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# Multisensory Memories and Monastic Identity at Sant’Elia near Nepi (VT)

Alison Locke Perchuk

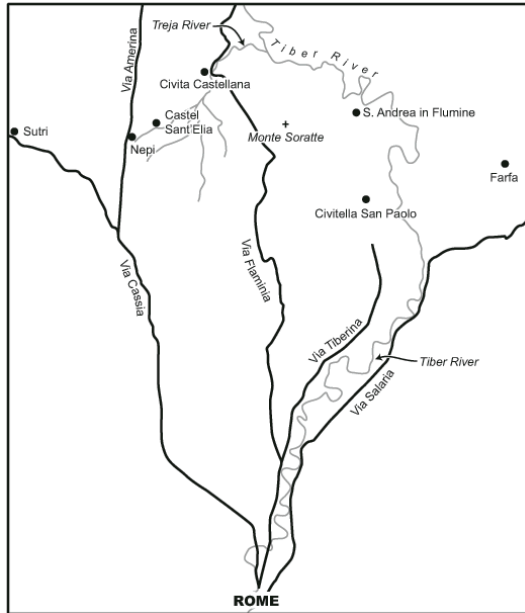


Fig. 1. Map showing location of Monastery of Elijah, Castel S. Elia. (Map: Julian Wiggins).

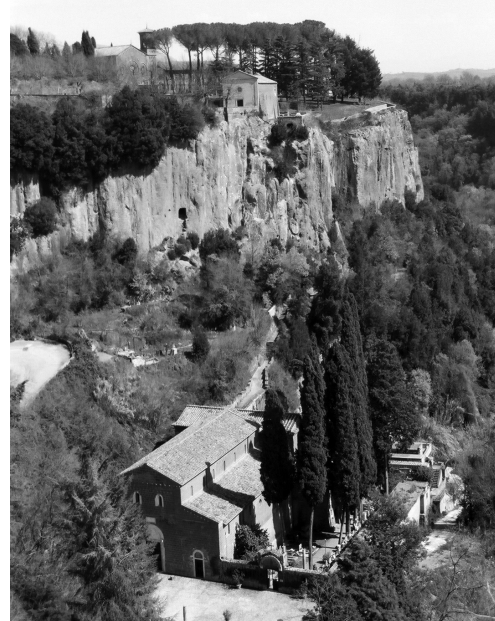


Fig. 2. Aerial view of monastery of Elijah from the west, showing church of Sant’Elia and chapel. (Photo: author).

Located some 50 km north of Rome on the side of a steep cliff above a tributary to the Tiber, the 12th-century church of Sant’Elia is a remarkable extra-urban representative of “Roman Romanesque” architecture<sup>1</sup> (figs. 1–5). Its smooth mural surfaces and transept basilica form translate the crisply quarried local tufa into the materials and morphology of Roman churches of the first decades of the 12th century. Its damaged yet still extensive wall paintings present an apse composition rooted in that of SS. Cosma e Damiano, while their style connects them to the St. Nicholas Chapel in the Lateran Palace and the tomb of Alfanus at Sta. Maria in Cosmedin. A colorful Cosmati marble altar, ciborium, and pavement further establish ties to Rome. In these aspects, Sant’Elia both displays a clear *romanitas* and serves as an important corrective to often

<sup>1</sup> Principal studies include Peter Hoegger, *Die Fresken in der ehemaligen Abteikirche Sant’Elia bei Nepi: ein Beitrag zur romanischen Wandmalerei Roms und seiner Umgebung* (Frauenfeld/Stuttgart: Huber, 1975); Øystein Hjort, “The Frescoes of Castel Sant’Elia. A Problem of Stylistic Attribution,” *Hafnia: Copenhagen Papers in the History of Art* 1 (1970); Joachim Poeschke, “Der römische Kirchenbau des 12. Jahrhunderts und das Datum der Fresken von Castel Sant’Elia,” *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 23–24 (1988); Alison Locke Perchuk, “In the Image of Elijah: The Artistic Foundations of Community in a Medieval Italian Monastery” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2009). A comprehensive bibliography is provided in Delia Kottmann, “Die Datierung der romanischen Wandmalereien von Castel Sant’Elia: Zum Stand der Forschung,” in *Zeiten-Sprünge: Aspekte von Raum und Zeit in der Kunst vom Mittelalter bis zum Gegenwart. Studien zu Ehren von Peter K. Klein zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Nicola Hille and Monika E. Müller (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2007).

overbuilt or heavily restored coeval monuments in Rome. Multiple generations of art historians have taken this close affiliation with Roman art and architecture as an indication of the church’s provinciality—it was, after all, located at the geographical margins of both 12th-century papal territory and that of 19th- and 20th-century art history—but as I have recently shown elsewhere, Sant’Elia should be understood as an intentionally transplanted Roman monument, executed through high-level patronage employing the same workshops active for Pope Calixtus II (r. 1119–1124) and his chancellor Alfanus (d. ca. 1123) and intended to mark the frontier between papal and imperial territories during a period of ongoing conflict between the Roman papacy and the Holy Roman Emperor.<sup>2</sup>



Fig. 3. Sant’Elia, west façade and chapel.  
(Photo: author).



Fig. 4. Sant’Elia, exterior of transept and apse. (Photo: author).

But even though Sant’Elia was constructed as a visual marker of papal political authority along a key border, this was not the sum total of its purposes—nor, indeed, was it even its primary one. Built ca. 1125 under the leadership of an abbot named Bovo, Sant’Elia served as the abbey church for the *monasterium s. Heliae*, the monastery of Elijah, a male community attested since at least the 10th century and at the time of the church’s construction presumably subject to the Benedictine Rule.<sup>3</sup> The church functioned as the monastery’s liturgical heart,

<sup>2</sup> Alison Locke Perchuk, “Schismatic (Re)Visions. Sant’Elia near Nepi and Sta. Maria in Trastevere in Rome, 1120–1143,” *Gesta* 55, no. 2 (2016).

<sup>3</sup> Three inscriptions mention Bovo as abbot and patron: Luisa Miglio, “Castel Sant’Elia,” in *Inscriptiones medii aevi italiae (saec. VI–XII). Lazio: Viterbo*, vol. 1, ed. Luigi Cimarra et al. (Spoleto: CISAM, 2002), 15–19 nos. 6–8 (1126). The name *monasterium s. Heliae*: e.g., Jan-Olof Tjäder, *Die nichtliterarischen lateinischen Papyri italiens aus der Zeit 445–700*, Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Rom, 4<sup>o</sup>, no. 19, part 2 (Stockholm: Åströms for Svenska Institutet i Rom, 1982), 298–302 no. 49 (557); Giuseppe Giontella, Delfo Gioacchini, and Abbondio Zuppante, *Le pergamene medievali di Orte (secoli X–XV)*, Ente Ottava Medievale di Orte, no. 2 (Orte (VT): Ente Ottava Medievale di Orte, 1984), 19 no. 1 (1987); Ludovicus M. Hartmann, *Ecclesiae S. Mariae in Via Lata Tabularium. I. Partem vetustiore, quae complectitur chartas inde ab anno 921 usque ad a. 1045* (Vienna: C. Gerold filii, 1895), 24 no. 18, 43–44 no. 35, 45–46 no. 38 (990, 1014, 1015). 10th-century community: John of Salerno, “Vita S. Odonis abbatis Cluniacensis,” *Patrologia Latina: The Full Text Database* ([London]: Chadwyck-Healey, 1996), electronic version of J.–P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus [...] series Latina* 133 (1841–1902. Reprint, Turnhout: Brepols, 1956–90), cols. 79–80. Benedictine Rule: Bull of Alexander IV, Vatican City,

sheltering the relics of the church's local saint, the 6th-century abbot Anastasius, and providing a site for the performance of the monks' *opus Dei* of prayer, the liturgy of the hours, and the liturgy of the Eucharist, for which the community seemingly opened its doors to the laity living in the small village on a plateau just to the west of the monastery.<sup>4</sup> As much recent work in the fields of history, art history, and medieval studies has demonstrated, medieval textual, visual, and material constructions were often intended to generate and promote specific concepts of identity, be these noble, civic, diocesan, or, as in the case of Sant'Elia, monastic.<sup>5</sup> In the context of this special issue of *California Italian Studies Journal* dedicated to the power of images, it is this aspect of Sant'Elia, its function as a site for the formulation of a specific, theologically and historically conscious communal monastic identity, that I wish to explore. In particular, this article will examine the roles played in the establishment of this identity by depictions of the community's two primary saints, its local abbatial saint Anastasius and its highly unusual titular dedicatee, the prophet Elijah.



Fig. 5. Sant'Elia, interior. View from nave toward apse. (Photo: author).

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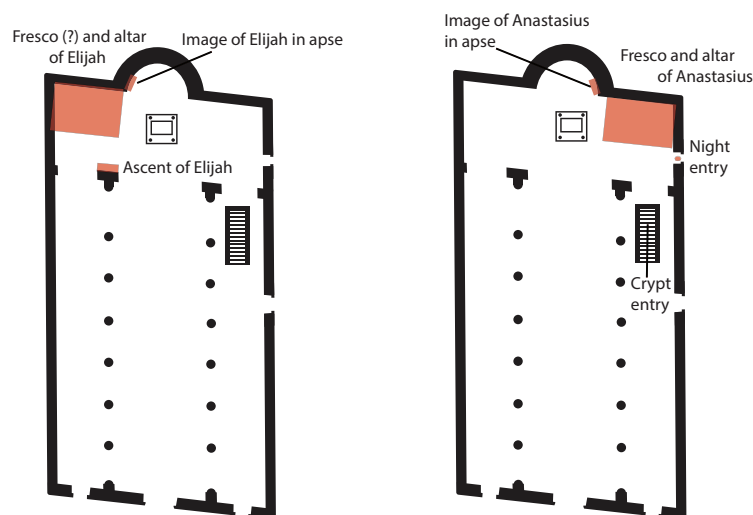
Archivio Segreto Vaticano (henceforth, ASV), Reg. Vat. 24, no. 224, ff. 156r–v (olim 159r–v) (1256/58). A handlist of medieval documents relevant to the monastery of Elijah is given in Perchuk, “In the Image of Elijah,” 296–314.

<sup>4</sup> Jean Hubert, “La place faite aux laïcs dans les églises monastiques et dans les cathédrales aux XIe–XIIe siècles,” in *Arts et vie sociale de la fin du monde antique au Moyen Âge*, Mémoires et documents publiés par la société de l'École des chartes, no. 24 (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1977); Tiziana Fiordiponti, “Castel S. Elia. L'insediamento nell'età medievale attraverso l'esame degli ambienti ipogei e delle strutture murarie superstiti,” *Biblioteca e società* 22, nos. 3–4 (2003); Perchuk, “In the Image of Elijah,” 5–6.

<sup>5</sup> To name only a few items relevant to the formulation of my arguments: Marcia Kupfer, *Romanesque Wall Painting in Central France: The Politics of Narrative*, Yale Publications in the History of Art (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Thomas E. A. Dale, *Relics, Prayers, and Politics in Medieval Venetia: Romanesque Painting in the Crypt of Aquileia Cathedral* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Susan Boynton, *Shaping a Monastic Identity: Liturgy and History at the Imperial Abbey of Farfa* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006); Constance B. Bouchard, “Episcopal Gesta and the Creation of a Useful Past in Ninth-Century Auxerre,” *Speculum* 84, no. 1 (2009); Linda Safran, *The Medieval Salento: Art and Identity in Southern Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Nino Zchomelidse, *Art, Ritual and Civic Identity in Medieval Southern Italy* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014).



There is, however, a methodological complexity to this argument, one that moves it beyond pure iconography to the multisensory approach indicated in the title. While the operations of Sant'Elia's paintings do depend in part on their visual content and underlying textual traditions, their power lies in their multisensory dimensions, the ways in which they both expressed and were activated through the sights, sounds, smells, and movements of Christian ritual.<sup>6</sup> Two details from the wall paintings serve as heuristic guides in this regard. The first comprises three figures of clerics with open mouths, one of whom raises his right hand in blessing; these figures appear within a scene of the funeral of Anastasius positioned within Sant'Elia's south transept and rendered as if taking place within the church itself (figs. 6a & b, 7, 8). The second, presenting a falling cloak and a hand outstretched to receive it, comes from a depiction of the Ascent of Elijah on the north transept's west pier (figs. 9, 10). Until recently, art historical interpretation of such details used them for stylistic data or subsumed them within iconographic analysis of figures and scenes. The active and interactive aspects of these details, their evidence of motion, engagement, and exchange within and even beyond the image, would have been understood as little more than a way to lend a sense of liveliness to the image. But if we pay attention to these details, they guide the viewer into a world of gesture, movement, ritual, voice. They tell us that if we are serious about understanding such images, we need to leave behind our 21st-century inclinations to comprehend images by vision alone. If instead we ask, following W. J. T. Mitchell, "what these pictures want," they want to be enacted, performed, emulated.<sup>7</sup> As will be demonstrated, the paintings to which these details belong were inseparable from daily ritual, from liturgical elements spoken and sung at specific times, and from commemorative practices followed on such occasions as the feast days of saints and the deaths of terrestrial leaders.



Figs. 6a & b. Sant'Elia, plan, showing sites of images and altars of Elijah and Anastasius, respectively. (Diagram: author, over plan by Luke Matjas).

<sup>6</sup> The complex interpenetration of artworks and liturgy and the concept of the activation of images and objects through Christian ritual are the subject of a recent magisterial study: Éric Palazzo, *L'invention chrétienne des cinq sens dans la liturgie et l'art au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Éditions du CERF, 2014); see also idem, "Art, Liturgy and the Five Senses in the Early Middle Ages," *Viator* 41, no. 1 (2010). For a broader consideration of the senses in medieval culture, see, e.g., Stephen G. Nichols, Andreas Kablitz, and Alison Calhoun, eds., *Rethinking the Medieval Senses: Heritage/Fascinations/Frames* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).



Fig. 7. Sant'Elia, south transept, detail, singers at funeral of Anastasius. (Photo: author).



Fig. 8. Sant'Elia, south transept, detail, funeral of Anastasius. (Photo: author).



Fig. 9. Sant'Elia, north transept, detail, passing of the mantle to Elijah during ascent of Elijah. (Photo: author).



Fig. 10. Sant'Elia, north transept, ascent of Elijah. (Drawing: author, over photograph by author).

I am not the only scholar to argue that medieval art desired multisensory responses. Bissera Pentcheva, Amanda Luyster, Christina Normore, and Jennifer Kingsley are among those taking into consideration the auditory, haptic, spatial, and even psychological dimensions of human interaction with works of medieval art.<sup>8</sup> What their work has in common, and what it shares with much other scholarship in this vein, is that it enters into questions of the multisensory aspects of artworks through an investigation of materiality. In engaging the materially privileged—the golden letters painted within a chapel, the dazzling light reflected off of the surface of a metal relief icon, the jewel-and-ivory clad cover of a deluxe manuscript, the scent of exotic spices in

<sup>8</sup> Bissera Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010); Amanda Luyster, “Christ’s Golden Voice: The Wall-paintings of the Palais des Papes, Avignon,” *Word & Image* 27 (2011); Christina Normore, “Navigating the World of Meaning,” *Gesta* 51, no.1 (2012); Jennifer Kingsley, *The Bernward Gospels: Art, Memory and the Episcopate in Medieval Germany* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014).

liturgical incense—their research addresses situations in which direct sensory responses were essential to communicative and functional processes.

This article differs from such work in that its object of analysis is constructed of the much humbler materials of earth, paint, and stone. Even the exceedingly valuable, because rare, collection of medieval liturgical garments linked to Sant’Elia comprises mostly simple items intended for daily use.<sup>9</sup> Although evidence from medieval Italian texts and artifacts indicates that the monastery would have possessed, *inter alia*, manuscripts, textiles, metalwork, and reliquaries made of various materials, other than the garments, no surviving 12th-century items can be connected to Sant’Elia and so such artifacts remain outside the scope of my analysis. My concern is instead with the dynamics of representation. I contend that the images within Sant’Elia were intended to cue a multisensory exchange between the built environment and the living monastic bodies that inhabited that environment, and that the causes and effects of that exchange were linked to communal identity. In particular, the monastic community’s desire to remember and to engage its two principal saints, the abbot Anastasius and the prophet Elijah, dictated the designation of Sant’Elia’s transept as the site for complex recollective processes geared toward the generation and transmission of a corporate identity rooted in the holiness of these two figures, their physical or analogical connections to the monastery’s landscape, and the implications of such rooted sanctity for the efficacy of the community’s *opus Dei*. These processes, encompassing liturgical singing and recitation, processions and performances of rituals, shifting sightlines, and fixed altars and architecture, would have operated differently during daily liturgy, on the feasts of these saints, and at the death or commemoration of the monastery’s abbots. An exploration of Sant’Elia’s spatialized imagery not only provides a deeper understanding of the function of this specific monument, but offers insight into the multisensory dimensions of the decorated spaces of Italy’s medieval churches more generally.<sup>10</sup>

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Although today Sant’Elia stands isolated on the side of a ravine, as initially built it did not exist as an independent church but formed part of the wider topography of the monastery of Elijah. As reconstructed from the surviving architecture, descriptions in documents of the 16th through 19th centuries, records of the church’s initial 1856 restoration, and standard 12th-century monastic architectural practices, the site initially comprised at least three discrete built zones: the church of Sant’Elia, an adjacent cloister located to the south of the church and housing the private and domestic spaces of the monastery (now the site of a modern cemetery), and a small chapel sited on the top of a cliff to the northeast of Sant’Elia and today belonging to a Franciscan monastery<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> 26 garments, one cloth antependium, and one textile fragment discovered at Sant’Elia in the 17th century and dating primarily from the 12th to 13th centuries are preserved in the Museo della Spiritualità in Castel Sant’Elia; *I paramenti liturgici di Castel Sant’Elia: La loro storia e la cronaca del restauro*, ed. Marica Mercalli and Silvia Checchi (Rome: Gangemi, 2012); Maureen C. Miller, “The Liturgical Vestments of Castel Sant’Elia: Their Historical Significance and Current Condition,” *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 10 (2014).

<sup>10</sup> This was the theme of the Giornata di studi: Spazio Figurato: Architectural Space and Iconographic Programs in Italy, 1200–1450, organized by Ludovico Geymonat, Marius Hauknes, and Hannah Jacobs at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome, 2 December 2011. Conference review: Giorgia Pollio, *Arte Medievale*, 4<sup>th</sup> ser., 4 (2014).

<sup>11</sup> Apostolic visitations: Rome, Archivio di Stato di Roma (henceforth, ASR), Camerale III, B. 1484, *Relatio Visitationis Civitatis et Diocesis Sutrine de Anno 1671, Triennio 29*, n.p. [ff. 5v–6v]; ASV, Cong. Vescovi e Regolari, Visita Apostolica 31, *Visitatio Nepesina, 1574*, ff. 27r–29r, and Visita Apostolica 175, *Status animarum uniusquiusque loci totius diocesis tam Sutrinae quam Nepesinae* (1680), ff. 23r–29r. Deeds of emphyteusis ASR, chir. 14 aprile 1790; ASR, Camerale III, B. 584, no. 5, items 2 and 3, and no. 16. Description: ASR, Ministero del



(fig. 2, 3). Each of these areas gave shape to the ritual practices and quotidian behaviors of the monastery's inhabitants, individually and as a community.



Fig. 11. Sant'Elia, view of high altar and north transept with altar of Elijah. (Photo: author).



Fig. 12. Sant'Elia, view of south transept with night entrance and altar of Anastasius. (Photo: author).

The church was the monastery's liturgical heart. It sheltered the high altar, at which the Eucharist was celebrated on a daily basis; this ritual was understood as both reenacting Christ's sacrifice on Earth and instantiating a liturgy performed ceaselessly in heaven (fig. 11). The altar became, in this sense, the site of a regular, and regulated, irruption of the eternal sacred within lived human space and time and a primary physical marker of the monastery's sacrality. The same can be said of the church's two side altars, located in the north and south transepts, which would have enabled additional Eucharistic celebrations; as will be argued, these altars were dedicated to Elijah and Anastasius respectively and would also have been used in their commemorations (fig. 12). In front of the high altar, at the head of the central nave, is a slightly raised marble platform; this indicates the privileged position of the monastic choir, or *schola cantorum*, within which the monks would have chanted the liturgy of the hours, sets of spoken and sung prayers, liturgical songs, and excerpts from Scripture and other texts recited at seven times during the day. A crypt located below the central and south transepts and accessed via a staircase at the head of the south aisle would have offered another ritual space, presumably used

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Commercio, ecc., B. 352/28 [Delegazione Apostolica di Viterbo, no. 9283, 11/3/1854] and [Delegazione Apostolica di Viterbo, no. 1164, 2/15/1855]. All but the last are transcribed in Perchuk, "In the Image of Elijah," 315–340. The monastery also comprised a network of landholding within an approximate radius of 30 km from Nepi; see Nepi, Archivio Storico Diocesano di Civita Castellana, sezione Orte, perg. n. 1 (987), in Giontella, Gioacchini, and Zuppante, *Le pergamene medievali di Orte*, 19, no. 1; (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana [henceforth, BAV], Vat. lat. 6196, *Varia scriptora que pertinent ad res Camerales*, ff. 113r–115r (1178; XVI c. apograph).

chiefly for commemorative activities but possibly also containing additional altars<sup>12</sup> (fig. 6b). These areas of the church were further distinguished through architecture, including the piers and elevated pavement that set the transept and apse apart from the rest of the church and the colonnades that divided the north and south aisles from the central nave, through the insertion of such marble furnishings as the ciborium over the high altar and the now-lost barriers of the *schola cantorum*, and through variations of color and pattern in the Cosmati marble pavement that originally filled the main body of the church.<sup>13</sup>



Fig. 13. Sant'Elia, apse, detail, conch. (Photo: author).

The 12th-century frescoes also participated in the structuring of Sant'Elia's interior, both by their presence in the transept and apse and apparent absence from the rest of the church, and by their iconography. In particular, the paintings on Sant'Elia's east wall should be understood as connected to the three altars arrayed across the east side of the transept. The apse frescoes comprise a quadripartite pictorial ensemble. In the conch, Christ rises above a bleeding *Agnus Dei* and the four rivers of Paradise; he is flanked by, from north to south, Elijah, St Paul, St Peter, and Anastasius (fig. 13). An inscription exhorting viewers to contemplate this composition divides the conch from a register of 12 lambs processing toward the *Agnus Dei* from Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Further down, a grouping of the Virgin and Child with standing archangels and a small figure of an abbot, presumably the church's patron, Bovo, is positioned directly above and behind the altar block. Modelled on an 8th-century icon from S. Maria in Trastevere in Rome known as the Madonna della Clemenza,<sup>14</sup> this grouping is flanked by eight standing female saints wearing the elaborate garments of *feminae clarissimae* and presenting jeweled crowns (fig.

<sup>12</sup> Wolfgang Braunfels, *Monasteries of Western Europe: The Architecture of the Orders* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

<sup>13</sup> Dorothy Glass, "Papal Patronage in the Early Twelfth Century: Notes on the Iconography of Cosmatesque Pavements," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 32 (1969).

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of the icon and its dating, see Perchuk, "Schismatic (Re)Visions."



5). On the upper portion of the eastern wall, the 24 elders of the Apocalypse process in two rows toward the apse, chalices in their veiled hands (figs. 11, 12). To the south below the elders is a rectangular fresco depicting the death of Anastasius, from which the details introduced earlier are drawn; the pendant section to the north also once contained scenes presumably of a hagiographic nature, now painted over (figs. 11, 12, 16). The wall was logically completed at the base by a patterned dado. Paintings also flowed across the other three walls of the transept, including a narrative cycle of the Apocalypse on the south and north walls, and figures of standing saints and narrative scenes of a hagiographic nature, now almost entirely lost, on the west wall (figs. 14, 15). The entire transept was ringed at the clerestory level by a row of standing Old Testament figures: major and minor prophets holding scrolls with excerpts from their admonitions and the sons of Jacob displaying phrases from their blessings. All are clad, like Elijah, in contemporary military garb (figs. 11, 12, 14, 20). There is no evidence for frescoes within the nave of the church.



Fig. 14. Sant'Elia, south transept, west wall, including north transept pier. (Photo: author).



Fig. 15. Sant'Elia, north transept, west wall, including south transept pier. (Photo: author).

Apart from its location and probable equivalence to the church in terms of length and materials, we know nothing about the appearance of the monastery's cloister, or about the dormitory, kitchen and refectory, chapter house, and guest quarters that it presumably contained. A 12th-century doorway in the south transept that today leads into a 16th-century sacristy originally connected the transept directly to the cloister and presumably to a dormitory built in its eastern range<sup>15</sup> (figs. 6b, 12). A second doorway, now blocked, in the south aisle adjacent to the west end of the *schola cantorum* would have led into the cloister's northern range. The location

<sup>15</sup> The stone arch defining the aperture is overlapped by the 12th-century frescoes.

of this doorway today several meters above the ground level of the modern cemetery suggests that the cloister was constructed atop an earthen podium intended to provide adequate building space by leveling out the declivity of the ravine. The cliff top chapel, which is now dedicated to the Archangel Michael, deserves additional investigation.<sup>16</sup> Its masonry exhibits the same type of tufa construction as Sant'Elia, suggesting a 12th-century origin, while the preservation within the chapel of an inscription recording an altar dedication by abbot Bovo links this structure to the monastery below. This description of the monastery of Elijah is admittedly static, evoking as it does discontinuous structures, discrete actions, and fixed viewpoints. As inhabited, however, these structures and the spaces they established would have been connected by constant movement, whether through scripted liturgical processions or through the quotidian activities of community members. They would also have been activated through sights, sounds, smells, tastes, textures, and other sensations forming part of liturgy and daily life.

While much can be learned about the monastery of Elijah and 12th-century Italian art and culture more broadly from considering the complex in its totality, for the remainder of this article I will focus on three specific elements. All are details of the frescoes within Sant'Elia's transept. In the order in which they will be considered, these are: the scenes on the east wall of the south transept of the death of Anastasius; the images of Anastasius and Elijah in the conch of the apse; and the scene on the inner face of the north transept pier of Elijah's ascent. Although presenting themselves to us as motionless and optically perceived two-dimensional images, these elements are profoundly intertwined with the monastery's multisensory existence as a lived ritual site. I will also briefly address the frescoes' overall effects, including the relevance of a series of standing prophets that ring the transept at clerestory level for our understanding of the audiences for and function of the transept's images. This discussion will demonstrate how these images of the monastery's special saints, organized very precisely within Sant'Elia's architectural space, were activated at different times, through diverse sensory mechanisms, and with immediate purposes that varied across the liturgical year. Even within this heterogeneity of purpose and practice, Sant'Elia's frescoes functioned consistently to reinforce habits of thought, concepts of institutional history, and modes of comportment that generated a very specific monastic corporate identity.

This article's first heuristic guide, the representation of the open mouths and blessing hand, is found in one of four scenes in a frescoed panel depicting moments from the holy death of the abbot Anastasius, located on the eastern wall of the south transept (figs. 6b, 7, 12, 16). Positioned approximately one meter above the pavement, the painting rises above and behind a modern altar that replicates the position of a 12th-century altar dedicated to the local saint; the images of Anastasius's death should be understood as an altarpiece *avant la lettre*.<sup>17</sup> The integrity of this altar to the medieval construction is demonstrated by the three niches built into the wall, one above and one to either side of the altar. The painting itself presumably extended for nearly the full width of the wall, from the apse at left to the transept's south wall at right, this latter punctuated by the door that originally led to the dormitory and cloister. A stair at the head of the south aisle descends to the crypt; the images would have been in plain view to those entering this lower space, which may have held the remains of members of the community or even relics of Anastasius's legendary brethren.

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<sup>16</sup> Discussed briefly in Vittorio Cati, *Castel Sant'Elia: natura, storia, arte, religione* (1996; repr. Foligno (PG): Grafiche Industriali, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Julian Gardner, "Altars, Altarpieces, and Art History: Legislation and Usage," in *Italian Altarpieces, 1250–1550: Function and Design*, ed. Eve Borsook and Fiorella Superbi Gioffredi (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).



Fig. 16. Sant'Elia, south transept, detail, fresco sequence of death of Anastasius, above his altar. (Photo: author)

The scene containing these details depicts a monastic funeral (fig. 8). The deceased, wearing a grey scapular over a mustard tunic, lies on a draped bier placed in the nave of a church, his tonsured and haloed head toward its fictive apse. Three tonsured figures cluster about his head. One holds an open book in his left hand while making a blessing gesture over the deceased with his right; the second figure holds aloft a processional cross. All three wear liturgical garments; all three have their mouths open in chant or song. Behind the fictive apse stands a tree, and behind the tree rises a three-storied campanile, or bell tower; three bells are visible within the tower, as is a small figure within the tower's base, operating the bell-pulls. The campanile has been placed above the apex of the central niche; together, the painted tower and physical niche divide the frescoed panel into two sections (fig. 16).

To the right of the bell tower are two additional scenes, stacked vertically. The lower scene presents eight monks with scapulars and tonsures; their sprawling, rubbery bodies mark them as deceased. They fan out within a semicircular enclosure as a doubled hand blesses them from above. The upper scene comprises, at right, a church viewed from the exterior; its orientation is opposite that of the church in the funeral scene. Facing the church, one wing folded back against the campanile, stands a large angel; the other wing stretches toward the church, and the angel's hands are raised in a gesture of address. Between angel and church, sheltered under the angel's wing, are eight monks, each with scapular and tonsure; they look at the angel with engagement, hands in positions indicating reception of speech.

Blessings, bells, songs, speech: What are we witnessing? The short answer is that the painting represents episodes from the holy death of the monastery's local saint, abbot Anastasius. The core hagiographical source for Anastasius is a passage from the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great:

The saintly Anastasius in the monastery of Suppentonia near the city of Nepi: he ruled it with utmost care when he was made its abbot. A steep mountain rose to a great height over the monastery and below it lay a deep chasm. When the time had come for God to reward the labors of Anastasius, a voice was heard one night calling from the top of the cliff in prolonged tones, "Anastasius, come!"

Immediately after that, seven other monks were called by name the same way. A short period of silence followed and then the voice summoned another monk. There was no doubt in the mind of anyone that death awaited those who had been summoned. Within a few days Anastasius died. The others then died in the order in which they had been called. One of the monks had come to kneel at Anastasius's deathbed, pleading, "By the God whom you are going to face soon, let me depart from this world within seven days after you have passed away." He died about a week after Anastasius.<sup>18</sup>

From a strict iconographic perspective, the scene at the upper right depicts the summoning of the monks; that at the lower right, their entombment; and that at left, Anastasius's deathbed. Already, however, discrepancies emerge between Gregory's text and the image: the use of an angel to give body to the voice; the transformation of Anastasius's dormition into a monastic funeral; the depiction of these events within a contemporary material, liturgical, and architectural setting. These discrepancies are not the result of sourcing the image within the wrong text, for the only other known discussion of Anastasius is in Flodoard of Reims's *De triumphis Christi*, a 10th-century poem that includes an epitome of the *Dialogues*.<sup>19</sup> Rather, the frescoed panel has been elaborated in these ways specifically to generate connections between the painted and the lived worlds, connections effected through the evocation of multiple sensory modes.

The first elaboration concerns topography and architecture, as depicted and as lived (figs. 1, 2, 16). A primary basis for the equation of Gregory's "monastery of Suppentonia" with the monastery of Elijah is the coincidence of the location of each monastery on the side of a ravine near Nepi. The monastery's builders confirmed this equation by constructing a chapel atop the cliff behind the church. Dedicated to the Holy Trinity, the angelic hierarchy, and Gregory the Great, the chapel confirms the location of the theophany, the nature of the divine messenger, and the holiness of the man who recorded the theophany and its effects.<sup>20</sup> Movement of the monks through this topography, whether for daily offices, in solemn processions commemorating the monastery's foundation, or other rituals involving the chapel, would have further tightened the bonds between the textual and the physical landscapes, permitting the 12th-century monks to understand themselves as treading a 6th-century sacred landscape.

This landscape is replicated within the Anastasian fresco. At upper right, the scene of the summoning takes place in proximity to a church whose cut-stone masonry, tile roof, and semicircular apse and windows replicate those of Sant'Elia. The campanile and the head of the angel—the twin sources of the voice, as will be explained below—are elevated behind the church's apse, which is the relationship between the physical church and cliff top chapel. Anastasius's funeral, at left, takes place within a church that again looks like Sant'Elia in masonry and form. The orientation of this second figured church with apse toward the center of the painting permits the first church to slide into the topographic position of the chapel. Within the scene of the entombed monks, the doubled blessing hands emanate from a point just forward

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<sup>18</sup> Abridged and adapted from Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, I: 7–8, trans. Odo John Zimmerman, *Fathers of the Church* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1959, repr. 1983), 28–34; Latin text in *Dialogues (livres I–III)*, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, *Sources Chrétiennes*, no. 260, vol. 2 (Paris: Éditions du CERF, 1979), 64–77.

<sup>19</sup> Flodoard of Reims, *De triumphis Christi [Invocatio, De triumphis Christi sanctorumque Palaestinae, De triumphis Christi Antiochiae gestis, De triumphis Christi apud Italiam]*, *Patrologia Latina* 135, at col. 834; Peter Christian Jacobsen, *Flodoard von Reims: Sein Leben und seine Dichtung «De triumphis Christi»*, *Mittellateinische Studien und Texte*, no. 10 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978).

<sup>20</sup> Miglio, "Castel Sant'Elia," 15–16 no. 6.



of the apse of the fictive church above, a location that corresponds to the position of Sant'Elia's high altar. This aligns the pictured tomb with Sant'Elia's crypt—fitting for an image that, located at the head of the south aisle, would have been clearly visible to anyone descending into that crypt (fig. 6b). Part of medieval Christian belief was the tangibility of the sacred, the idea that it could inhere physically within the world. The transference of Anastasius's holy life and death into the natural and built environment of the monastery of Elijah established a claim for the unmediated sanctity of the monastery and by extension, of the efficacy of the *opus Dei*, the work of liturgy and prayer, of the monastery's community.

If topography engenders movement, bells engage the sense of hearing and prompt active response. The fictive campanile divides the two halves of the frescoed panel yet links in a practical manner to all three scenes; the vigorous tolling of the figure within the campanile's lowest story instructs us to engage our aural imagination (figs. 8, 16). By 12th-century central Italian practice, bells would have been tolling continuously during the funeral of Anastasius and the burial of the monks.<sup>21</sup> Gregory described the heavenly voice as calling to Anastasius in “prolonged tones”; the “Anastasius, come!” “Brother, come!” “Brother, come!” within his narrative assimilate to the tolling of bells.<sup>22</sup> This assimilation is aided by the depiction of the angel between the campanile and the monks, as if the bells' sounds were reverberating through the angel to the brethren. It also is supported by medieval consecration rituals for church bells, which used Psalm 28 to constitute the bells as the *vox Domini*, the voice of the Lord, an association confirmed by the Trinitarian depiction of three bells and, to return briefly to the monastery's topography, by the dedication of the cliff top chapel to the Holy Trinity and the angels.<sup>23</sup>

But monastic bells did not only ring for funerals and feasts. They also structured monastic time, their tolling guiding the monks' movements through their daily routine. Important to note in this regard is the fundamentally cyclical nature of Christian religious time. The monastic year was a liturgical year, marked by the repetition of prayers, feast days, and commemorations of the living and the dead in a prescribed order. In adhering to a liturgical calendar and to the Benedictine Rule, the monks of the monastery of Elijah would have understood themselves as living in unison with their fellow monks, contemporary, past, and future, in their own community and across the Latin Christian world. In equating the divine voice that summoned Anastasius with the bells of 12th-century monastic rhythm, the painting supports the long view of monastic life, transforming linear lived time into cyclical Christian time, a message reiterated multiple times per day in the sound of the monastery's physical bells.<sup>24</sup>

The integration of sound and movement lies at the core of liturgical performance, and it is performance that is represented in the scene of Anastasius's funeral (figs. 7, 8). The saint lies on his bier, clad in a tunic and scapular, standard 12th-century monastic clothing.<sup>25</sup> At his head

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<sup>21</sup> Boynton, *Shaping a Monastic Identity*, 135–143.

<sup>22</sup> “Anastasi veni.” Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, I: 8.

<sup>23</sup> *Le pontifical romano-germanique du dixième siècle*, ed. Cyrille Vogel and Reinhard Elze, *Studi e testi*, no. 229 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1963) sec. 51, 185–190; *Le pontifical romain au moyen-âge*. I. *Le pontifical romain du XIIIe siècle*, ed. Michel Andrieu, *Studi e testi*, no. 86 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1938) Appendix, 6, 293–295.

<sup>24</sup> John Arnold and Caroline Goodson have recently argued that bells served to generate community; John H. Arnold and Caroline Goodson, “Resounding Community: The History and Meaning of Medieval Church Bells,” *Viator* 43, no. 1 (2012).

<sup>25</sup> The tunics are similar to one preserved in the textile collection at Castel Sant'Elia, though for compositional reasons the painters have taken liberty with their colors; *I paramenti liturgici*, 165. The blue-grey color of the

stands a tonsured figure dressed in chasuble and alb, who holds an open service book in his left hand and makes a blessing gesture with his right. Behind him are two figures clad in dalmatics, one holding aloft a golden processional cross. In these details, the fresco follows medieval protocol as described in a coeval manuscript from the nearby abbey of Farfa, in which a cross is used in the procession bearing the body into the church; a priest wearing an alb and stole stands next to the body, blessing it and reciting prayers; singers intone the *Kyrie* and responsories; and bells toll throughout the service.<sup>26</sup> On the one hand, such details would have served to make the event legible to 12th-century monastic viewers. On the other hand, nothing in Gregory’s text mandates depiction of a funeral—and certainly not of singers whose mouths are open, as if caught in the act.

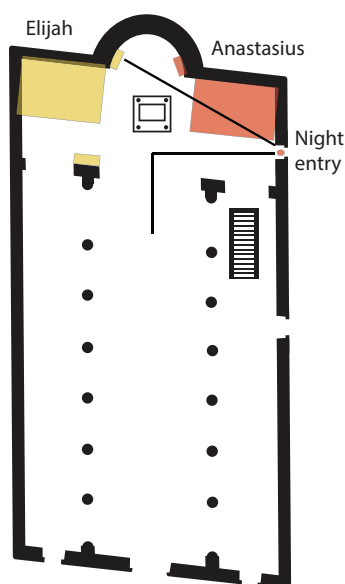


Fig. 17. Sant’Elia, plan, movement and sightlines in transept.  
(Diagram: author, over plan by Luke Matjas).

These artistic decisions make fuller sense if we examine the architectural and liturgical organization and functions of the south transept (figs. 6b, 12, 17). That the south transept was dedicated to Anastasius is indicated by the presence of the frescoed panel and adjacent altar as well as by the analogous recognition of the monastery’s titular saint, Elijah the prophet, in the north transept. The inclusion of Anastasius’s relics within the altar would have transformed it into his tomb, while the altar’s positioning in line with the crypt stairs pulled it into a vertical affiliation with this lower area of sacred death and burial. The crypt’s sacrality was made explicit in the inscription placed by the abbot Bovo over its entrance, which began, “God, the immense light, the light shining forth from the light.” This text gives verbal (and when read aloud, oral and auditory) form to the image of the doubled hand blessing Anastasius’s deceased brethren in the

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scapulars plausibly represents undyed wool, the use of which may have been linked to reforming ideals of a return to the early church; see Michel Pastoureaux, “L’église et la couleur des origines à la Réforme,” *Bibliothèque de l’École des chartes* 147 (1989): 222–225.

<sup>26</sup> Boynton, *Shaping a Monastic Identity*, 135–143.

frescoed panel.<sup>27</sup> The importance of this connection for the monastic community is indicated by the selection of the south, as opposed to the north, transept for Anastasius. A 12th-century door in the south transept today leads into the 16th-century sacristy, but it was originally the night entrance, leading from the dormitory directly into the transept and used at Matins, the liturgical office that marked the start of the liturgical day. Anastasius—the monastery’s former abbot—was thus commemorated in the part of the church closest to the residence of the current abbot and monks; they in turn would have had to pass by his tomb/altar every morning as they began their daily labors of liturgy and prayer.

Altar and image took on additional specific functions in two ritual contexts: the annual celebration of Anastasius’s feast-day, and the death and commemoration of contemporary abbots. As part of Anastasius’s commemoration, the relevant passages from the *Dialogues* and its epitome in the *De triumphis Christi* would have been read during the liturgy, the painting serving to gloss the text and sound and image coming together to connect past and present.<sup>28</sup> The commemorative ritual also included a full performance of the Office of the Dead. The open mouths and blessing hands in the image would thus have been duplicated by the open mouths and blessing hands of the 12th-century monks performing the funeral rituals. When brought into alignment with concepts of tangible sacrality and the cyclical nature of Christian time, the reenactment of Anastasius’s funeral in front of the image of his funeral over his tomb/altar can be understood as a way for the monastic community to constitute themselves effectively as Anastasius’s heirs and their current abbot as his direct successor. During an abbatial funeral, the overlap between hagiographical depiction and contemporary action would have functioned in an inverse manner as the deceased abbot was transformed into a new Anastasius and his monks into Anastasius’s brethren. Because monastic practice dictated the performance of funeral masses on the anniversaries of the deaths of historical as well as saintly abbots, these powerful expressions of communal history and identity would have been repeated at various times across the liturgical year, further cementing the monastery’s historical and transhistorical claims to sanctity.

The importance of these connections between the 12th-century monks and their 6th-century abbot is condensed in the fresco within the conch of the apse (figs. 5, 13). At center we find Christ, flanked by the princes of the apostles, Paul and Peter. At far right is a saint who has lost his label, but his location, directly in the line of sight of the deceased Anastasius lying on his bier, and his dress, a more brilliant version of Anastasius’s burial garb, confirm that he represents the 6th-century abbot. All stand together on a green, flower-strewn field watered by the four rivers of Paradise. Anastasius’s presence before Christ indicates that he is a conduit through which the monks’ prayers can reach the Lord, an assessment confirmed in the *Dialogues* by his ability to intercede on behalf of the monk who did not wish to be left behind. As a role model, his presence signals that if they follow the virtuous path trod by him and his brethren, the 12th-century monks might one day also enjoy the privilege of heaven. The multisensory memories of Anastasius in paint, in sound, in movement, and likely in his physical presence as relics within the altar, confirm the plausibility of this aspiration.

The case of Anastasius presents a complex system of repetition and replication, inherent within Christian thought and intended to offer pathways to salvation for those who participate.

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<sup>27</sup> Miglio, “Castel Sant’Elia,” 16–18 no. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Boynton, *Shaping a Monastic Identity*, 42–50; idem, “Orality, Literacy and the Early Notation of the Office Hymns,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 56, no. 1 (2003), 109–110; Thomas J. Heffernan, “The Liturgy and the Literature of Saints’ Lives,” in *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church*, ed. T. Heffernan and E. Ann Matter, 2nd ed. (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), 65–94.

Within this logic, the emulative is the authoritative: a local saint does not typically stand at the head of sacred tradition.<sup>29</sup> This message is also condensed within the apse, for opposite Anastasius, at the far left of the composition—and thus on Christ’s honorific right—stands the prophet Elijah, titular saint of the monastery and, according to medieval scriptural interpretation, the original monk.<sup>30</sup> Elijah’s pictorial presence raises the same issues as does Anastasius’s: the content and positioning of his images, and those images’ demands for active response.



Fig. 18. Sant’Elia, apse, detail, the prophet Elijah. (Photo: author).

As the monks processed into Sant’Elia early every morning at Matins, passing by the altar dedicated to Anastasius, the figure confronting them as they entered—indeed, calling out to them through the inscription at his feet—was that of Elijah within the apse (figs. 11, 17, 18). Beginning “Vos qui intratis, me primum respiciatis” [You who are entering, look upon me first], when viewed from the nave this inscription invites the viewer to engage visually with the apse composition as a whole. But when seen from the night entrance in the south transept, with the “me” just inside of the prophet’s left foot, the inscription reads as a command to look upon, and thus to recognize the importance of, Elijah at the start of every liturgical day.

<sup>29</sup> E.g., Maximilien Mähler, “Évocations bibliques et hagiographiques dans la vie de Saint Benoît par Saint Grégoire,” *Revue bénédictine* 83 (1973).

<sup>30</sup> E.g., Athanasius, “Life of Antony,” 7–8, in *Early Christian Lives*, ed. and trans. Carolinne White (London: Penguin Classics, 1998), 14; Jerome, *Epistolae*, “Epistola 58: Ad Paulinum,” *Patrologia Latina* 22, col. 583. Numerous commentators follow Jerome; see Perchuk, “In the Image of Elijah,” 164–176.



But who was this Elijah upon whom the monks were commanded to gaze, and who, as their titular saint, they would have been required to praise through an antiphon at Lauds every day?<sup>31</sup> As presented in the Books of Kings, Elijah was driven by his desire for God to separate himself from mankind and live a life of abstinence and prayer in the Sinai desert. In reward, he was granted direct communication with God, prophetic ability, and an end that did not include death but rather heavenly ascent.<sup>32</sup> He is mentioned in the New Testament as “a man passable like unto us,” and his emphatically human nature aided medieval theologians from Jerome forward who proposed Elijah as a monastic exemplar.<sup>33</sup> It is in this context, as a model for retreat and prayer and a sign of the possible rewards of an ascetic life, that he is presented at Sant’Elia. Elijah also forms an appropriate pendant to Anastasius in that both withdrew from the world, both experienced a theophany in the form of the divine voice, and both were rewarded by heavenly ascent. In the cyclical thought processes of medieval Christianity, Anastasius becomes a second Elijah, a chain of replication that carries forward to the 12th-century community.<sup>34</sup>

Elijah’s image at the north end of the apse and the presence of a later altar framed by three niches and surmounted by vestiges of 12th-century wall paintings, now reduced to illegible fragments of trees and architecture, suggest that the north transept would have been dedicated to the prophet (figs. 6a, 11). Opposite the altar on the east face of the transept pier is a rendering of Elijah’s departure from this world via ascent in his fiery chariot; this image is the source of this article’s other heuristic detail, the falling cloak and the hand outstretched to receive it (figs. 9, 10, 15). The episode depicted in this heavily damaged painting derives from 4 Kings 2:1–15, in which Elijah is taken up to heaven in sight of his disciple, Elisha. At the image’s left are two men dressed in the military garb that within the pictorial logic of Sant’Elia identifies Old Testament prophets. At lower right, three squiggly lines suggest the flowing water of the Jordan River, while at upper right, a fragmentary red circle conjoined to a salmon rectangle and a truncated green triangle can be identified as Elijah’s chariot and his falling mantle, respectively. This episode is the origin of the expression, “the passing of the mantle,” for it is Elijah’s mantle, left behind for Elisha, that both symbolizes and effects the passage of his prophetic legacy to Elisha and the other “sons of the prophets.” Elijah offers a new model of inheritance, one that is dependent not on blood relations as were most inheritances in the medieval world, but on association: he had chosen Elisha to be his disciple and selected him to receive the prophetic inheritance. Inheritance by association also governs monastic structure and authority. The depiction within the monastery’s church of Elijah’s ascent and the transmission of his power to

<sup>31</sup> On Elijah, see Henri Leclercq, “Élie. Élisée,” in *Dictionnaire d’archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, ed. Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1907–1953), vol. 4, part 2: 2670–2674; Gustave Bardy et al., *Élie le prophète. I, Selon les écritures et les traditions chrétiennes*, Les Études Carmélitaines (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1956); Robert A. Koch, “Elijah the Prophet, Founder of the Carmelite Order,” *Speculum* 34, no. 4 (1959); Roland E. Murphy and Cosmas Peters, “Élie (le prophète),” in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique: Doctrine et histoire*, ed. M. Viller et al., vol. 4, part 1 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1960); Tarcisio Stramare et al., “Elia, profeta,” in *Bibliotheca sanctorum*, ed. Filippo Caraffa and Giuseppe Morelli (Rome: Istituto Giovanni XXIII della Pontificia Università Lateranense, 1964); *Élie le prophète: Bible, tradition, iconographie. Colloque des 10 et 11 novembre 1985, Bruxelles*, ed. Gerard F. Willems (Leuven: Édition Peeters, 1988); Jane Ackerman, “Stories of Elijah and Medieval Carmelite Identity,” *History of Religions* 35, no. 2 (1995); Perchuk, “In the Image of Elijah,” 152–206.

<sup>32</sup> 3 Kings 17–21, 4 Kings 1–2.

<sup>33</sup> James 5:17–18, though see also Rom 11:1–6; Jerome, “Epistola 58: Ad Paulinum.”

<sup>34</sup> One of the most dramatic medieval examples of the *alter Heliae* motif is in a 9th-century sermon from Auxerre: Hericus of Auxerre, *Miracula S. Germani*, “Sermo ejusdem Herici, in solemnitate sancti Germani recitandus,” *Patrologia Latina* 124, cols. 1269–1272; Perchuk, “In the Image of Elijah,” 171–175.

Elisha makes visible the scriptural and conceptual basis for an identity that positions the monastery's community as following in the spiritual footsteps of Elijah and the literal ones of Anastasius.

This claim was solidified through liturgical performance. Monastic customaries prescribe the daily singing at Lauds of an antiphon to the community's primary saint. Elijah would have been commemorated more extensively on June 17, his feast-day in early medieval Italy.<sup>35</sup> He also played an important role during the month of July, when the Books of Kings were read aloud as part of the divine office.<sup>36</sup> Western liturgies for Elijah are rare, but an analysis of 12th-century central Italian service books enables identification of the chants that would have been sung as part of the reading of Kings and most likely as part of Elijah's annual feast-day liturgy.<sup>37</sup> The focus of all of the known chants was Elijah's heavenly ascent. Most of the chants are in the third person save for one, rooted in Elisha's exchange with Elijah prior to his ascent:

I [sc. Elisha] pray, O master, that your double spirit may be come into me; and he [sc. Elijah] [said] "If you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be as you ask."<sup>38</sup>

In this chant, the monks take on the voice of Elisha, requesting to be Elijah's heir; the fresco thus becomes an image of the fulfillment of their sung request: "If you see me [...]" Through the active details of the painted surface, the monks witnessed Elijah's ascent; through the chant, they celebrated their reward, the founding of their community in the name and spirit of Elijah.

This article has argued that specific concepts of communal history and monastic identity are woven through the images, architecture, and landscape of the monastery of Elijah. Taken alone, Sant'Elia's frescoes convey information regarding the sacred histories of the monastery's titular and local saints, information backed up by the dedication of altars to Elijah and Anastasius and by details of monastic topography. But placed into a multisensory context comprising speech, song, and music, movement and gesture, and even clothing, the frescoes become the visual catalyst for complex processes of recollection and emulation that support important aspects of the monastery's historical and spiritual claims. Specifically, they establish Elijah as a scriptural model for emulation by the monastic community; Elisha as testimony that spiritual inheritances are possible; and Anastasius as post-Biblical proof that not only is this process of emulative transformation possible, the monastery of Elijah is a privileged site for that transformation.

Earlier it was noted that we can learn much by considering Sant'Elia's frescoes as a whole, and so it seems appropriate to conclude by placing the images discussed into a wider context

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<sup>35</sup> BAV, S. Maria Maggiore 41 and 48, and Vat. lat. 4770, and Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana (henceforth, Val.) A 21 and B 63; discussed respectively by Victor Saxer, *Sainte-Marie-Majeure: une basilique de Rome dans l'histoire de la ville et de son église, Ve-XIIIe siècle*, Collection de l'École française de Rome, no. 283 (Rome: École française de Rome, 2001), 465, 670–671; B. Botte, "Le culte des saints de l'Ancien Testament dans l'Église chrétienne," *Cahiers sioniens* 3 (1950), 45, and idem, "Une fête du prophète Élie au VIe siècle en Gaule," *Cahiers sioniens* 3 (1950), 170; Jacob Carl Ledwon, "The Winter Office at Sant'Eutizio di Norcia: A Study of the Contents and Construction of Biblioteca Vallicelliana Manuscripts C 13 and C 5" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 1986), 111, 115–116, 145. See also Perchuk, "In the Image of Elijah," 156–158.

<sup>36</sup> Perchuk, "In the Image of Elijah," 177–179.

<sup>37</sup> Only one festal mass for Elijah is known in the medieval Latin west, from 7th-century Auxerre; Botte, "Une fête du prophète Élie."

<sup>38</sup> "Oro domine ut fiat spiritus tuus duplex in me at ille si videris quando tollar a te erit quod petisti," Val. C 5, f. 185r 03 = *Corpus Antiphonarium Officii*, ed. René-Jean Hesbert, 6 vols. (Rome: Herder, 1963–1979), 6713a; cf. 4 Kings 2:9–10.

with respect to the church's architecture and audience. So far, these images have been addressed from the perspective of a monastic audience, which is appropriate in an article that examines the role of images in establishing corporate identity. From the nave, however, the paintings appear in a quite different structure (figs. 5, 19). Evidence suggests that the monks did share their church with a local lay community.<sup>39</sup> These individuals, as well as any pilgrims or passers-by, would have been permitted into Sant'Elia's nave, but not into its transept. From this vantage point, they would have been able to see the Eucharistic sequence of the Christ Child on the Virgin's lap behind the altar, guarded by archangels and venerated by female saints; the *Agnus Dei* above, bleeding into a chalice of the type carried by the elders of the Apocalypse; and the result of this sacrifice, the ascending and returning Redeemer, flanked by those charged to bring his message to Gentiles and Jews alike, St Paul and St Peter. The presence of Elijah and Anastasius in heaven with Christ and the princes of the apostles offered visual testimony to their sanctity and to the efficacy of their prayers, and thus of prayers to them. Visitors in the nave would also have had access to the scenes from the death of Anastasius over the south transept altar and any parallel scenes concerning Elijah over the altar at the north. These images would have represented, and perhaps educated visitors in, the monastery's own local and spiritual history.



Fig. 19. Sant'Elia, composite view of transept paintings visible from within the nave. (Photos: author).

Visitors would not, however, have been able to see the fundamental moment of Elisha's inheritance that set in motion monastic life (figs. 6b, 10, 15); nor would they have been able to see the figures of more than a dozen other Old Testament figures ringing the upper transept, holding unfurled scrolls containing admonitions concerning virtuous modes of living, guarantees of punishment for disobedience, and blessings for the sons of Israel (figs. 11, 12, 20).<sup>40</sup> Basic Christian doctrine and general knowledge of the sacrality of the monastery of Elijah were available for all to see, and for all to experience through the liturgy of the Eucharist. But

<sup>39</sup> See n. 4, above.

<sup>40</sup> E.g., the scroll held by the prophet Samuel contains the words italicized in the following passage, readily construed as a reference to monastic obedience: "And Samuel said: Doth the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord should be obeyed? *For obedience is better than sacrifices: and to hearken rather than to offer the fat of rams*" (1 Kings 15:22); Perchuk, "In the Image of Elijah," 187–193.

instructions in monastic virtue, the monastery's legacy of spiritual inheritance and heavenly ascent, and the possibility of physical movement through the Anastasian landscape? Those were reserved for the eyes, ears, and bodies of the monastic community alone.



Fig. 20. Sant'Elia, south transept, detail, prophets labeled Amos and Jonah. (Photo: author).

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