, 1976) foreground the controversy's connection to internal, state politics. The empire felt a need to centralize the spiritual power that had become dispersed through the growth of monastic culture, whose constituents operated outside of the court and the urban centres, paid no taxes, and were exempt from military duty. Since its inception some four centuries earlier, monasticism had been establishing itself as an "offworld" nexus of spiritual power, holding fast to the notion that "the Christian ideal must have some expression other than the empire."[30] In his likening of the holy person to a living icon, Brown shows a connection between the monastics and the non-regulated spiritual power of images. The psychological needs that had been met by the holy man could equally be satisfied by the icon. The monastics' spiritual power was perpetuated through icons, which functioned much like the living holy people, themselves.

Leo III died of dropsy in 741 and was succeeded by his son, Constantine V, who perpetuated the iconoclastic agendas with personal interest, and came to be identified as perhaps the most ruthless force in the iconoclastic saga. To endorse his iconoclastic position, Constantine V summoned the

---

[28] Look for example to the argument/counterarguments between Patrick Henry and Peter Brown in "What was the Iconoclastic Controversy About?" and "A Dark-Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy" (respectively).
[29] Mettinger, *No Graven Image?,* 77.
[30] Henry, "What was the Iconoclastic Controversy About?" 31.

Council of Hieria (754), where it was argued that the Eucharist was the only true image of Christ.[31] Other holy objects were limited to the church building, and the sign of the cross.[32] The decree's logic reasoned that to render the body of Christ in an image was to commit the heresy of separating his two types, as did the Nestorians in their conception of Christ as dual natured. Notably absent from the council were the five patriarchs, including Nikephoros I of Constantinople, who would later be exiled and martyred (828) for his pro-icon politics. Under Constantine V's rule, the persecution of the monastics intensified. "The Life of Saint Anthousa" tells us of the saint whose virtuosity enabled her to withstand torture from Constantine V's agents by fire with the embers of burning icons, as well as severe lashing, to eventually mollify the emperor and escape with her life.[33]

The council of Hieria was later rejected (787), then ratified (815) and then rejected again (843).[34] Constantine V's political program included the persecution of monks who served clients at the empire's periphery, thereby constituting a threat to the consolidated spiritual power of its centre. For example, after some years of persecution, in 764 or 765, Saint Stephen the Younger was executed publicly. Later, he would be celebrated by the iconodules as a prominent martyr of the cause.

Constantine V died in 775 and was succeeded by his son Leo IV who died in 780 of tuberculosis, leaving his wife, Irene, as regent for their minor son, Constantine VI (she later became Empress, after having him deposed, blinded and imprisoned when he came of age in 797). In 787 Irene summoned a church council (the Second Council of Nicaea) to restore icons to their old power and end a fifty-year period of cultural reform. In support of his position, the iconodule Patriarch Nicephorus proposed, at the council, that the miraculous Image of Edessa, which was said to have been made

---

[31] See Brekenridge, "The Iconoclast's Image of Christ", and Baranov, "The Doctrine of the Icon-Eucharist."
[32] Brown. "Dark Age", 5.
[33] See "Life of St. Anthousa of Mantineon," in Talbot, *Byzantine Defenders*, p16-19.
[34] The cycle of rejections and ratifications are humorously narrated in "Life of St.Theodosia of Constantinople," in Talbot, *Byzantine Defenders*, p107, 120.

without human hands, superseded the mosaic injunction.[35] At this time, Irene re-installed an image of Christ at the Chalke Gate.

The proclamations of the 787 council endured for less than twenty years. Irene was deposed in 802 and replaced by Nikephoros (not to be confused with his contemporary, the Patriarch Nikephoros I of Constantinople), who was succeeded by Staurakios (803), succeeded by Michael I (811), who abdicated to Leo V (820). Shortly after Leo V's accession, amid a period of military defeats, he initiated an investigation into the decision to sanctify the veneration of icons made at the 787 council. He instituted a second iconoclasm which was to endure for roughly thirty more years. Once again, the image of Christ at the Chalke Gate was used to publicize imperial politics when it was replaced with the sign of a cross, around 815.[36] Leo V was assassinated in 820, during Christmas mass, and Michael II (who was awaiting execution for conspiring against the throne) was immediately proclaimed Emperor. Patriarch Nikephoros was allowed to return from exile and worked but failed to convince the Emperor to abandon his (lenient) iconoclastic agendas. Theophilos, Michael II's son, took the throne in 829 and died in 842, leaving his wife, Theodora, as regent to their minor son, Michael III. Under Theodora's regency, images were restored, once again, to their celebrated status. The "[re]admission of the graven image," to use Kitzinger's words, was set to be celebrated henceforth by the feast of Orthodoxy.

2c. What are the Byzantine Iconoclasms?

I ask what the Iconoclasms *are* (not "were") because the question is not only what happened, but also how the history and mythology are alive in modern scholarship. At the controversies' occurrence, the terms iconoclast or iconoclastic were only used sporadically, and at no time during the

---

[35] Kessler, "Pictures," 62.
[36] Brubaker, *Sources*, 71.

crisis did anyone self-identify as "iconoclastic."[37] The losing parties were retroactively denounced as "enemies of images" (*ikonomachoi*), and heretical.[38] Even by the eighteenth century, the term was relatively unused. The historian Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), for example, did not use it, nor did his study of the eighth and ninth centuries engage in the moment of iconoclasm; a moment that, for many historians today, defines the political climate of the time.[39] It was not until the late nineteenth century that the term "iconoclasm" or "iconoclastic" became used. Following this introduction to the scene was a period of quiet gestation before the terms were taken up more broadly, in the mid-twentieth century, finding peak usage towards its end.

Perhaps due to a "postmodernist fascination for fragmentation," the iconoclasms have become fixed in the imagination to the extent that that they have suffered "a crisis of over explanation."[40] The degree with which they have infected our imagination is put into perspective by Jan N. Bremmer who contrasts the volume of scholarship on the eighth-century iconoclasms with the less-studied, but more effective, "creeping destruction" of the changes made in the Church following the Reformation, especially in the Catholic Church itself.[41] The effects of the critical mass of scholarship dedicated to Byzantine iconoclasms has become practically inseparable from the effects of the eighth and ninth-century events themselves.[42]

---

[37] Bremmer, "Iconoclast […] Towards a Genealogy," 9.
[38] Belting, *Likeness*, 146.
[39] Bremmer, "Iconoclast […] Towards a Genealogy," 17. For an overview of Gibbon's treatment of Byzantium see Runciman, "Gibbon and Byzantium".
[40] Brown, "A Dark Age Crisis", 3, and Bremmer, "Iconoclast […] Towards a Genealogy", 17.
[41] These losses were initiated by proclamations to create unobstructed views of the altar (issued at the Council of Trent), the removal of side altars due to the abolishment of private mass, and obliteration through the renovations which brought Baroque stylistic updates to the interiors. Ironically, it seems that the ambivalent aniconism of the Lutheran Church preserved medieval works that were lost in other places. Because although Luther did not tolerate the veneration of images, he was opposed to their destruction and supported that their place in churches be maintained. So, in the Protestant churches, rather than destroying old artefacts, they simply got repurposed, for example the tabernacle became a place to hold liturgy.
[42] One could conclude that a profound effect of the iconoclasms is its modern historicization and capacity to invoke a sense of wonder in the modern imagination.

Built into any aniconic philosophy is a concession to the power of images. The paradox of iconoclasm is its necessitation of the images it opposes. To make the suppression of an image evident, the example of its destruction must be presented, and in so doing, the memory (which is a kind of mental image) of the suppressed image is preserved, which, ironically, affirms its power. The iconoclast is thus complicit in the game of images, and in an ironic turn of logic, becomes the ultimate iconophile (by insisting on images' power). The so-called "iconoclasts," of the eighth-century controversy, frequently merely replaced one image-type for another, such as for example the deposition of the image of Christ at the Chalke Gate during the time of Leo III was undertaken under the pretense of its preservation (after suffering vandalization) and replaced with another image (of the cross). What is not discussed is that to restore the image of Christ would have necessitated a similar "iconoclasm" in its removal of the image of the cross!

There can be no doubt that both iconodules and iconoclasts were playing respective roles in the same game of images. In practice, anti-iconisms and iconisms are two sides of the same coin. The phenomenon of their mutual dependence is examined by Jaś Elsner who traces historical events that show the continuity of "the discourse of iconoclasm" from the Greco-Roman world to Byzantium.[43] The discourse of iconoclasm has made significant contributions to our pictorial heritage.[44] Oppositions to images have tested image cultures, and though they have sometimes precipitated the loss of great artworks, there is much to attest to their role in strengthening images' biosphere, namely through its diversification. For example, in the sixth century, a novel class of images of Christ, which were said to be not made by human hands, arose in response to the Second Commandment's prohibitions against the fabrication of representations of divinity.

---

[43] Elsner, 371.
[44] Elsner shows how the tradition of image breaking that arrived in Byzantium was already well established in the Pagan, Greco-Roman world, for example in the ancient Roman practices of *damnatio memoriae* which used the destruction of images as a kind of image in itself, to show the triumph of one over another. Elsner, 370.

3. The Visage of Christ.

The necessity for Christ's portrait stands out because in his ascension to heaven, he left no material remains on earth, depriving its inhabitants the opportunity to fashion relics that indexed and memorialized his life. Portrait painting offered a solution by creating a tangible presence to focus his worship. In addition, these paintings re-enacted the central Christian mystery, the realization of a material representative of God, on earth.[45]

3a. Sources from Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai.

Crucial in the study of early Christian portraiture is a repository of paintings preserved at Saint Catherine's Monastery, located about 100 kilometres from the tip of the Sinai Peninsula. The Monastery was built during Justinian's rule (b.482), near the foot of the mountain where it is believed that Moses procured his stone tablets. The curious irony that our greatest collection of early Christian art was preserved at the legendary site where the Commandment against graven images was issued cannot go without mentioning.[46] The Saint Catherine's collection was preserved for a number of reasons including geographic remoteness, its dry climate, and the monastery's significant fortifications which improved the security of its contents. Furthermore, it can be acknowledged that within the monastery itself there exists a culture of preservation. Caretakers of this collection today view themselves as guardians of a world treasure, and it is reasonable to assume this attitude has persisted for centuries. This culture of preservation is also evinced by the unrivaled collection of ancient and

---

[45] Kessler "Pictures," 64.
[46] Father Justin notes it as a "juxtaposition." See web source "Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai. Video Excursion." The Commandment itself is said to have been produced in the late Bronze Age but is more likely to have developed in the exilic period (sixth century BC). Subject to an impossibly broad range of interpretations, the Commandment has, in one way or another, been at the center of conversations and questions about the legitimacy of images as instruments of faith for centuries, if not millennia.

medieval manuscripts, which included the fourth century Codex Sinaiticus, which contains the oldest

known complete transcription of the New Testament, as well as the so-called Septuagint, which was the

version of the Old Testament that was adopted by early Greek-speaking Christians.

Although the nineteenth-century historian of Byzantine art Nikodim Pavlovich Kondakov wrote

extensively on the Sinai region, the monastery's collection of icons only came to the attention of art

historians in 1956 with G. and M. Sotiriou's *Icones du Mont Sinai*, which published 150 icons from the

collection.[47] Following the Sotiriou examination, a collaborative project led by Kurt Weitzmann and

George H. Forsyth undertook a more comprehensive documentation and analysis of the icons,

cataloguing some 2048 works.[48] This preserve represents the world's largest collection of pre-

iconoclastic icons. Its public exposure in recent decades makes the twenty-first century a fortunate time

to revisit and study the early Middle Ages.

Among the monastery's treasures are two early likenesses of Christ. The first of these is the so-

called Christ Pantocrator (fig.8), which is a sixth-century portrait-bust of Christ on a panel measuring

84 x 45.5 cm. Weitzmann and others argue for Constantinople as the panel's place of origin, where

contemporary coinage echoed this Christ type, and where the degree of craftsmanship required for its

high quality would have been available.[49] Within the painting, distant architecture, perhaps classical,

can be seen behind Christ's broad shoulders. His beard is thick and medium length, swooping slightly

to the right. His dark hair is pulled behind his back towards the right, directing one's gaze down to a

thick codex furnished with gemstones or enamel fittings. His hand and forearm, which clutch the

codex, are relatively small compared to his bust. The forearm directs the gaze laterally towards the left

of the panel. Here, Christ's right hand, which is similarly delicate, protrudes vertically from within the

---

[47] Leroy.
[48] Weitzmann, xiv.
[49] Weitzmann, 15.

folds of his robes in a relaxed gesture of benediction. An ambiguous triangular form, chromatically

linked to the hand (presumably part of his vestments) directs the viewer's gaze back up to the left side

of Christ's face, thus completing a clockwise circumnavigation of the composition. This visual

ambulation, as it were, orbits a strong vertical axis marked by shadows of the nose, the Adam's apple,

and by the codex's left-most edge. Upon noticing this axis, asymmetries in Christ's face become

especially apparent. The left side is softer in comparison with the more shadowed, angular right, which

shows a steeper drop in his mustache and a more aggressively peaked eyebrow. One might surmise this

side, the codex side, shows an angry God, while the other, the benediction side, shows a generous

and/or compassionate God. Although Weitzmann interprets these asymmetries as a representation of

Christ's dual nature, a purely visual analysis suggests a duality of temperament rather than of

ontology.[50] The interpretation of a duality of temperament was possibly upheld by the inscriber of a

textual addendum across the architectural elements above Christ's right shoulder, barely visible in

reproduction, which in Greek would read as *philanthropos,* in red lettering.[51]

      Another painting from the monastery which is especially important to this study is the Abgar

panel, and its conjoined Thaddaeus panel (fig.9), which were once the wings of a tenth-century

triptych. Each wing measures a modest 28 x 9.5 cm. On the left panel, we find Thaddaeus, robed in

white and enthroned. His right hand emerges from the folds of his vestments in casual benediction

while his left gestures towards the now lost central panel. His close cropped, brown hair and youthful

face are encircled by a thin, red nimbus. Below Thaddaeus' feet are two monks who can be identified

by their inscriptions as Saint Paul of Thebes and Saint Anthony. They are dressed in brown garb and

are gesturing with outward-facing palms. At the top of the right wing we see King Abgar receiving a

vera icon. The King's face is damaged; where his face has been bisected by a crack, a large fragment of

---

[50] Weitzmann, 15.
[51] Nelson, 51, Weitzmann, 14.

paint is missing. In a curious coincidence, time seems to have realized the painting's legend by making real an image of the King's ailment, which has been presumed to be leprosy. At the time of its painting, however, there is no doubt that the king was depicted in good health. His medium-length beard is thick and white, and his head is topped with a banded cap, possibly a Parthian tiara, which is decorated in white dots including strands that hang to his neck at each ear. His garb is regal. A blue under-garment is worn under an orange robe shimmering with yellow highlights. The youthful messenger, Ananias, or Hannan, clad in shimmering blue, presents to Abgar the legendary *vera icon* which appears here on a piece of fringed white cloth. Abgar delicately handles the mandylion between his index and middle finger. Consistent with representations of miraculous images, the visage of Christ is uninterrupted by the angular perturbations of its support and is oriented flat against the picture plane for optimal visibility. Below Abgar and Ananias are Saint Basil, clad in white, and Saint Ephrem in brown, each identified by red inscriptions. The panels' style is anachronistic, linking it to images from the earliest years of the church. Comparisons can be made to the second-century frescoes in the Dura Synagogue as well as to Syrian works of the third century.[52]

In his Sinai catalog, Weitzmann speculates that the lost central panel contained a larger-sized depiction of the same *vera icon* seen on its right wing, sitting above a continuation of the motif of standing monks which bisects each wing horizontally. Belting takes the proposal one step farther by asserting that the lost panel shared its source with two surviving *vera icons* which are now in Genoa and the Vatican (fig.10).[53] His claim depends largely on the fact that the height of existing *vera icons'* panels match to within a few millimeters of the Abgar and Thaddaeus wings. I would strengthen Belting's argument by noting that if the *vera icon* was understood as an imprint of Christ (an idea which had become incorporated in the Abgar myth by the sixth century), then it must be scaled to

---

[52] Belting, *Likeness*, 210.
[53] Belting, *Likeness*, 210.

roughly life-sized. As it happens, given the panel's height of around 29 cm, the face therein is, indeed, neatly scaled to life-size. Furthermore, this logic continues in the *vera icon's* illustration in the right (Abgar) wing. This holy face, too, is scaled to match its human companions.

The incorporation of the graphic arts into a wider conception of the religion's story, which developed over several centuries, can be partially charted through the history of the *vera icons* of Christ. These unique formulations of the body of Christ tell us both a story of the incorporation of painting into orthodoxy and give us a theory of it as a visual phenomenon that can yield the presence of something which has none.

Vera icons are a unique formulation of the image not as the product of humankind's handiwork, but as agents which impose themselves onto society. Like relics, which established power for their saints from beyond the grave, the miraculous images of Christ were physical conduits to transmit divine intervention. From the onset of this image type in the first millennium until today, it operates as a surrogate for a missing body.

3b. *Vera Icons*.

The *vera icons'* history spans the fourth century to the present, forming a significant portion of Christ's iconography.[54] These images are known largely by their representations, which are portraits of Christ as an image within an image. We typically see within this type a loosely hung cloth from which emerges Christ's floating visage. At their inception, the *vera icons* were accoutrements of narratives about salvation through faith despite the absence of God's bodily presence. The earliest examples,

---

[54] Runciman, 240. Also, see "The Holy Face: Legends and Images in Competition," (Likeness, 208), a chapter which dedicated to changing utility of the vera icons of Christ, including up to the nineteenth century, for Belting's recap of the basics of the Edessa story. Note that his opinion of the ultimate fate of the Edessene original differs from Runciman's. Belting believes its end came in 1204, and created an opportunity for the emergence of its later Roman counterpart, Veronica's veil.

extant only in legend, were painted panels executed in "choice colours" by court painters.[55] From the second half of the sixth century onward, these craft-based *vera icons* were replaced by magical imprints of Christ appearing on veils of fabric, etc. Because of their miraculous provenance, these touch relics, known as *acheiropoieta,* images that are said not to be made by human hands, vitalized images in times when their viability as tools of inculcation was threatened.[56] For Byzantines who grappled with the problem that divinity could only be depicted in bad faith, *vera icons* presented a workaround whereby the human hand was removed from the act of representation. At the second council of Nicaea (787), after Christian images suffered great loss at the hands of iconoclasts, *acheiropoieta* substantiated arguments for images' inclusions as pedagogical sources in the church. The formulation of a miraculous surrogate for the absent body of Christ gave credibility to representations of the invisible, and helped to solidify painting-craft as an authoritative source of spiritual guidance. *Vera icons* can be thus be historicized as the material precipitate of Christians who disfavoured material representations of the divine, but nevertheless found themselves drawn to the capacity of images to instruct, seduce, and elucidate matters of faith.

The fifth through the tenth century saw a proliferation of *vera icons* of Christ. By the tenth century, the Image of Edessa and its legends came to define the *vera icon* type. In the years between its translation to Constantinople in 944, and its loss in 1204, this relic enjoyed a privileged status as the

---

[55]Maguire, 8. Kuryluck, 39.

[56] Cameron, The Manydlion and the Byzantine Iconoclasm, 38. Kitzinger, 113. Also see the chapter "St. Luke's Picture and the "Unpainted" Originals," (Likeness) where Belting introduces the later versions of the acheiropoietos and their counterparts, the St Luke portraits, before touching on the legends of the Image of Edessa, from which they germinated. An introduction to what is possibly an under-explored topic - their relationship to ancient (Greco-Roman) mythology of mana from heaven and ancient cult imagery - is tantalizingly introduced in this chapter.

prototypical image of Christ.

3c. Image of Edessa - Legends of the *Vera Icons.*

The so-called Image of Edessa constitutes the prototypical visage of Christ and typifies the *vera icon* type. The *vera icons'* history has been well studied in modern times, beginning with Ernst Von Dobschutz' *Christusbuilder* (1899), which delivered an entire chapter on the subject.[57] Following this was Steven Runciman's account (1933) which clearly outlined the most significant derivations and modifications of the legend, and extended the archaeology of the icon itself to 1792, when it was destroyed in a the sack of a Paris church.[58] In 1954, Kurt Weitzmann's publication of a trove of icons preserved in Saint Catherine's monastery shed new light on the subject, especially for the benefit of Averil Cameron and Hans Belting who published on the topic in 1983 and 1994 respectively. Mark Guscin has recently published two books on the subject. His *Image of Edessa* (2009) includes translations of all the key sources from Latin, Syriac, and Ancient Greek, while his more recent *The Tradition of the Image of Edessa* (2016) is the most comprehensive examination of the subject to date.

Ultimately, there is no authoritative or original source of the *vera icon* legends. Instead, we have a palimpsest of translations, transcriptions, and adaptations. Like the *vera icons* themselves, which can miraculously duplicate themselves, the legends have generated an array of subsidiaries and spinoffs. The legend of the Image of Edessa, however, has come to define the genre.

The city of Edessa is located at the site of present day Şanlıurfa, Turkey, near the Syrian border, roughly 900 kilometers north of Jerusalem. The site has been inhabited since prehistory, with indications of populations dating to 9000 BC, though its recorded history only begins in the Hellenistic

---

[57] Impossible for me to review, since I cannot read German.
[58] Runciman, 251. For Runciman, the time from the image's transfer to Constantinople until its loss is a tale of declining prestige.

period.[59] Beginning in the second century BC, the city was ruled for several centuries by a dynasty which produced kings by the name of Abgar. At this time the city was at the perimeters of both the Roman and Parthian empires and was subject to their rivalry. Edessa's incorporation into the Roman Empire began in Trajan's reign (98–117).[60] In the latter half of the second century, the city received Christianity, though not necessarily in any formal capacity.[61] In 639, the city became occupied by Arabs and for the next several centuries remained under Muslim authority.

The Image of Edessa emerged from an earlier legend of the city's evangelization, documented in Eusebius of Caesarea's (c. 260-340) fourth-century *Church History* which chronicles the first three centuries of the faith. Eusebius acquired the evangelization story through consultation with Syriac records from the city itself. For Eusebius and his readers, recounting the evangelization legend authenticated the Edessene Church by establishing its apostolic origins.[62] Writing in Greek, Eusebius recounted the events of an interchange between Abgar (supposedly Abgar V Ukkama) and Christ: Having heard of Christ' miracle-working, King Abgarus solicits aid for the treatment of his affliction, possibly leprosy.[63] Dispatching a message by a courier named Ananias (from Hannan in the Syriac), Abgarus offers refuge from Roman persecution. Ananias locates Christ and implores his return but finds him unable to comply on account of forthcoming obligations on the cross. Christ is sympathetic, however, and pens a personal reply explaining he will deliver one of his seventy disciples to cure the King, and that the King and his house would thereby find salvation. Some days later, after Christ's ascension, Christ's disciple Thaddeus (from Addai) goes to Edessa and works miracles among the people. The King, hearing of these deeds, summons Thaddeus to inquire about his capacities as a healer

---

[59] Ross, 5.
[60] Ross, 29.
[61] Ross, 117. Cameron, *The History of the Image of Edessa*, 82.
[62] Ross, 135. Drijvers, "Protonike," 303.
[63] Ross, 117.

and spokesperson of God. Upon Abgarus' reception of Thaddeus in his throne room, the King experiences a great vision "in the countenance of the apostle Thaddeus" whereupon Abgarus prostrates himself before the holy man, who lays his hands on him, thus curing his ailment and securing King Abgarus' domain for Christ.

The Syriac document from which Eusebius derived his narrative, the *Doctrine of Addai*, is known, as well, from two sources that were both rediscovered in the nineteenth century. The Doctrine's first rediscovery is credited to W. Cureton, who came across its fragments in manuscripts in the British Museum in 1848. Following this find, George Phillips uncovered a more complete version in the Imperial Public Library of St Petersburg, which he published in 1876 in its original Syriac as well as in modern English. The provenance of Phillips' source is largely unknown, but it is thought to be from the middle of the first millennium. Phillip's proposal of its a sixth-century origin is more conservative than Averil Cameron's of around 400.[64]

Within the Doctrine of Addai we have a narrative which follows a virtually identical template as was presented by Eusebius: the facilitation of discourse between Christ and the King of Edessa by a messenger, the dispatching of an apostle following Christ' ascension, the apostle's subsequent miracle-working in Edessa, and the inclusion of "a wondrous vision [...] seen by Abgar in the face of Addai" (Thaddaeus in the Greek) which catalyzed his, and then the city's Christianization.[65] In contrast to Eusebius' account of the legend is the introduction of a portrait of Christ. When Hannan the messenger, and in addition, the court archivist and King's painter, visited Christ, he "took and painted a likeness of Christ with choice paints, and brought it with him to Abgar" who received the icon with "great joy, and

---

[64] Phillips, iii; Cameron, "The History of the Image of Edessa," 81.
[65] Phillips, 6.

placed it with great honor in one of his palatial houses."[66]

The question of when the portrait was introduced to the legend remains open. Although it is largely agreed that no material image existed in Edessa prior to 380, the possibility of its earlier appearance in legend is not precluded.[67] It is not known whether Eusebius omitted the portrait of Christ, or if it was appended to the Syriac text after his consultation. Eusebius may or may not have found its reference in the Syriac documents. Steven Runciman believed that Eusebius deliberately suppressed the portion of the legend that included the image, on account of his distaste for icons.[68]

Both the Greek and the Syriac versions, however, do present us an image of Christ, though it is of a different sort: King Abgar's hallucinatory vision of the prophet "in the countenance of Thaddeus." Does this mean Thaddeus' face looked suddenly like Christ's? Could we call this an impermanent *vera icon*? Whatever the king saw, it was significant enough for him to bow down in position to receive the Apostle's blessing hand, which cured the king's ailment and consummated his conversion to Christianity. The purpose of this image, if we can call it that, like the *vera icons,* is to catalyze the reception of the faith.

We have yet to encounter the Image of Edessa as an object of miraculous origin, which is to say, an image not made by human hands. The legend acquired this feature in a third text: Evagrius Scholasticus' sixth-century *Church History*, which identifies "the divinely created image, which human hands had not made, the one that Christ the God sent to Agbar when he yearned to see Him." Evagrius further embellishes the image's potency by recounting its use in defence of the city when it fell under siege in 544. The city's defenders had tunneled underground, below the city's walls, in order to launch a sneak attack and destroy the assailants' timber-framed siege towers by fire. Being unable to start the

---

[66] Phillips, 5.
[67] Cameron, "The History of the Image of Edessa," 82.
[68] Runciman, 242.

blaze, they brought out the image and washed it over with water and then sprinkled that water upon the timbers which took to flame forthwith. The sixth century thus represents a turning point in the capacity for the Image of Edessa to dip from the wellspring of magic that relics and other holy objects had already been taking from since at least the fourth century.

Before continuing with the remaining history of the Image of Edessa, it should be noted that an image was not required to work miracles. On the contrary, it seems that miracles were needed to justify the image. The fact is that another class of object, the holy relic, had already been established as capable of producing miracles some 500 years prior. The True Cross provides an example. This was a relic that was venerated at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem by the 340s, and whose legend was first recorded c. 390.[69] The legend is based around events in the life of Constantine the Great's mother Helena (248/9 – 328/9), who journeyed to Palestine in 327-328 on a trip described by Eusebius as a pilgrimage.[70] Around this journey was woven the emergence of the relic, and its discovery attributed to Helena. In the fifth century (probably the 430s), another version of the story was inserted into the *Doctrine Addai*, the documents that had already informed Eusebius of the Abgar legend (and which, as was already noted, contained no miraculous image of Christ).[71]

In this version of the True Cross' discovery, the invented persona of Protonike, wife of Emperor Claudius (first century), replaces Helena.[72] The legend tells of Protonike's journey to Golgotha, where she and her entourage entered Christ's tomb to find three crosses (one each for Christ, the good thief, and the bad thief) and whereupon Protonike's virgin daughter painlessly and immediately dropped dead. Protonike commenced to make prayer over her daughter while applying, in succession, each of the crosses (presumably fragments thereof). When the third cross was applied, her daughter was

---

[69] Drijvers, "Helena," 30 (venerated) and "Protonike," 298 (recorded).
[70] Drijvers, "Helena," 30.
[71] Drijvers, "Protonike," 309
[72] Phillips, 14.

resuscitated, and thus the True Cross was revealed.[73] The miracle of resuscitation not only recalls the journey of Christ from cross to tomb and back again to life, but also certified the relic itself, proving it was more than just crude matter. That the Image of Edessa accrued miracle-working capacity can be understood in the same terms: as a justification of the image.

Returning now to the Image's history, we observe that in the early seventh century the city of Edessa became occupied first by Persian, then Islamic forces. By the eighth century, when iconoclasms inspired widespread destruction of images, Edessa continued to be presided over by Muslim authorities. The image was thus isolated and preserved from destructive forces to which it may have otherwise succumbed.

In the late tenth century, the Byzantine empire's Macedonian dynasty embarked on an eastward military expansion, aimed at the recapture of lands which had been previously lost. The city of Edessa was placed in their sights for reasons including that it was thought to have been Christianized in the first century, and because of its association with the legendary image in whose acquisition the military saw great value. The city hence became a target of conquest, and after laying siege to the city, an arrangement was made to procure the image. The image was then translated to Constantinople, and to institutionalize the acquisition, the *Narratio de Imagine Edessena* was drafted (c. 944).

The Narratio De Imagine Edessena places the image at the centre of a narrative about images' utility as a tool of conversion and affirmation of faith, as had been previously established by Evagrius, Eusebius, and all. The *Narratio* promptly establishes its central thrust: the proposition of a special type of image that a) is not made by human hands and b) is able to work miracles, the fact of which had previously been established by Evagrius. The significance of the image having not been made by human hands is confirmed by the quantity of its assertion within the document, which amounts to over

---

[73] Drijvers, "Protonike," 299-300.

twenty instances. Once the image came into the possession of the empire, and its official history was committed to writing, the image's legend had no further chance for modulation or growth. Hence, its story remained fixed from this point until 1204 when it vanished from history during the sacking of Constantinople (during the Fourth Crusade.)[74]

The legends of the *vera icons* provide a case study of painting's capacity (in the Middle Ages) to evoke the presence of a missing person. For these paintings, it was the miraculous, godlike presence of Christ that was evoked. In the face of criticisms rooted in the ancient Judaic prohibitions on images, these images acquired the power to working miracles. The perceived fact of their miracles functioned to authenticate the images' divine provenance, thus mitigating their susceptibility to attacks rooted in them having been man-made, idolatrous objects.

3d. The Mandylions of Christ.

At this point, we turn to two celebrated likenesses of Christ (fig. 11) which hearken to late antiquity in their style and provide our closest surviving links to the legendary Image of Edessa.[75] Both are painted on canvas and affixed to identically sized panels (c. 40 x 29 cm).[76] These so-called Mandylions of Christ (a term which only became common in the eleventh century) are presently located in Genoa and the Vatican and are believed to be copies of the Edessene prototype.[77]

The image formerly of San Silvestro in Capite, now in the Vatican Palace, shows a brown monochrome from which the face emerges with chiaroscuro-type effect rendered in sombre hues of sienna. The structure of the face is crisp and schematic. Almond eyes rest close to a smooth brow from which descends an elongated nose. The area around the mouth is worn from its reception of devotional

---

[74] *Likeness*, 53, 56.
[75] *Likeness*, 210.
[76] *Likeness*, 210.
[77] Cameron, *"The Mandylion and the Byzantine Iconoclasm,"* 37.

kisses. Hans Belting speculates that beneath its many layers of varnish, the oldest surviving icon of Christ might be found, and claims a sixth-century origin for the image but does not indicate how he arrived at that date.[78] There is little information available on the painting, so further analysis becomes difficult. More seems to be known about the Genoa panel, which is almost indistinguishable from the San Silvestro version, though it is less worn at the mouth. The panel itself arrived in Genoa around 1380 as an imperial gift honoring financial support from Leonardo Montalto, who later bequeathed it to the local Monastery of San Bartolomeo. The supposition of its tenth-century origin is derived from the likelihood of its match to the lost central panel of the tenth-century Abgar wings, preserved in Saint Catherine's Monastery near Mount Sinai, which measures precisely the same height (fig.10).

The Genoa Mandylion is a composite artifact derived from pieces dating across several centuries. Its constituents can be broken down as follows: On a wooden panel is affixed a painted canvas bearing Christ's visage, with two more pieces of fabric (folded?) attached on the panel's verso. The panel is held behind by a rectangular silver and gold casing. At the perimeter of this casing are a series of embossed enamels which chronicle the legend of the Image of Edessa. At the centre of the casing, surrounded in a flat panel of filigree, is a cut-out which reveals the visage of Christ by following the contours of the head, hair, and beard. Finally, a baroque frame has been appended, which forms a narrow border around the older frame, and is inlaid with gemstones and surmounted by a section of crown-like latticework. To summarize the available details of each subsection, I have arranged Table 1.[79]

Later, a discussion of the peculiar shape of the metal casings will show how, in the twentieth century, its iconography became curiously linked to images of the dead.

---

[78] *Likeness*, 210, 54
[79] Provenance, materials, etc, from Wolf, "Das Mandylion von Genua."

	Verso fabric	Verso fabric (later)	Wooden support (panel)	Canvas (Mandylion)	Inner Frame	Outer Frame
Date	10th century.	16th Century.	1240-1280 (radiocarbon).	Unknown.	Literature: 1320-1380. Radiocarbon: 1360-1420.	Baroque
Size	23cm x 37cm.	?	28.7cm x 17.3cm.	28.7cm x 17.3cm	28.2cm x 34cm.	?
Material	Silk.	?	Poplar.	Painted canvas.	Gold filigree panel surrounded at perimeter by narrative scenes in enamels/niello over gold-plated silver on a wooden support.	?
Notes	Persian (Sasanian) origin. Shows winged horse encircled by decorative motif.			Possibly painted in Constantinople. Gerhard Wolf describes its contour as "fish-shaped."	Known as Palaiologan frame, after the ruling dynasty in Constantine. at the time of its attributed fabrication.	

Table 1. Genoa Mandylion and its Constituents.

Chapter Three: Iconographies of the Dead.

In chapter one, key sources of ancient aniconisms and their reception into Christianity were reviewed. Next, in chapter two, the *acheiropoietic* images of Christ were introduced, and a focused examination of the Image of Edessa was presented, beginning with its earliest appearance in fourth-century legends. As we have seen, by the sixth century, the image's material representations had been realised, the time by which the cult of images had taken hold at an institutional level. This historical survey of the *acheiropoietic* visage of Christ concluded with the surviving *Mandylions* of Christ, which are of uncertain origin, but nevertheless represent our closest link to what from the sixth through until the thirteenth century (when it was lost during the fourth crusade) was the preeminent portrait of Christ.

If painting has a memory, then deep in those recesses are images of the dead. These images come to us through what are perhaps the earliest surviving panel paintings, which originate in Roman-occupied Egypt (near Cairo) at the beginning of the first millennium, AD. These antique panel paintings, known as the Fayum mummy portraits, are painted memorabilia of the dead, and are pictorial hybrids of Hellenistic and Egyptian traditions of representation. These delicately painted portraits were affixed to mummified corpses to appear like windows that reveal a figure in the bloom of life behind its wrappings. Aside from the panels' aged and/or damaged appearances, the paintings might blend in neatly among a crowd of mid-modern figurative painters, such as especially the London school including Lucian Freud, Walter Sickert, and the Camden town painters (who have been influential in my own practice.)

Like the Byzantine icon paintings that would appear in abundance some four centuries later, the Egyptian portrait-heads are surrounded by flattened space, devoid of any marks to indicate a natural setting. It has been proposed that these paintings are intermediaries between pagan and Christian cults of the image, including the Image of Edessa, not least because of their striking resemblance to later

Coptic and Byzantine icon paintings.[80] While causal links to the later Christian cult of images can perhaps never be fully confirmed, there is no doubt that ancient traditions of funerary portraiture influenced the Christian appetite for images of Christ and the saints that had taken shape by the sixth century.

If paintings fortified their capacity to evoke presences of the dead during the generative period from late antiquity until the turn of the first millennium, we must wonder if, even today, they are similarly psychically charged with complexes of mortality. Perhaps paintings, whose images are the precipitate of ongoing transmissions from prototype to model, are inescapably bound to the "ghosts" of their ancestors.

At the core of this dissertation lies the proposal that medieval traditions of imaging Christ fortified painting's potential to evoke the presence of one who is not there, a condition of the medium which today feels axiomatic. In light of this proposal, the present chapter looks beyond images of Christ to find additional precipitates of painting's central project of representing absence.

The tradition under examination here commenced as the Image of Edessa entered its twilight at the beginning of the second millennium. It was at that point that a new kind of picture was introduced to the Christian milieu: that of the common-man who had died, but then returned to the land of the living in the ephemeral form of a spirit or ghost. In a manner similar to the visage of Christ which showed, simultaneously, his divine presence and his body's profound absence, images of ghosts were also invested in showing the presence of the deceased, while their apparent invisibility also indicated that their bodies were, nevertheless, missing. As with the *vera icons*, medieval ghosts worked in an arena of the miraculous. They were brought to the land of the living through miracles, and once arrived,

---

[80] See Belting, *Likeness*, 78-98.

could themselves perform further miracles.

Today, the word "ghost" conjures an iconography that is familiar anywhere that someone wishes to purvey the fun of Halloween without disturbing their clientele. But the iconography of the ghost can be charted from a course which had already begun in antiquity. In the following section, a brief review of how the look of the ghost was theorized in Antiquity and the Middle Ages is followed by an introduction to the shrouded-type, with which we are so familiar today.

1. Early Imaginings of the Undead.

In my studies, I have yet to encounter an image of a ghost that has survived from antiquity, and so to follow the thread to these early times we turn to literature. Some of our oldest ghost stories come from the Greek epics. In Homer's *Iliad* (eighth century BC) we are told of the ghost of Patroclus who, "in the same robe he living wore," appears in a dream before disappearing as thin smoke when Achilles reaches for contact.[81] Similarly, in the *Odyssey* (eighth century BC) Ulysses reaches in vain to touch his mother's shade.[82] "All people are like this when they are dead," she explains, "the sinews no longer hold the flesh and bones together; these perish in the fierceness of consuming fire as soon as life has left the body, and the soul flits away as though it were a dream."[83] A later example of a ghost appears in Euripides' *Hecuba* (c. 424 BC.). Set after the events of the Trojan war, the play opens with the ghost of Polydorus (grandson of Cisseus and Priam) who promptly informs the audience that he is a ghost. This is perhaps because there was no costume he could have worn to visually signal himself as such. Evidently, Polydorus was what could be called a plain-clothed ghost: one whose appearance in the afterlife remains the same as it was in life. Although interring the dead in burial shrouds was a common

---

[81] Homer, *Iliad*, trans Alexander Pope, 670, 744.
[82] At the time this writing, a newly discovered tablet is possibly the oldest written record of the *Iliad*, possibly dating to the 3rd century. The tablet is engraved with 13 verses of the known text.
[83] Attributed to Homer, trans Samuel Barber, 186.

practice (as for example in Penelope's long-term weaving project in Homer's *Odyssey*), the burial shroud was not a well used costume when representing the Greek undead.[84] The animated Roman dead offered other varieties of ghost images, often called *lemures*, *larvae*, and *manes*, who appeared as black clouds, or as gruesome and/or mutilated bodies, to evince a violent death.[85]

The only true biblical ghost is found in 1 Samuel 28 (composed fifth century BC), where we are presented with Samuel's ghost.[86] The text tells of King Saul who, on the eve of his battle with the Philistines, seeks advice from his ancestor, the deceased King Samuel. Travelling in disguise because he had already outlawed necromancy, Saul locates a Medium (the Witch of Endor) to raise Samuel's spirit and facilitate the consultation. The Medium proceeds to summon Samuel, but realizes at the same moment, in fear, that it is King Saul who employed her (who forbade such practices). Saul assures her that she will go unpunished for this crime, and so the Medium proceeds and the spirit of Samuel arrives. While only the Medium can see the ghost of Samuel, Saul is nevertheless able to converse with him, and is informed that he and his sons will perish the following day. Saul collapses in despair and hunger (since he had not eaten all day and night) and so the Medium slaughters her calf and prepares bread without yeast to feed the king and his men before they depart. As foretold by the ghost, Saul and his sons are slain in battle the following day.

An interesting counterpoint to this Old Testament ghost story is the story of the raising of Lazarus, written in the Gospel of John (late first, early second century). After learning of Lazarus' death, Christ traveled to his friend's gravesite, and though it did "stinketh" (Lazarus had been dead for four days), the stones which ensconced the body were removed.[87] Christ then called on Lazarus to rise,

---

[84] Thank you to Aara Suksi.
[85] Yardley, 84. Muecke, 126, Thaniel, 184.
[86] Schmitt, 15.
[87] Perhaps in accommodation to the Jewish belief that the soul departed the body three days after death, but also to emphasize the certainty of Lazarus' death.

and "he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin" (John 11:44). The cloth, especially covering the face, seems to be deeply implicated in the representation of death.

In contrast with the moralistic "thou shalt not" told in the narrative of Samuel's ghost, the story of Lazarus recontextualizes necromancy as a positive affirmation of faith while also foretelling the miracle of Christ's resurrection. Interestingly, images of Lazarus appear among our very earliest surviving Christian images, which are found in the Callixtus catacombs, whose murals were painted in the fourth century (fig.12). In these images, Lazarus is seen emerging from a vertical tomb, wrapped in the fashion that was later to describe how Christ had been buried: "wound in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury" (John 19:40).

Approximately one millennium later, when Giotto (b. 1276) painted his *Rising of Lazarus* (c1305), the prototype had not changed, though the painter did take the opportunity to develop the realism of Lazarus's bodily decay (fig.13). Lazarus' cheeks are visibly sunken, the face bloodless, and the stench of his body, due to his four-day internment, is made apparent through the expressions of onlookers who grimace and/or cover their noses in response. This was not then a restoration of the body to its vitality and life, but the reanimation of a decaying corpse.[88]

2. Arrival of the Shrouded Ghost.

The wrapped-dead image-type, which from the outset was used in association with the reanimated corpse, eventually came to constitute one of three main types of medieval ghosts that populated Christian mythology. Although ghost stories had always circulated, their admittance into

---

[88] The Icelandic sagas of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (by which time the island had been thoroughly Christianized) give us a similar type of risen-dead: the *Draugr*. These are typically physical bodies that have risen from their graves or somehow manifested, in corporeal form, usually to bring violence onto the living.

ecclesiastical doctrine took several centuries. Early Church Fathers worked to suppress their integration, such as for example Augustine (354-430), who aimed to inhibit development of cults of the dead. His view was that ghosts were not beings who crossed from the hereafter, but rather a kind of image provoked by demons to appear in the mind of the living, especially during sleep. Augustine proposed that these mental apparitions were entirely disconnected from the deceased whom they allegedly represented, and that the dead were equally as unaware of the proceedings of the living as the living were of the dead.

In contrast with Judaic apprehensions about engaging the dead, Christians became fascinated by them. In the ancient world, the dead had rested outside of the city. Christians, however, drew them close, laying them within city walls, under domestic dwellings, and in church yards, crypts and altars. The dead were also brought spiritually close through the cult of relics, which had solidified the notion that spiritually powerful members of society, namely saints, could occupy a position in the afterlife from which they could exert power over the living. Hence, the permeable boundary between the living and the dead was constituted as a site for a flow of power.

It was not until the second millennium that ghost stories were admitted into the institution of the Church. As Jean-Claude Schmitt shows, the widespread acceptance of ghosts by the tenth century allowed a flourishing of ghost stories by the year 1000, by which time ghosts were used to prove the immortality of the soul and foreshadow the eternal afterlife.[89] Although the preceding cults of the saints had already opened the boundary between the living and the dead, it was not until the second millennium that it became possible for "ordinary" deceased people to interact with the living. While the dead saint might extract vengeance on the living for their misdemeanours, the deceased common-person might improve their standing in the afterlife through a living relative or loved one who would

---

[89] Schmitt, 34, 37.

make prayer or pecuniary contributions in their name. It was the invention of purgatory which gave ghosts the footing from which to negotiate with the living, which, as is shown by Jacques Le Goff, the Church flirted with for almost a millennium before fixing it permanently into its theology in the thirteenth century.[90]

Three depictions of the ghost of Samuel have been gathered by Jean-Claude Schmitt to demonstrate the main iconographic types used in the Middle Ages. Already familiar to us is the wrapped-dead, as seen in depictions of Lazarus from late antiquity (fig.14). Next is the plain-clothed type (fig.15), who, "in the same garb he living wore"; and finally, the phantom type (fig.16), which is most like today's shrouded ghost. This iconographic type is not likely to have become codified until the thirteenth century. Possibly the earliest surviving example of this type has been located by Jean-Claude Schmitt in the richly illustrated songbook, *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (c. 1272) (fig.17).[91]

The *Cantigas* miracle tale is illustrated across a page divided into six vignettes. In the first we see a gathering of friends in a hall, followed in the next frame by the same gathering gone a bit rowdy: a youth raises his hands to the sky, apparently uttering blasphemies against God. Next, we see a demon unmercifully tearing open the youth to end his life. The fourth vignette shows a change of setting, and a depiction of the youth's father visited by a mysterious, shrouded, and possibly translucent figure, with hands folded across his front. We learn from the text that the mysterious figure has come to announce the youth's death. In the fifth vignette, we see the father arriving at the scene of the death, and finally, in the sixth, the youth is carried in his funeral procession. The unfortunate youth is now shrouded, only faintly delineated (translucent?), and his hands, like a mysterious news-bearer from the beyond, are folded across his chest. The iconography has come full circle: in death, the youth has acquired the appearance of the mysterious figure. It becomes evident then that this mysterious news-bearer is, in

---

[90] Argued exhaustively in *The Birth of Purgatory.*
[91] Schmitt, 212.

fact, visiting from beyond the grave.

3. A Note on the Modern Ghost.

In modernity, the shrouded type would become the preeminent iconography of the ghost. In the early seventeenth century, Shakespeare's "sheeted dead did squeak and gibber,"[92] and in the following century, when William Hogarth painted the so-called Cock Lane or Scratching Fanny ghost in *Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism* (1762)*,* and *The Times* (1790), the prototype remained unchanged.[93] In 1856 the photographer Sir David Brewster used double exposures of people shrouded in linens to produce fanciful images of hauntings in order to promote stereoscopic photo-technology. The tradition of ghost photography, which popularized the methods Brewster had employed, emerged on the tails of the European Enlightenment, a time when a flood of scientific discoveries of unseen forces (especially magnetism and electricity) promoted the idea that we live in a world of things beyond the human senses that are, nonetheless, measurable. Photo-technology had already demonstrated its ability to capture "invisible" phenomena when Eadweard Muybridge photographed a galloping horse (1878) to show in freeze frame an event which exceeds the eye's flicker fusion threshold (essentially the speed at which a periodic variation appears to become a fixed constant).[94] To this effect, the image of the so-called Brown Lady of Raynham Hall (a transparent, draped figure descending a staircase) was published in first in *Country Life,* in London, 1936, and a year later in the American magazine, *Life,* and became a modern icon of the type. A salient, mid-twentieth-century ghost that contributed significantly to today's understanding of the type was Casper, who was first presented in the 1954 animated motion picture *The Friendly Ghost*. This child-sized ghost, a kind of

---

[92] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act 1, scene 1.
[93] Handley, 147, 170.
[94] Paul Firenze details these points in "Spirit Photography, How Early Spiritualists Tried to Save Religion using Science."

huggable bogeyman, appears to be made of soft, white dough, or marshmallow. His material origins, however, are made evident in the film's opening scene, set in a haunted house, which shows a host of ghosts springing to life from various cloths which cover furniture, paintings, pillows, etc. This may be a trivial detail, but is one that nagged this author since childhood, when the lack of clarity regarding Casper's material nature was all too disturbing. It seems that in modernity, the sheeted-ghost has become characterized by its potential to elicit a broad spectrum of responses, including for comic relief, to elicit a sense of horror and pathos, and to figure an absence in a way that has become nothing less than iconic.

Conclusion: Convergent Iconographies.

1. The Artist's Perspective.

This dissertation has looked to history to discover possible routes by which we have fortified an understanding that painted figures might evoke the presence of an absent person. What has not been addressed, however, is what role that the act of looking takes in the formulation of the absent person. To apprehend the proposed absence, after all, we must work to envision something that is not entirely the same as what is presented before us. Although we s*ee* paint, we need to *look* at a person.

In this final section I endeavour to regain some of the creative expression of my studio practice by emulating an aspect of its methodology here, in the zone of writing. This synthesis will focus on the act of looking, which is at the core of not just my studio practice, but perhaps at the core of every visual artist. For me, the process of looking often comes down to mental gymnastics. Although I see one thing, perhaps a landscape I just painted, I work my visual imagination to find, in that representation, something else, something quite different from what I had first intended to depict.

This mental game is a familiar to anyone who has considered the "rabbit duck," or other images which induce a so-called "gestalt shift" as the viewer stops perceiving (in this case) the rabbit, by mentally replacing its ears for the bill of a duck. But these "gestalt shift" type images are only the most didactic examples of images that inspire this creative engagement with looking. To develop a context, I will provide an anecdotal example, as the experience was to become formative for my own painting methodology.

In my youth, I frequently passed a popular landmark near the town of Jasper, Alberta, known as "the old man in the mountain", which is nothing more than an uncanny profile of a face formed in the

ridge of a low mountain range, spectacularly visible from the highway. It confused me that I was so

captivated by the "image" of the sleeping giant, knowing full well that it was only from that vantage

point that the rock and stone could produce this effect. Much later, it occurred to me that it was not the

rock and stone which entranced me, but rather the engagement of my own imagination. The materials

only served as a catalyst to activate the mind, which yielded the presence of something which certainly

was not there: the body of a sleeping giant. Evidently, engaging in this act of creative application of the

mind contributes to a sense of joy on my part. In my view, physical exercise as well as the faculties of

imaginative or creative looking contribute to one's well being.

2. The Artist's Interpretation.

The connections between my studio practice and this dissertation are now becoming clearer. At

the root of this essay is the notion of looking for something that is not there, seeing the unseen, perhaps.

Painting is deeply connected to this possibility. It is widely understood that when we engage with

paintings, we not only enjoy their materials, but we also approach the absent things to which the

medium points us. This phenomenon is, of course, a subjective experience based on the traditions that

have informed viewers' expectations and thus influenced their perceptions.

Having established the relevance to my practice of what I might call "creative looking," as it

pertains to the search for what is unseen in a painting, I return now to the medieval, and commence

with a painter's interpretation, rooted in a process of creative looking, of the iconography of the *vera*

icons.

In the first millennium, theories and practices of painting that were deeply connected to their

need to memorialize the dead, especially Christ, were cultivated. As has been discussed here, the

demand for images of Christ is unique among those of other holy persons because a) his image was too

holy to be rendered in paint (remember the Edessene court painter who failed to capture his portrait) and b) the lack of his remains deprived followers of corporeal relics (since he ascended to heaven). A special type of image, the *vera icon,* was formulated to meet the demand for indexes and memorabilia of his life. Informed by ancient Judaic anti-image rhetoric, these images were said to be not made by human hands and are known by their Greek name, *acheiropoieta.*

Today there are no surviving artefacts which came to occupy the elevated *acheiropoietic* status in the first millennium CE. We know of them largely through legends, through their depiction in other paintings, and through two pieces (the Mandylions now located in Genoa and the Vatican Palace), which are believed to be copies of an original. Perhaps, however, little has changed since the *vera icons* were first seen in circulation. Even in its heyday, the Image of Edessa, for example, would have been known predominantly through pictures that contained depictions of the *acheiropoieta* within their frames, or images which supposedly had some material and/or direct contact with the original. In fact, the capacity for the image to spawn replicas was built into its legends. The *Keramion*, for example, was a tile which itself took the likeness of Christ from the original Image of Edessa, and then proceeded to spawn further impressions of itself.

We must also remember that even during special events, when the prototypical image enjoyed public display, such as during its translation to Constantinople in 944, it was an image fabricated by human craftsmen who, cunningly or not, employed their talents to deceive viewers into believing they were viewing an image "painted" by god. With the foregoing in mind, it is arguable that scholars therefore need to make greater effort to address the confusion that arises from our naming convention which attributes the name "*acheiropoieta*" to both the fictional image painted by God, and to its real-world, material depiction. Some focus must be drawn to separate the theoretical from the material, and emphasise the point that, effectively*, acheiropoietic* phenomena are material representations of a

theoretical representation of a missing person (the image with divine provenance.)

A parallel analysis can be applied to spirits of the deceased who were believed to visit our world from beyond the grave. Like the fictional *acheiropoietic* holy face, which was not made by human hands, but was "painted" by God, ghosts were never actually seen (since, after all, they as well are fictitious entities). Both phenomena are imaginary representations of missing bodies; they exist only in the mind. Paradoxically, we can only formulate an awareness of these imaginaries through their material representations. *Acheiropoieta* and ghosts are therefore *representations of imaginary representations of missing bodies.*

With this convergence in mind, and to regain, in writing, the kind of creative interpretation that benefits my studio practice as an artist, I wish to conclude this study by returning to the Mandylions, presently found in Rome and Genoa – in particular, to the peculiar shape of their metal castings. In both Mandylions, the gilded frames sharply delineate the perimeter of Christ's head to yield dome-shapes that terminate at their bases in three jagged peaks, to indicate falling hair at each side of a pointed beard. Although these castings were baroque addenda, the (probably) lost original Mandylion had acquired a gold casing before its translation to Constantinople in the tenth century, and it was this casing which likely provided the prototype for the surviving frames in Genoa and Rome.[95] In a photograph of the Genoa painting, captured in a rare moment when it had been relieved of its frame, it can be seen that the schematized contour in question is continuous with the painting itself; Christ's face likely developed this format at its inception.[96] We can therefore guess that the shape originated in the context of the *vera icons* no later than the tenth century.

This easily distinguishable contour has a practical function: it helps the image's identification from a distance, such as would be beneficial in its procession and/or presentation before large crowds.

---

[95] Belting, *Likeness*, 213.
[96] Belting, *Likeness*, colour plate III.

A sixteenth-century altarpiece in Rome (fig. 18) demonstrates this capacity well. Though it depicts the second millennium's image of Christ know as a Veronica's Veil (which had supplanted the lost Image of Edessa), the miraculous visage of Christ has been stamped into the painted sheet by a woodblock which had been cut to the same crisply defined perimeter as we have seen in the Mandylion itself, to the effect of achieving clear visibility.

But today, the peculiar shape serves a much different, and entirely unanticipated function: it recalls Inky, Pinky, Binky, and Clyde, the adversaries that featured in the 1980s video arcade game PAC-MAN (fig.19). How strange is this? Other visual interpretations are possible, of course. Perhaps it resembles a tooth, or, as Gerhard Wolf has suggested, it could be likened to a fish.[97] But these interpretations do not offer the rich historical links presented by the simple fact that both the sheeted ghost and the holy face of Christ employ a cloth or sheet to fabricate the representation of an imaginary representation of a missing body.

Where does this coincidence take us? Perhaps nowhere. Sometimes, likenesses inform us of the chronology of the images' histories. It is entirely possible that PAC-MAN's designers had seen the Mandylion, and deliberately incorporated its iconography. But the game's founder, Toru Iwatani, who died in 2017, is not here to answer to that question. At other times, likenesses are more telling of the beholder, whose psychology and culture has informed their perception, and their willingness to grasp at connections even when there are none. Perhaps this coincidence is nothing more than a by-product of a painting practice which leans heavily on the opportunistic recognition of chance likenesses, and a fascination with the implied links between painting and images of the dead.

---

[97] Wolf, "Das Mandylion von Genua."

Bibliography:

Web Content

Damascus, John. "St John Damascene on Holy Images. Followed by Three Sermons on the Assumption." Gutenberg. September 09, 2015. Accessed March 30, 2019. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/49917/49917-h/49917-h.html.

> This is a digitized edition of Damascus, John. *St John Damascene on Holy Images*. *Followed by Three Sermons on the Assumption*. Translated by Mary H. Allies. London: Thomas Baker, 1898.

Eusebius Pamphilius. "Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine." Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Accessed March 07, 2018. http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.toc.html.

Evagrius Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History, Book 4. (AD431-594), Translated by E. Walford (1846). Accessed February 12, 2019. http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/evagrius_4_book4.htm.

Freedman, Paul. "The Early Middle Ages, 284-1000." Open Yale Courses. Accessed August 01, 2018. https://oyc.yale.edu/history/history210.

"Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai. Video Excursion." *The J.Paul Getty Museum and Lyn Goldfarb Productions, Inc*. Accessed Dec 1, 2016. http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/icons_sinai/.

"Homer Odyssey: Oldest Extract Discovered on Clay Tablet." BBC News. July 10, 2018. Accessed July 10, 2018. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44779492.

"The Internet Classics Archive | Hecuba by Euripides." The Internet Classics Archive | Antigone by Sophocles. Accessed July 10, 2018. http://classics.mit.edu/Euripides/hecuba.html.

Homer. *Iliad*. Translated by Alexander Pope. Flaxman Designs, 1899. September 2006. Accessed July 14, 2018. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/6130/6130-pdf.pdf.
Homer, and Samuel Butler. 1900. Accessed July 14, 2018. https://www.planetebook.com/the-odyssey/

James, Richard D. "Dave Noyze SYROBONKERS! Interview (November 2014)." Rare AFX. February 05, 2015. Accessed February 02, 2019. https://rareafx.wordpress.com/dave-noyze-syrobonkers-interview-november-2014/.

Reynolds, Simon. "The Wire 300: Simon Reynolds on the Hardcore Continuum: Introduction - The Wire." The Wire Magazine - Adventures In Modern Music. Accessed February 08, 2019. https://www.thewire.co.uk/in-writing/essays/the-wire-300_simon-reynolds-on-the-hardcore-continuum_introduction.

Wolf, Gerhard. 2005. "Das Mandylion von Genua." Available online at www.mpg.de/840449/forschungsSchwerpunkt1.

The Friendly Ghost. Directed by Izzy Sparber. By Bill Turner. Adapt. Otto Messmer. Performed by Frank Gallop, Jack Mercer, Mae Questel. United States: National Telefilms Associates, 1945. Accessed March 7, 2018. https://archive.org/details/TheFriendlyGhost.

Print Content

Belting, Hans, and Thomas Dunlap. *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*. Princeton: Princeton University Pres, 2014.

Belting, Hans. *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Belting, Hans. "In search of Christ's Body. Image or Imprint?" In *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation: Papers from a Colloquium Held at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome and the Villa Spelman, Florence*, edited by Kessler L. Herbert and Gerhard Wolf, 1-12. Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1998.

Betancourt, Roland, and Taroutina Maria. *Byzantium/Modernism. The Byzantine as Method in Modernity*. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2015.

Binski, Paul. *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation*. London: British Museum Press, 1996.
Caciola, N. "Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual In Medieval Culture." *Past & Present* 152, no. 1 (1996): 3-45.

Blackwood, Nicole. "Printmaker as Painter: Looking Closely at Ugo Da Carpi's Saint Veronica Altarpiece." *Oxford Art Journal* 36, no. 2 (2013): 167-84.

Cameron, Averil. "The Anxiety of Images: Meanings and Material Objects." In *Images of the Byzantine World: Visions, Messages and Meanings: Studies Presented to Leslie Brubaker*, edited by Angeliki Lymberopoulou, 45-56. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Pub., 2011.

Baranov, Vladimir Novosibirsk, "The Doctrine of the Icon-Eucharist for the Byzantine Iconoclasts", *Studia Patristica,* 44, (2010), p. 41–48.

Bissell, Edwin Cone. *The Pentateuch, Its Origin and Structure: An Examination of Recent Theories*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1885.

Breckenridge, James D. "The Iconoclasts' Image of Christ." *The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the International Center of Medieval Art,* Vol. 11, No. 2 (1972), p. 3-8.

Bremmer, Jan. N. "Iconoclast, Iconoclastic, and Iconoclasm: Notes Towards a Genealogy." *Church History and Religious Culture* 88 (2008): 1-17.

Brown, Peter. "A Dark-Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy." *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 88, No. 346 (1973): 1-34.

Cameron, Averil. *The Byzantines*. Milton Keynes: Lightning Source, 2012.

Cameron, Averil. "The History of the Image of Edessa: The Telling of a Story." *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983): 80-94.

Cameron, Averil. "The Mandylion and the Byzantine Iconoclasm." In *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation: Papers from a Colloquium Held at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome and the Villa Spelman, Florence*, edited by Kessler L. Herbert and Gerhard Wolf, 33-54. Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1998.

Cameron, Averil. "What was Byzantium." in *The Byzantines*. 1-19, Milton Keynes: Lightning Source, 2012.

Camille, Michael. "Before the Gaze. The Internal Senses and Late Medieval Practices of Seeing." In *Visuality before and beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, compiled by Robert Nelson, 195-223. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Camille, Michael. *Gothic Art: Glorious Visions*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: , New York, 2003.

Camille, Michael. *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art.* London: Reaktion Books, 2015.

Daniell, Christopher. *Death and Burial in Medieval England: 1066-1550.* London: Routledge, 1999.

Drijvers, Jan Willem. "Evelyn Waugh, Helena and the True Cross." *Classics Ireland*, Vol. 7, (2000), p.25-50

Drijvers, Han J.W. "The Image of Edessa in the Syriac Tradition." In *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation: Papers from a Colloquium Held at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome and the Villa Spelman, Florence*, edited by Kessler L. Herbert and Gerhard Wolf, 13-32. Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1998.

Drijvers, Jan Willem. "The Protonike Legend, the Doctrina Addai and Bishop Rabbula of Edessa." *Vigiliae Christianae* 51, no.3, (1997), p.298-315.

Elsner, Jaś, "Iconoclasm as Discourse: From Antiquity to Byzantium." *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 94, No. 3 (2012), p. 368-394.

Feder, Yitzhaq. "The Aniconic Tradition, Deuteronomy 4, and the Politics of Israelite Identity." *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol.132, No.2, 2013, p. 251-274.

Finney, Paul Corby. *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Firenze, Paul. "Spirit Photography: How Early Spiritualists Tried to Save Religion by Using Science." Altadena, CA: *Skeptic* vol. 11, no. 2, 2004, p.70+

Flint, Peter W. (translator) "Numbers." In *A New English Translation of the Septuagint: And the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title*, edited by Wright, Benjamin G., and Albert Pietersma, 107-140. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Freedburg, David. "Myth of Aniconism." In *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Goff, Jacques Le. *The Birth of Purgatory*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Guscin, Mark. *The Tradition of the Image of Edessa*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016.

Handley, Sasha. *Visions of an Unseen World: Ghost Beliefs and Ghost Stories in Eighteenth-Century England*. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007.

Henry, Patrick. "What was the Iconoclastic Controversy About?" Church History, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Mar, 1976): 16-31.

Hooper, Steven. "Bodies, Artefacts and Images. A Cross-Cultural Theory of Relics." *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*. Ed. James Robinson, Lloyd De-Beer, and Anna Harden. London: British Museum, 2014. 190-199.

Kennet, R. H. "The Date of Deuteronomy." *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 28 (July, 1906): 481-500.

Kessler, Herbert L. ""Pictures Fertile with Truth": How Christians Managed to Make Images of God without Violating the Second Commandment." *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, Vol. 49/50 (1991/1992): 53-65.

Kessler, Herbert L. *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.

Kessler, Herbert L., and Gerhard Wolf. *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation:Papers from a Colloquium Held at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome and the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1996*. Bologna: Villa Spelman, 1998.

Kitzinger, Ernst. "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954): 83-150.

Kuryluk, Ewa. *Veronica and Her Cloth: History, Symbolism, and Structure of a "True" Image*. Cambridge, MA, USA: B. Blackwell, 1991.

Leroy, J. "Review of *Icônes du Mont Sinaï,* by G. Sotiriou and M. Sotiriou." *Syria* 36, no. 3/4 (1959): 323-25.

Litten, Julian. *The English Way of Death: The Common Funeral Since 1450*. London: Robert Hale, 1991.

Maguire, Henry. *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Mettinger, Tryggve N. D. *No Graven Image?: Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1995.

McLean, Paul D.(translator) "4 Reigns." In *A New English Translation of the Septuagint: And the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title*, edited by Wright, Benjamin G., and Albert Pietersma, 320-341. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Mitchell, W. J. T. "What Do Pictures "Really" Want?" *October* 77 (1996): 71.

Nagel, Alexander. *Medieval Modern: Art out of Time*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2012.

Nelson, Robert S., and Kristen M. Collins. *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006.

Noble, Thomas F. X. *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians.* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

Paxton, Frederick S. *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990.
Pentcheva, Bissera V. "The Performative Icon." *The Art Bulletin* 88, no. 4 (2006): 631-55.

Perkins, Larry J.(translator) "Exodus." In *A New English Translation of the Septuagint: And the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title*, edited by Wright, Benjamin G., and Albert Pietersma, 43-81. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Peters, Melvin K.(translator) "Deuteronominon." In *A New English Translation of the Septuagint: And the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title*, edited by Wright, Benjamin G., and Albert Pietersma, 141-173. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Phillips, George. *The Doctrine of Addai, the Apostle: Now First Edited in a Complete Form in the Original Syriac*. London: Trübner & Co., 1876.

Ross, Steven K. *Roman Edessa: Politics and Culture on the Eastern Fringes of the Roman Empire, 114-242 CE*. London: Routledge, 2001.

Runciman, Steven. "Gibbon and Byzantium." *Daedalus* 105, no. 3 (1976): 103-10.

Runciman, Steven. "Some Remarks on the Image of Edessa." *Cambridge Historical Journal* 3, no. 03 (1931): 238-52.

Rothstein, Erin. "Pablo Picasso and Primitivism: An Exploration of "Non-Western" and Medieval Influences in Les Demoiselles D'Avignon" (MA thesis., University of Western Ontario, 2010).

Schmitt, Jean-Claude. *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*. Translated by Teresa Lavender. Fagan. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Sahas, Daniel J. *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986.

Steinberg, Leo. *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Trilling, James. "The Image Not Made by Hands and the Byzantine Way of Seeing." In *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation: Papers from a Colloquium Held at the Bibliotheca*

Hertziana, Rome and the Villa Spelman, Florence, edited by Kessler L. Herbert and Gerhard Wolf, 109-127. Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1998.

Weitzmann, Kurt. *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1976.

Wolf, Gerhard. "From Mandylion to Veronica: Picturing the Disembodied Face and Disseminating the True image of Christ in the Latin West." In *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation: Papers from a Colloquium Held at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome and the Villa Spelman, Florence*, edited by Kessler L. Herbert and Gerhard Wolf, 153-179. Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1998.

Fig. 1.

Nicaea X, oil on canvas, 154 cm x 137 cm, 2017/18.

The author's image.

Fig. 2.

Expats, oil on canvas, 183 cm x 183 cm, 2016-18.

The author's image.

Fig. 3.

A Pilgrim's Life, oil on canvas, 183 cm x 165 cm, 2017/18.

The author's image.

Fig. 4.

Corpus Integrum, pt.2, oil on canvas, 152 cm x 140 cm, 2018.

The author's image.

Fig. 5.

Black Pond, oil on canvas, 36 cm x 36 cm, 2017.
Pond 2b, oil on canvas, 36 cm x 36 cm, 2017.
Early Sticks, oil on canvas, 40 cm x 48 cm, 2017.

The author's images.

Fig. 6.

Preper, 1, oil on canvas, 36 cm x 36 cm, 2017.
Preper, 2, oil on canvas, 36 cm x 36 cm, 2017.

The author's images.

Fig. 7.

Night/Water Codex, oil on canvas, 41 cm x 81 cm, 2017.

The author's image.
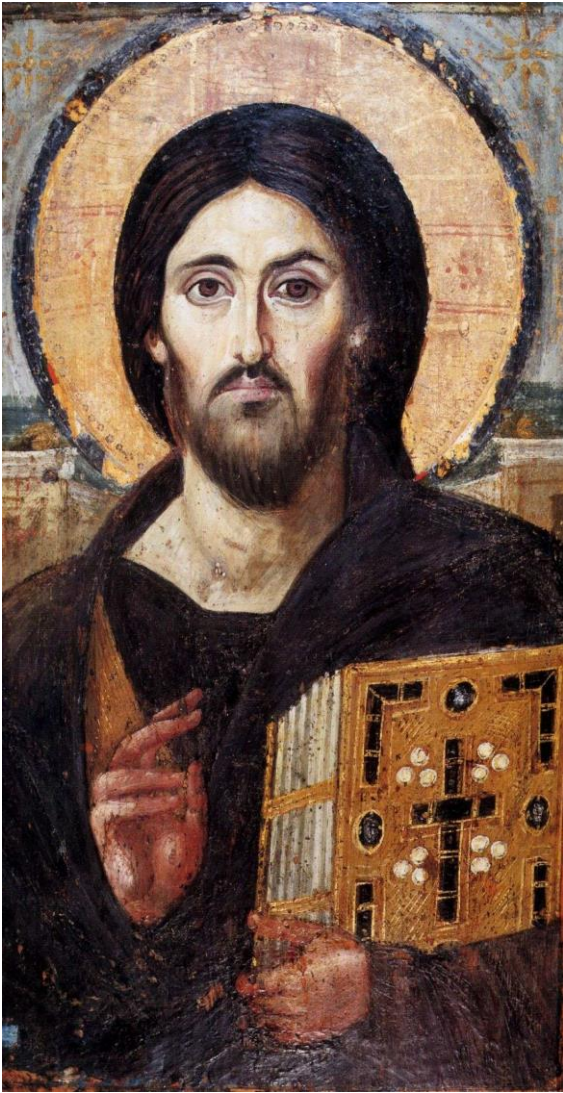
Fig. 8.

Christ Pantocrator, sixth century, St. Catherine's Monastery,

Image source:
"Christ Pantocrator." Wikipedia. Accessed April 03, 2019.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ_Pantocrator.

Fig. 9.

Two Wings of a Triptych: Saint Thaddeus, Saint Paul of Thebes, Saint Anthony; King Abgarus, Saint Basil, and Saint Ephraem, mid tenth-century, St. Catherine's Monastery.

Image source:
"The Icons of Mount Sinai." Princeton University. Accessed April 06, 2019.
http://vrc.princeton.edu/sinai/items/show/6422.
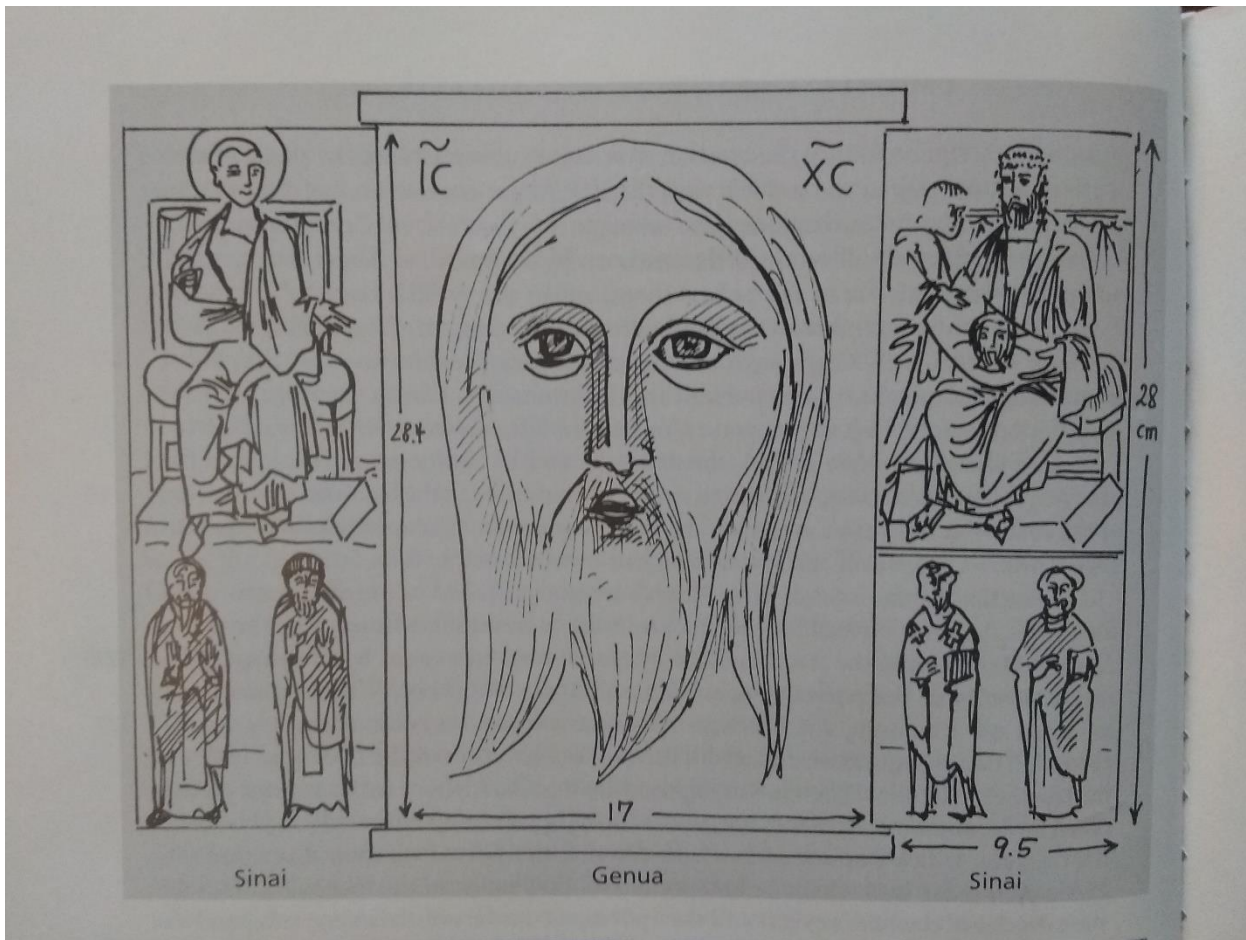
Fig. 10, Hans Belting's proposal which places the Genoa Mandylion as the lost central panel of the Abgar triptych.

Image source:
Belting, Hans. *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p212.
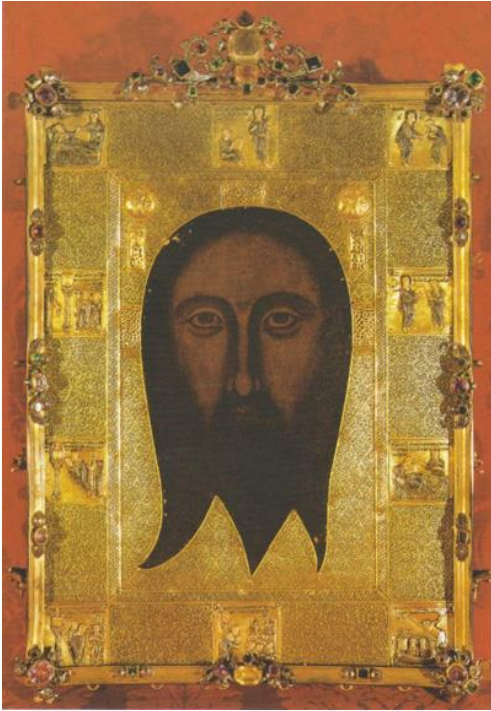
Fig. 11, *Mandylions* in Genoa (left) and Vatican (right).

Genoa Mandylion, possibly tenth-century, Church of St Bartholomew of The Armenians in Genoa, Italy.

Image source:
"Il Mandylion Di Genova." Accessed April 06, 2019. http://www.iconesacregenova.it/il-mandylion-di-genova.

The Mandylion formerly of San Silvestro, possibly sixth-century, Matilda chapel, Vatican Palace.

Image source:
"Image of Edessa." Wikipedia. Accessed April 06, 2019.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image_of_Edessa#Holy_Face_of_Genoa.

Fig. 12, Lazarus fresco, Catacomb of the Giordani, Rome, Italy. 3rd century.

Image source:
Stracke, Richard. "Saint Lazarus." Iconography. Accessed April 06, 2019.
http://www.christianiconography.info/lazarus.html.

Fig. 13.

Giotto (b.1276), *The Raising of Lazarus*, c.1305, Scrovegni (Arena) Chapel, Padua, Italy.

Image source:
"Raising of Lazarus, C.1304 - C.1306 - Giotto." Accessed April 06, 2019.
https://www.wikiart.org/en/giotto/raising-of-lazarus.

Fig. 14, the Ghost of Samuel as a resuscitated corpse.

Gumbertus Bible, Bavarian, last quarter of the twelfth century and before 1195, University Library Erlangen-Nürnberg, MS 1, 82v.

Image source:
"Biblia sacra - Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg MS 1." University Library Erlangen-Nürnberg. Accessed April 05, 2019. http://digital.bib-bvb.de/webclient/DeliveryManager?custom_att_2=simple_viewer&pid=3672120.

Fig. 15, the Ghost of Samuel as a plain clothed type.

Bible Historiale, French, c. 1291-1294. London, British Library, MS Harley 4381, fol 127.

Image source:
"Detail of miniature of Samuel and David." British Library. Accessed April 19, 2019.
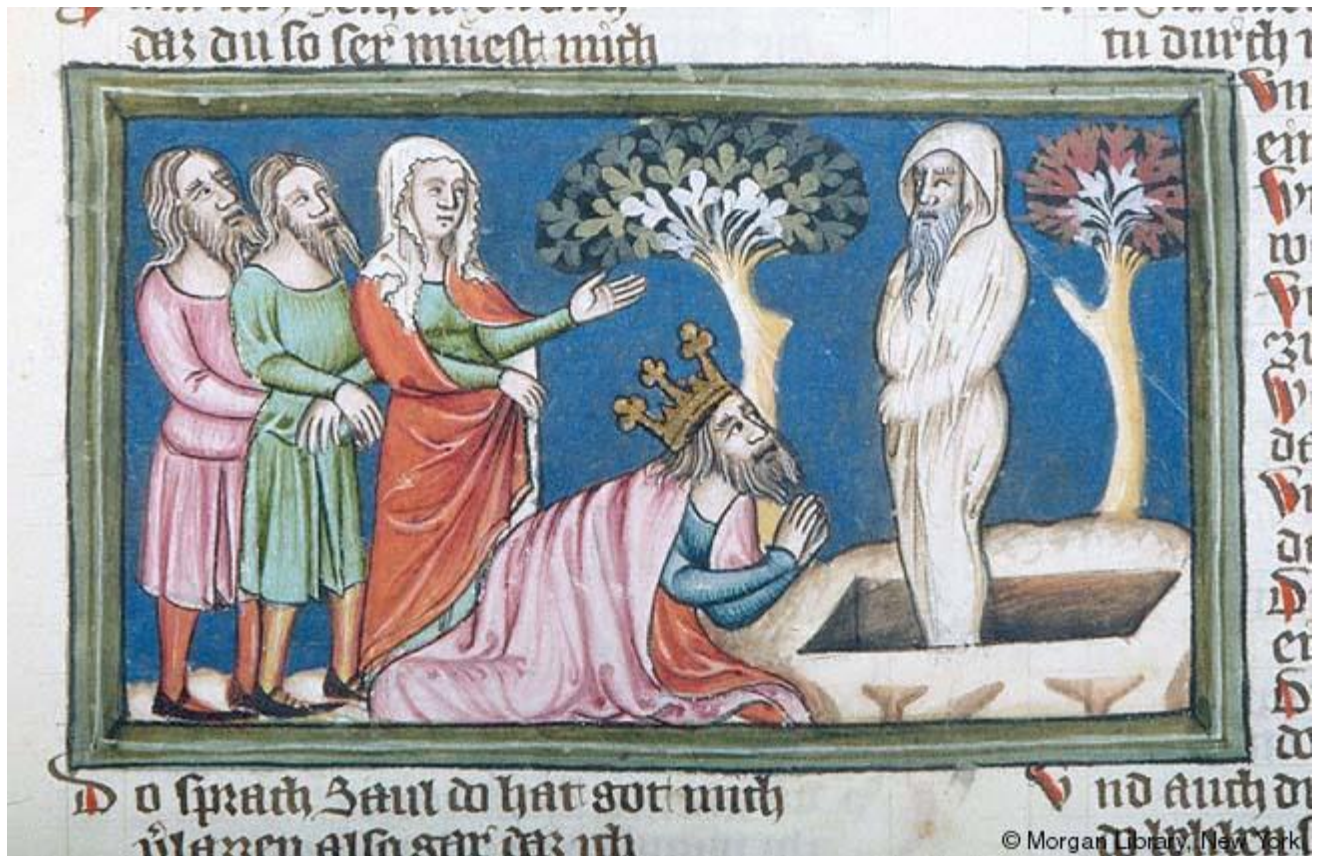http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=22286

Fig. 16, The Ghost of Samuel as a shrouded type.

Christ-Herre Chronik. Bavaria, c. 1375-1380, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, ms. M769, f.172r.

Image source:
"Medieval & Renaissance Manuscripts." The Morgan Library & Museum. Accessed April 04, 2019.
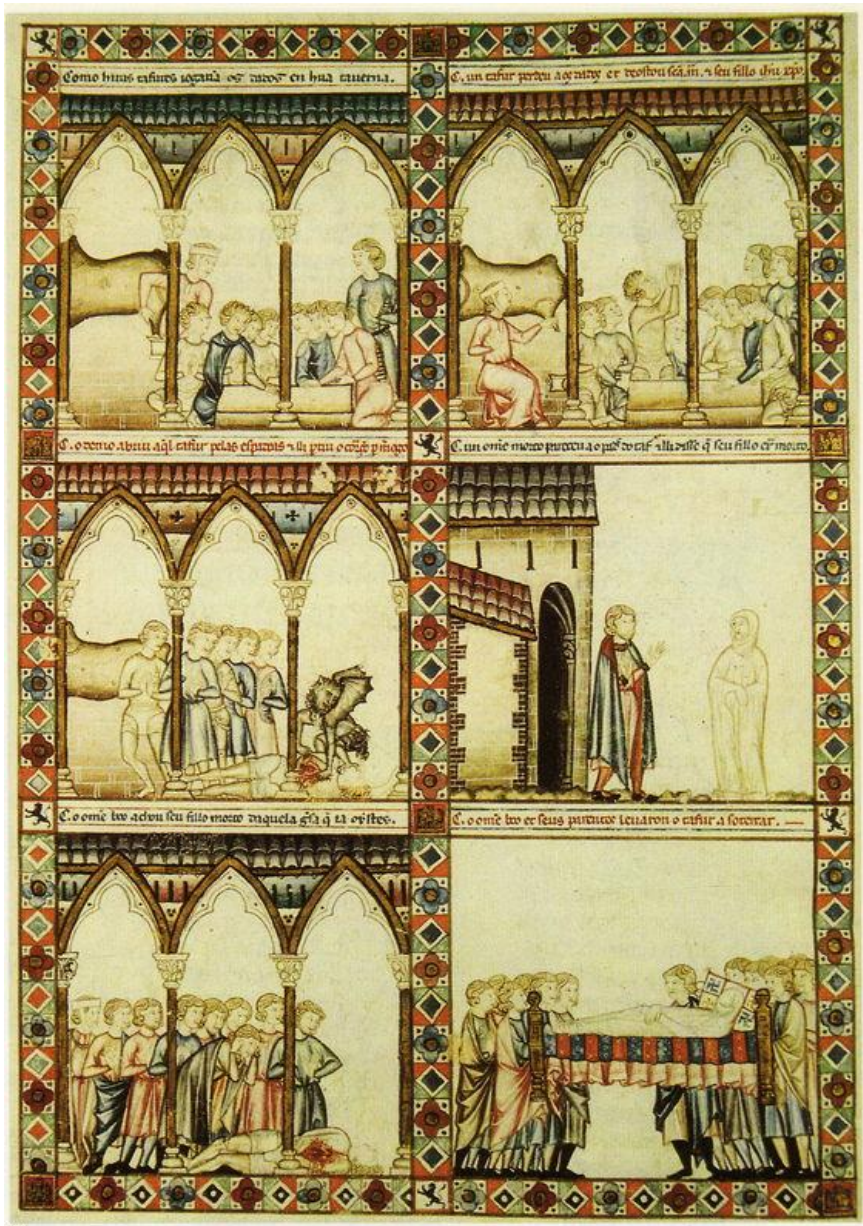http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/125/143938.

Fig. 17, A phantom announces to a father the death of his son in a tavern.

Cantigas de Santa Maria Alfonso X, Spanish, c 1272, Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain: Real Biblioteca, ms.T.I.1, f.80, San

Image source:
"LE FANTÔME DANS L'ICONOGRAPHIE OCCIDENTALE - Histoire Des Juifs En Europe."
November 29, 2009. Accessed April 05, 2019.
http://lesermentdupuits.canalblog.com/archives/2009/11/29/15970784.html.

Fig. 18.

Ugo da Carpi, *Saint Veronica Altarpiece*, c. 1524–1527, tempera and charcoal on panel, 158 × 145 cm, Archivio della Fabbrica di San Pietro, Vatican.

Image source:
"Saint Veronica Altarpiece." Wikimedia. Accessed April 17, 2019.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:06_ugo-da-carpi-la-veronica-tra-i-santi-pietro-e-paolo-cittae295a0ccca7-del-vaticano-fabbrica-di-san-pietro.jpg
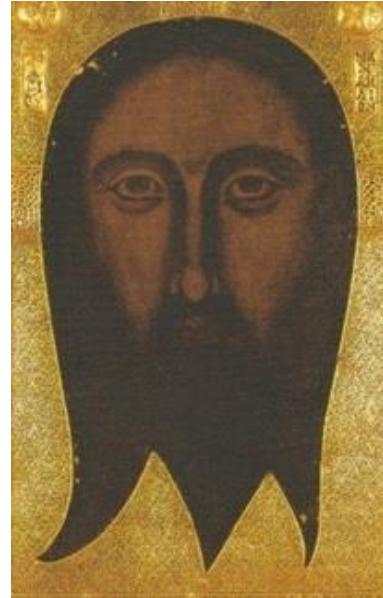
Fig. 19, P*AC-MAN ghost*, first appeared in the 1984 video-arcade game, PAC-MAN, and *Genoa Mandylion*, for reference, (see fig. 4).

Image source:
ProBESTDESIGN, *Pacman Ghost Orange Art Print*, accessed April 2, 2019.
https://society6.com/product/pacman-ghost-orange_print

Curriculum Vitae.

Selected Solo Exhibitions:

2019   University of Western Ontario, *Painting Has a Great Memory but No Plan*, London, ON.

2017   Michael Gibson Gallery, *Onward Cirri Mould*, London, ON.

2015   PDA Projects, *Maiolica for Marjory*, Ottawa, ON.

2014   Anna Leonowens Gallery, *The Nature of Things*, Halifax, NS.

2013   Carleton University Art Gallery, *Some Paintings Enjoying Fresh Air*, Ottawa, ON.
         SAW Gallery, *New Ottawa Artist Spotlight*, Ottawa, ON.

Selected Group/Duo Exhibitions:

2018   Michael Gibson Gallery, *Crossfade*, with Gavin Lynch. London, ON.

2014   Papier, with Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Montreal, QC.
         Patrick Mikhail Gallery, *Primer*, Ottawa, ON.

2013   Patrick Mikhail Gallery, *Colin Muir Dorward & Scott Everingham*, Ottawa, ON.
         National Gallery of Canada, *RBC Canadian Painting Competition 2013*, Ottawa, ON.
         Papier, with Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Montreal, QC.

2012   The Power Plant, *RBC Canadian Painting Competition 2012*, Toronto, ON.

2008   Concordia University MFA Gallery, *Que estamos esperando?*, Montreal, QC.

Education:

2015 – 2019   Studio PhD, University of Western Ontario, Ottawa, ON.

2011 - 2013   MFA, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON.

2002 - 2007   BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design, Vancouver, BC.

1998 - 1999   Computer Engineering, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Edmonton, AB.

Collections:

National Gallery of Canada.

Yukon Permanent Art Collection.

Royal Bank of Canada.

City of Ottawa.

Awards/Scholarships/Residencies:

2017   Ontario Graduate Scholarship.

2016   Ontario Graduate Scholarship Artistic Performance Award.
       Ontario Graduate Scholarship.

2015   Full admission scholarship, University of Western Ontario.

2014   Bill and Isabel Pope NSCAD Residency.

2013   Honourable Mention/Purchase Prize: 15th Annual RBC Canadian Painting Competition.

2012   Finalist: 14th Annual RBC Canadian Painting Competition.

2010   Full admission scholarship, University of Ottawa.