

# UC Santa Barbara

## UC Santa Barbara Electronic Theses and Dissertations

### Title

Rewriting Radegund of Poitiers: Shifting Models of Women's Sanctity and Gender Expectations from the Merovingian Era to the Twenty-first Century

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/857672k6>

### Author

Rudolph, Anna Katharina

### Publication Date

2022

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
Santa Barbara

Rewriting Radegund of Poitiers:  
Shifting Models of Women's Sanctity and Gender Expectations from the Merovingian Era to  
the Twenty-first Century

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in History

by

Anna Katharina Rudolph

Committee in charge:

Professor Sharon Farmer, Chair

Professor Carol Lansing

Professor Elizabeth DePalma Digeser

Professor Jarett Henderson

September 2022

The dissertation of Anna Katharina Rudolph is approved.

---

Carol Lansing

---

Elizabeth DePalma Digeser

---

Jarett Henderson

---

Sharon Farmer, Committee Chair

July 2022

Rewriting Radegund of Poitiers:  
Shifting Models of Women's Sanctity and Gender Expectations from the Merovingian Era to  
the Twenty-first Century

Copyright © 2022

by

Anna Katharina Rudolph

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is with the greatest pleasure that I express my heartfelt gratitude to my mentors, friends, family, and colleagues whose support and guidance have made this project possible.

I am deeply indebted to my advisor, Sharon Farmer, who introduced me to Radegund on my first visit to UCSB. Her mentorship, her patience, and her uncanny ability to find the perfect words to solve any historical or organizational problem has been truly instrumental in my development as a researcher and scholar of Medieval History. Her encouragement of my academic curiosity and her willingness to support the ever-widening chronological scope of my dissertation as we discovered new *Lives of Radegund* together has truly made this project possible. She has been an incredible inspiration to me and I am so fortunate to have been one of her last students.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to the other members of my committee who have helped me on this journey. Carol Lansing's fearless leadership of numerous historiography and research seminars has been so crucial in developing this dissertation and in my growth as a historian. I am so thankful to Beth Digeser whose thought-provoking questions always helped me see my work from new and interesting perspectives. But most importantly, she taught me how to write a book review and her engaging pedagogical strategies shaped my identity as a teacher. Jarett Henderson's enthusiastic generosity with his time, his advice, and his friendship has been so valuable. The concepts I learned in his course on gender and colonialism inspired my seventh chapter and the crucial feedback I received from him and from Brad Bouley helped me find the key to telling the story of Radegund's cult in the nineteenth century. I would like to give a special thanks to Ed English for his advice on Latin translations, for his indispensable paleography course, and for the incredible way we always seemed to find ourselves in animated conversations about saints' cults. Also, a special thanks Hilary Bernstein for her expertise on Poitiers and the many hours she devoted to my understanding of Early Modern France, to Deborah Blumenthal for her research seminar and Medieval Mediterranean historiography course, and to all my fellow graduate students in our many research seminars who became intimately acquainted with Radegund whether they wanted to or not, and always gave me excellent feedback.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the Council for European Studies. My receipt of the Mellon-CES Dissertation Completion Fellowship allowed me to devote the 2021-2022 academic school year entirely to writing and continued research. The History Associates Fellowship from UC Santa Barbara enabled me to spend a month visiting archives in France and Germany to track down manuscripts of Radegund's *vitae*. It was on this trip that I was finally able to "meet" Radegund in the crypt of the Église Sainte-Radegonde in Poitiers and to travel like a pilgrim around the French countryside documenting her cult sites. The kindness and enthusiasm I encountered from archivists, librarians, tour guides, and historically-minded citizens made this one of my greatest adventures. Thank you to the mayor's assistant who handed me the key to the twelfth-century Church of Sainte-Radegonde at Saix when it was closed for the day. Thank you to the conservationist of the Bibliothèque Municipale de Poitiers who generously allowed

me to handle his city's most treasured artifact, BMP 250. Thank you to Claire Portiers of the Maison du Patrimoine of Chinon who heard I was researching Radegund and offered me a private tour of the cave-chapel even though public tours were not being offered at the time. And thank you to the townspeople of Sainte-Radegonde-des-Pommieres who mercifully did not chase me out of their fields as I searched for the Étoiles de Sainte Radegonde.

The staff of the Davidson Library, and especially the Inter-Library loan department, make all of our scholarship at UCSB possible. I am indebted to their expertise and dedication for filling my book requests and, when possible, scanning materials that fueled my research remotely.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank my many early mentors who supported the very beginnings of my academic journey. Michelle Salzman of the History Department at UC Riverside ignited my interest in the history of Late Antique women and I received my first exposure to medieval French in the courses of the late Theda Shapiro of the UC Riverside French Department. I am grateful for my time in the UC Davis Classics Baccalaureate program where I had the great pleasure of studying under the guidance of Emily Albu, who fostered my interest in medieval nuns and set me on the path of Medieval Women's History.

And lastly, I would like to thank my dearest friend and husband, Sean Piers, whose encouragement, support, and confidence in me over the last seventeen years has sustained my personal and professional growth. His engaging conversations and careful editing of nearly every piece of this text has made him, too, an expert in the life and afterlife of Radegund.

#### §

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the Dr. Rudolphs in my life – my father, Dr. Conrad Rudolph, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Medieval Art History at the University of California, Riverside; my aunt, Dr. Deborah Rudolph, Curator of Rare Books and Special Collections at the C.V. Starr East Asian Library at the University of California, Berkeley; and my grandfather, the late Dr. Richard C. Rudolph, Professor of Chinese Literature and Archaeology at the University of California, Los Angeles.

To my father – mentor, friend, and greatest inspiration. Thank you for instilling in me a passion for history, a love of all things ancient and medieval, and for raising me in a household where it is considered perfectly normal to pursue a career in the study of medieval saints. You have shaped me into the person I am today. I am immensely grateful for your unwavering support, your thoughtful advice, and the many hours you have devoted to discussing our favorite Merovingian queen-saint.

#### Postscript:

I feel that I must also take the opportunity to thank Radegund, who, over the course of these seven years, has been a silent presence and muse.

# Anna Katharina Rudolph

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY | UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA  
anna.katharina.rudolph@gmail.com | (951) 905-0337

## EDUCATION

---

- 2022            Ph.D. in History, University of California, Santa Barbara
- 2017            M.A. in History, University of California, Santa Barbara
- 2015            Post Baccalaureat Certificate in Classics, University of California, Davis
- 2011            B.A. in History and in French, Summa Cum Laude, University of California  
Riverside.

## HONORS, GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS

---

- 2021            Andrew W. Mellon - Council for European Studies Dissertation  
Fellowship
- 2021            Robert L. Kelley Scholarship in Public History
- 2017            History Associates Fellowship

## PUBLICATIONS

---

- 2021            Review of *Superior Women: Medieval Female Authority in Poitiers' Abbey of  
Sainte-Croix* by Jennifer Edwards, *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and  
Renaissance Studies* 52 (2021): 251-254.
- 2020            "Biographical Sketch of Virginia 'Jennie' Catlin Arnott." In *Online  
Biographical Dictionary of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the United  
States*, edited by Thomas Dublin, Kathryn Kish Sklar and Alexander Street.
- 2014            "Ego Clamor Validus Gandeshemensis, Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim: Her  
Sources, Motives, and Historical Context." *Magistra: A Journal of Women's  
Spirituality in History* 20, No. 2 (Winter 2014): 58-90.

## CONFERENCE ACTIVITY & PARTICIPATION

---

- 2022 “Sacred Environments: Politicizing the Relic Landscape and National Pilgrimage in Post-Revolutionary France.” Council For European Studies International Conference of Europeanists. “The Environment of Democracy.” Instituto Universitário de Lisboa. Lisbon, Portugal. June 20.
- 2021 Panel Organizer & Presenter. ““Reform Hagiography” in the Twelfth Century: Redefining Female Sanctity in the Gregorian Reform Era,” *Appropriation and Reimagination: New Models of Female Sanctity and Devotion in Medieval Europe*. International Congress on Medieval Studies. Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo. May 10-15.
- 2021 Invited Presentation. “Women in the Middle Ages.” Santa Barbara Junior High School. February 4 & April 15.
- 2020 Invited Presentation. “Queen Radegund and the Monarchy in Medieval Europe.” Series on European Royalty. Karpeles Manuscript Library and Museum. Feb 8.
- 2019 “A Frankish Saint in England: Rewriting Radegund for the Sixteenth Century.” Sewanee Medieval Colloquium. April 13.
- 2018 Conference Organizer. Annual Medieval Studies Program Conference: “The Politics of Pleasure: Social Networking in the Middle Ages.” UC Santa Barbara. May 5.
- 2018 “Putting Radegund on the Map: Lay Reinterpretations of Saint Radegund by the French Ruling Elite and the Expansion of Her Cult in the Fifteenth Century.” Western Association of Women Historians. April 28.
- 2017 Guest Lecturer. “The Social Conditions of the Witch Craze: Why Women?” Prof. Carol Lansing’s HIST 4B “Europe 1000-1715.” UC Santa Barbara History Department. March 9.
- 2016 “Constructing the Beata Regina of Sainte-Croix.” Annual Medieval Studies Program Conference. “Gender & Religious Practice in the Middle Ages.” UC Santa Barbara History Department. May 7.
- 2012 Guest Lecturer for Prof. Christine Duvergé’s FREN 109A “Medieval and Renaissance Literature.” UC Riverside French Department. January 9, February 6, and February 13.
- 2012 “Laughing in the Face of Fear: Differing Medieval Perceptions on the Presentation of the Torments of Hell.” UC Santa Barbara History Department. Graduate Student Conference, “Fear and Loathing in the Middle Ages.” April 28.



## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

---

2018 - 2021	University of California, Santa Barbara, Writing Program <i>Instructor: Academic Writing</i>
Spring 2016, S'17, S'18	University of California, Santa Barbara, History <i>Teaching Assistant: Western Civilization: 1715-Present</i>
Winter 2016, W'17, W'18	University of California, Santa Barbara, History <i>Teaching Assistant: Western Civilization: 1000-1750</i>
Fall 2016, Fall 2017	University of California, Santa Barbara, History <i>Teaching Assistant: World History: Prehistory-1000 CE</i>
Fall 2015	University of California, Santa Barbara, History <i>Teaching Assistant: Medieval Scandals</i>

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

---

2021-2022	Editorial Fellow, <i>Europe Now: Journal of Research and Art</i>
2021-2022	Project Coordinator, California State Parks UCSB History and Relevancy Program.
2019	Research Associate, California State Parks UCSB History and Relevancy Program. "Administrative History of La Purisima Mission in Lompoc, California."

---

## ABSTRACT

### Rewriting Radegund of Poitiers: Shifting Models of Women's Sanctity and Gender Expectations from the Merovingian Era to the Twenty-first Century

by Anna Katharina Rudolph

This project explores the life and “afterlife” of Radegund, a Merovingian queen, monastic leader, and saint, through almost a millennium and a half of history from the sixth century to the twenty-first. By focusing on specific consolidating moments in the development of Radegund's cult throughout Europe, this study offers a historically critical perspective on the appropriation and reinterpretation of a figure whose versatility ensured her lasting relevance as an important symbol suited to a myriad of political, theological, and social agendas.

After her death on August 13, 587, Radegund became the object of a popular cult in Poitiers, which gradually expanded throughout the French- and German- speaking regions of Europe, into Sicily, across the channel into England, and even into France's colonial possessions. As her cult became a global phenomenon, the two original sixth-century Merovingian biographies composed by individuals who personally knew her soon became the basis for new interpretations of Radegund in various social, religious, political, and geographic contexts. Throughout fourteen centuries, Radegund was "rewritten" by dozens of authors, artists, and devotees who used this figure as a vehicle to promote their different messages, concerns, and interests. Over the course of her afterlife, many different “Radegunds” were created and recreated that often projected contradictory meanings: she was envisioned as a stalwart virgin and an accommodating wife, a royalist rallying point and a republican national treasure, an accomplished queen and a self-effacing recluse, a healer

that employed both medicine and miracles, a protectress of the harvest, of cities, and of the nation, a victim and a heroine, to name just a few. My research considers how her various identities shaped and were shaped by shifting needs on both the individual and communal level, by gradual structural changes and transformative events.

My analysis of the Radegundian texts, art, and traditions covered in this study relies on methodologies derived from gender studies, global studies, and recent theories from memory studies and the reception of the Middle Ages. While most scholarship on Radegund is typically limited to an analysis of her two sixth-century biographies, my project is the first to feature post-medieval sources and cultic practices. Most of these sources, which range from Latin and vernacular *vitae* to monumental artistic programs to accounts of propitiating Radegund with packets of oats in rural French towns, have never been addressed in scholarship before or have never been discussed in terms of gender and their relation to women's history. In this innovative study, I use Radegund's afterlife as a case study for exploring the fluctuating dynamics of the cult of the saints and to better understand how these forces operated in relation to women's history. Gender and the role of women are central considerations as I trace the themes of changing expectations and behavior for women both inside and outside the convent, conventions of elite and royal women's spirituality, as well as attitudes towards marriage and sexuality. My research makes a unique and valuable contribution to scholarship on Radegund, the cult of the saints, and the history of women's spirituality by incorporating a considerably wider scope and type of sources than has hitherto been attempted. Ultimately, by tracing and analyzing the development of Radegund's cult in this way, *Rewriting Radegund* contributes to a greater understanding of the roles saints have played – and continue to play – at the intersection of gender and politics.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction:</b> .....	<b>1</b>
The Life and Afterlife of Radegund of Poitiers	
<b>Chapter 1</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<i>From Runaway Wife to Sainted Queen:</i>	
Constructing a Model of Saintly Queenship in Merovingian Gaul	
<b>Chapter 2</b> .....	<b>114</b>
<i>Nun and Reformer:</i>	
Poitiers, Hildebert, and New Institutional Identities for Women in Authority in the Twelfth Century	
<b>Chapter 3</b> .....	<b>163</b>
<i>Dynastic Saint and Cultural Artifact:</i>	
Radegund and Claims of Dynastic Continuity in Norman Sicily and Anglo-Norman England in the Twelfth Century	
<b>Chapter 4</b> .....	<b>194</b>
<i>Pilgrim, Grain Goddess, and French Royal Patroness:</i>	
The Expansion of Radegund’s Popular Cult Throughout France in the Twelfth Through Fifteenth Centuries	
<b>Chapter 5</b> .....	<b>230</b>
<i>Perfect Wife or Virginal Abbess? :</i>	
The Vernacular Radegund as a Model of Sanctity for Elite Women in Sixteenth-Century France and England	
<b>Chapter 6</b> .....	<b>276</b>
<i>Soldier of Christ and Model for Women's Tridentine Spirituality:</i>	
Radegund at the Intersection of Hagiography, Memory, and History in Post-Reformation France	
<b>Chapter 7</b> .....	<b>338</b>
<i>Royalist, Republican, and Colonizer:</i>	
‘La Mission Civilisatrice,’ Nationalism, and French Identities from the Revolution to World War I	
<b>Epilogue: Radegund Today</b> .....	<b>425</b>
<b>Conclusion:</b> .....	<b>434</b>
Rewriting History, Hagiography, and the Myth of the French Nation	
<b>Appendix</b> .....	<b>447</b>
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>455</b>

## Introduction

### **The Life and Afterlife of Radegund of Poitiers**

Radegund, sainted queen of the Frankish Kingdom and foundress of the convent of Sainte-Croix in Poitiers, is the most well-documented woman of the Merovingian era. The earliest comprehensive accounts of her life are the two distinctive and sometimes contradictory *vitae Radegundis*. These were composed around the year 600 by the renowned Italian poet, Venantius Fortunatus, and a nearly anonymous nun of Sainte-Croix, Baudonivia. Passages concerning Radegund's life also appear scattered throughout Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks* and *Glory of the Confessors*. Numerous letters written by and to Radegund have survived, together with poems composed in her honor by Fortunatus. Additionally, some scholars are now reconsidering several longer poems written from Radegund's perspective and traditionally attributed to Fortunatus as the work of Radegund herself.<sup>1</sup>

After her death in 587, Radegund became the object of a popular cult, which started out in the French town of Poitiers, then gradually expanded throughout the French- and German- speaking regions of Europe, across the channel into England, and even into France's colonial possessions. There are currently ninety-seven extant churches and chapels

---

<sup>1</sup> See Jo Ann McNamara's discussion of Radegund's authorship in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, ed. Jo Ann McNamara, John E. Halborg, E. Gordon Whatley (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992), 65. While some authors attribute three Latin verse epistles addressed to Emperor Justin II and Empress Sophia, Radegund's cousin Hamalafred, and Radegund's nephew Artachis as the work of Fortunatus without question, many scholars embrace Radegund as the author. Charles Nisard, editor of Fortunatus' *Opera Poetica* (1887) suggests that Radegund wrote all or part of the letters. Marcelle Thiebaux includes the letter to Hamalafred as Radegund's own composition in *The Writings of Medieval Women* (New York: Garland, 1987). Karen Cherevatuk discusses all three poems in "Radegund and Epistolary Tradition" in *Dear Sister: Medieval Women and the Epistolary Genre* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993) as expressions of Radegund's own (female) voice. McNamara cites Radegund's letter transcribed by Gregory of Tours in his *History of the Franks* 9:42 and Fortunatus' description of her learning and skill in poetry as evidence for her literary competence.

dedicated to Radegund in France and twelve in England. Approximately half of these are known to have been founded before the year 1300. As her cult became an international – and then a global – phenomenon, the two sixth-century hagiographical accounts were typically copied together as “Book 1” and “Book 2,” respectively, and they soon became the basis for numerous textual and artistic reinterpretations of Radegund in various social, religious, political, and geographic contexts.

This project traces the cult of this sixth-century queen-saint through over fourteen-hundred years of history from the end of the sixth century, through the Middle Ages, into the Early Modern period, and up to the twenty-first century. I argue that Radegund’s extraordinary resiliency over the centuries was fueled by her constructed persona’s unique capacity to embody multiple meanings and identities simultaneously. The production and pairing together of two distinct images of Radegund by her sixth-century hagiographers ensured her lasting versatility as a symbol suited to an astonishing range of political, theological, and social agendas. The unusual circumstances surrounding the production of these two disparate *vitae* set in motion a habitual practice of rewriting Radegund that would endure for over a millennium. Over the last fourteen centuries, more than a dozen full-length *vitae* have appeared that expand on, embellish, adapt, and change details of the original sixth-century *vitae*. These authors recognized Radegund’s versatility and capitalized on it as a vehicle for their own messages, interests, and concerns. This versatility is similarly reflected in centuries of artistic depictions of Radegund that often project contradictory messages. And lastly, the diversity of Radegund’s cultic expressions conveys vital information about local concerns as individual communities developed their own identities for Radegund.

### *The Cult of the Saints and Approaches to the Study of Saint Radegund*

Tracing the social, religious, and political expressions of the cult of Radegund over such an extended period of history fits into the relatively new category of historical scholarship that considers the "afterlife" of saints over the *longue durée*. Dismissed as the superstitious vagaries of the masses, "popular religion" and the cult of the saints did not receive serious academic attention until Peter Brown led the way with his 1981 *The Cult of the Saints*. As Brown observes in the preface to the newest edition of this pioneering study, the lives of the saints had been diligently researched by the Bollandists and early Church Fathers, but recent scholars have made only the most minimal efforts to produce analytical studies that situate the cult of the saints within their larger social context.<sup>2</sup> Raymond Van Dam's *Saints and Their Miracles In Late Antique Gaul* (1985), heavily influenced by Brown's *The Cult of the Saints*, continues in a similar vein by investigating the function and meaning of the saints' cults that populated the world of Gregory of Tours. Van Dam navigates the political, religious, and social meanings of the fifth- and sixth-century cults of Martin of Tours, Julian of Brioude, Hilary of Poitiers and other local saints of central and northern Gaul. Brown and Van Dam popularized the critical historical analysis of the cult of the saints, and since then, the field has expanded considerably to incorporate greater geographic and chronological range as well as attention to gender and social class. Beginning in the 1990s, scholars no longer had to justify their analysis of hagiography as a legitimate historical pursuit.

The normalization and appreciation of this topic as a valuable source for social, political, and gender history is thanks to the work of scholars like Moshe Sluhovksy,

---

<sup>2</sup> Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 2015), xiv.

Matthew Kuefler, Sharon Farmer, Jonathan Good, Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, and Kenneth Baxter Wolf. Some of these recent studies trace the development of a single saint's cult over several centuries to consider the changing needs, expectations, and realities that contribute to the ways the saint is remembered, depicted, venerated, and (re)interpreted. For example, Sluhovsky's *Patroness of Paris* analyzes the meanings and cultural expressions of the public cult of Sainte Geneviève in Paris from the twelfth century until its temporary decline during the French Revolution. Sainte Geneviève was a cultural symbol that the people of Paris appropriated, negotiated, and used according to specific communal traditions and assumptions. Sluhovsky's method is shaped by the sociologist Pierre Delooz' theory of sanctity as dependent on communal memory. As Delooz famously argues, "All saints are more or less constructed in that, being necessarily saints for other people, they are remodeled in the collective representation which is made of them."<sup>3</sup> With each rewriting of a saint's *vita*, details typically changed according to new memories and they could also be influenced by the author's own agenda, changing political and social conditions, and the needs of the community for which or by which the text was produced. Though Sluhovsky briefly notes the intersection of Geneviève's reconception as a warrior shepherdess with the influence of Joan of Arc, anxieties about "female militancy" during the reigns of powerful female regents in the fifteenth century, and the "cultural fascination with the Amazons" in the sixteenth century, gender and the role of women are not the focus of his investigation of this female saint's afterlife.<sup>4</sup> In *The Making and Unmaking of a Saint*, Kuefler follows the cult of Saint Gerald for one thousand years from the ninth to nineteenth centuries and reflects on how

---

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Delooz, "Pour une étude sociologique de la sainteté canonisée dans l'Eglise catholique," *Archives de Sociologie des religions* 13 (1962): 23.

<sup>4</sup> Moshe Sluhovsky, *Patroness of Paris: Rituals of Devotion in Early Modern France* (Koninklijke Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands, 1998), 50-51.



Gerald's image was created and recreated through hagiography. He focuses on the role that the writing and rewriting of hagiography plays in the production of communal identity. His method places the hagiographer at the center of his study as the integral force behind the shaping of Gerald's memory. This is somewhat problematic because, according to Kuefler, the rewritten saint's life becomes almost autobiographical as the identity of the community and hagiographer themselves is interwoven with the story of the saint. Even though Kuefler tends to exaggerate this concept, this is nonetheless a useful approach to the intersection of hagiography, memory, and identity. Good's *The Cult of Saint George in Medieval England* is a detailed study that traces the origins of George's cult in England and of the different identities that he came to embody for those who venerated him. Good considers why George was appropriated as England's patron saint in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He explores both royal and popular manifestations of devotion to George which adds to our understanding of the varied dynamics and functions of saints' cults among people of differing social status. A major theme in this study is the emergence of nationalism in the Middle Ages and how George's status as a national patron saint contributed to this, which is a contentious subject in medieval scholarship.

Other studies offer useful models for considering the multiple agendas driving the production of textual traditions associated with a particular saint. Farmer's study of Saint Martin's afterlife explores the shaping of four distinct and yet sometimes overlapping "communities of Saint Martin" in Tours from the mid-eleventh- to mid-twelfth- century: the clergy of the cathedral of Tours, the Benedictine monks of the abbey of Marmoutier, the secular canons at the Basilica of Saint-Martin, and Chateaufort, the suburb that developed around the basilica. Farmer focuses mostly on Marmoutier and Saint-Martin as she examines

the specific ways that the canons and monks used the cult of Saint Martin to promote their interests using different strategies, including the invention of new customs and traditions that were then accompanied by new rituals, feasts, and texts. Farmer's most significant contribution is her dissection of how these cultic innovations reflected the monastic communities' changing needs and expectations as they responded to larger societal changes. This research contributed to a growing trend in medieval scholarship on the cult of the saints that contextualized the particular functions saints served for a particular community at a particular historical moment. Farmer's assertion that "The cult of Saint Martin did not simply mean one thing, rather, it lent itself to varying uses and interpretations," is particularly applicable to Radegund's case. In *Writing Faith* Ashley and Sheingorn analyze an eleventh-century compilation of miracles attributed to the intervention of Sainte Foy, patron of the monastery of Conques. Their method is shaped by Felice Lifshitz' theory that every version of a hagiographic text is a rhetorical construction that serves historical purposes, so that no redaction was more authentic than another. All authors of hagiographic texts "write faith" in that they construct and reconstruct saints' lives and miracles for believers. They created portraits of Sainte Foy out of materials in their cultural milieu that responded to specific, often local, needs and agendas.

While my proposed study follows a similar trajectory to those of the published works mentioned above, it also makes a unique contribution to the field in multiple ways. Despite the wealth of sources and their accessibility, no scholarship has engaged in an in-depth study of Radegund's cult of this scope, nor have scholars attempted to analyze the gendered implications of her post-medieval cult. The majority of Radegund scholarship is limited to analyses of the sixth-century *vitae Radegundis* by Fortunatus and Baudonivia, and,

occasionally, to developments in her medieval cult in Poitiers. Treatment of Radegund's original two Latin *Lives* accounts for a remarkable quantity of articles, such as Ruth Wehlau's "Literal and Symbolic: The Language of Asceticism in Two Lives of St Radegund" (2002), Georges Pon's "Un corps martyrisé. L'exemple de sainte Radegonde" (2011), Jean Leclercq's "La sainte Radegonde de Venance Fortunat et celle de Baudovinie : Essai d'hagiographie comparée" (1989), Jason Glenn's "Two Lives of Saint Radegund" (2011), Sabine Gäbe's "Radegundis : sancta, regina, ancilla. Zum Heiligkeitsideal der Radegundisviten von Fortunat und Baudonivia" (1989), F. E. Consolino's "Due agiografi per una regina: Radegonda di Turingia tra Fortunato e Baudonivia" (1988), Simon Coates' "Regendering Radegund? Fortunatus, Baudonivia and the problem of female sanctity in Merovingian Gaul" (1998). Nearly all of these studies seek to explain why the *vitae* composed by Fortunatus and Baudonivia are so drastically different. Some scholars take a literary approach to the texts as they consider the genre conventions of saints' lives and the authors' tendency to follow or break away from hagiographic *topoi*. Most use gender and the role of women as their analytical framework, focusing either on the ways the authors' gender might have influenced their portrayal of Radegund or what pressures different models of female sanctity might have exerted on Radegund and/or her hagiographers. Explanations of the *Lives*' disparities often point towards the hagiographers' belief that Radegund needed to overcome the negative qualities of her biological sex, her marriage, or her social class, which caused them to highlight or minimize certain details of Radegund's life over others.

Some of the most detailed historical work on Radegund and her foundations is also the most lacking in critical analysis. Robert Favreau has dominated French scholarship on medieval Poitiers and the cult of Radegund since at least the 1970s. His numerous articles,

essays, and monographs are meticulously researched and incorporate a nearly exhaustive range of Radegund's medieval sources. Favreau's strength lies in his ability to collect and organize names, dates, facts, and sources into encyclopedic-like articles and short books. His work contains little analysis, but offer an excellent foundation for scholars interested in delving deeper into larger historical issues.<sup>5</sup> *Histoire de l'abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers: quatorze siècles de vie monastique* remains the most comprehensive study of Radegund's Abbey of Sainte-Croix. Published in Poitiers by the Société des antiquaires de l'Ouest in 1986, this exceptional edited volume that covers the Abbey's history from its sixth-century origins to the late twentieth century comprises work by Robert Favreau and other scholars of Poitevin history, including pieces written by the nuns of Sainte-Croix themselves.<sup>6</sup> However, much like Favreau's work, the essays of *Histoire de l'abbaye Sainte-Croix* prioritize the documentation of historic details over analysis and interpretation. This makes them a crucial starting point for scholars seeking to situate the history of Radegund, her cult, and her institutions within broader social, cultural, religious, and political contexts and to relate them to larger scholarly conversations. Jo Ann McNamara's *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (1992) remains the standard English translation of Fortunatus and Baudonivia's *Lives of Radegund*, as well as the epic poem, *The Thuringian War*. Jennifer Edwards' recent *Superior Women: Medieval Female Authority in Poitiers' Abbey of Sainte-Croix* (2019) is the first book-length analytical study of Radegund's institutions. Much like Farmer's *Communities of*

---

<sup>5</sup> Robert Favreau, "Le culte de sainte Radegonde à Poitiers au Moyen Age," *Les religieuses dans le cloître et dans le monde des origines à nos jours: Actes du deuxième colloque international du C.E.R.C.O.R.*, Poitiers, 29 septembre-2 octobre 1988 (Saint-Etienne : Publications de l'Université de Saint Etienne, 1994), 91-110 ; "Manuscrits poitevins des vies de sainte Radegonde." *Revue Historique Du Centre-Ouest / Société Des Antiquaires De L'Ouest* Vol. 5 Iss. 2 (2006): 337-339.

<sup>6</sup> Yvonne Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de l'abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers: quatorze siècles de vie monastique*, ed. Edmond-René Labande (Poitiers: Société des antiquaires de l'Ouest, 1986).

*Saint Martin*, Edwards' examination of the centuries-long controversy between the canons of the Church of Sainte-Radegonde and the nuns of the Abbey of Sainte-Croix highlights the strategies the abbesses relied on to maintain authority and mitigate conflict with their dependents and local officials.

The wealth of devotional art produced by individual devotees and Radegund's institutions has inspired numerous art-historical studies that investigate the historical contexts of objects intimately connected with Radegund and her cult. Magdalena Carrasco's article, "Spirituality in Context: The Romanesque Illustrated Life of St. Radegund of Poitiers" (1990), explores the circumstances in Poitiers surrounding the production of a twelfth-century *libellus* containing the first illustrated copy of Radegund's sixth-century *vita*. The edited volume, *La vie de Sainte Radegonde par Fortunat : Poitiers, Bibliothèque municipale, manuscrit 250 (136)*, produced under Robert Favreau's direction in 1995, offered scholars a nearly complete color facsimile of the *libellus* and provided the standard French translation of Fortunatus' *Life of Radegund* for decades until the Bibliothèque municipale de Poitiers digitized the manuscript and made it accessible on their website. While Carrasco's article offers greater analytical depth and engages with issues of women's gendered spirituality, Favreau's volume nonetheless provides great historical breadth with six articles that cover the history of the Church of Sainte-Radegonde, the history of its canonical chapter, and a full paleographical and codicological analysis of the manuscript text and illustrations. Cynthia Hahn's "Collector and saint: Queen Radegund and devotion to the relic of the True Cross" (2012) is the most detailed study of the Abbey of Sainte-Croix' most precious treasure, the eponymous relic of the Holy Cross sent to Radegund from Constantinople by the Emperor Justin II. Meredith Parsons Lillich analyzes scenes from the medieval stained glass at the

church of Sainte-Radegonde in *The Armor (Armour) of Light: Stained Glass in Western France 1250-1325* and Veronique P. Day's article, "Recycling Radegund: Identity and ambition in the Breviary of Anne de Prye," considers Radegund as a role model in the fifteenth century for Anne de Prye, the abbess of La Trinité in Poitiers, by analyzing the scenes of Radegund's life that appear in her breviary. These studies all offer valuable interpretations of devotional art related to Radegund's cult, though none of them situates their subjects within the larger history of Radegund's afterlife.

Recent advancements in the study of the global Middle Ages have established the feasibility and benefits of widening traditional chronological and geographic scopes. This dissertation offers the most global outlook possible by tracing the cult of Radegund across borders and through multiple languages to provide a truly global look at the spread of this cultural, political, religious, and social phenomenon. No previous study of Radegund or a single saint's cult has been able to provide such an in-depth analytical comparison. I follow the proliferation of Radegund's cult beyond the walls of Poitiers, throughout France, into England, Sicily, and even into France's colonial possessions of Algeria and the Northern Congo. This dissertation also applies some of the more recent theories from memory studies and the reception of the Middle Ages to produce a more comprehensive analysis.

Methodology from both of these areas is crucial for understanding the relationship between the "historical" Radegund as first constructed by her sixth-century biographers and the "reinvention" of multiple "Radegunds" through later textual, artistic, and cultic expressions. This makes it possible to explore how tradition, and that which was perceived as being "traditional," affected the memory of Radegund and the ways she was represented.

## ***Methodology***

“Rewriting Radegund” goes beyond other studies of Radegund – or of any saints’ cult – by using Radegund's long "afterlife" as a vehicle to explore the fluctuating dynamics of the cult of the saints to better understand how these forces operated in relation to women's history. As Moshe Sluhovsky explains in his study on the cult of Sainte Geneviève, *Patroness of Paris: Rituals of Devotion in Early Modern France*, “older saints and their cults had to change in order to mirror new realities and new models of perfection. ‘Adjust or perish’ was the unspoken motto...” Saints can only remain relevant if they are able “to project or mirror people's perceptions, images, and expectations, according to changing hopes, pressures, and ideals.”<sup>7</sup> In this way, the changing articulations of the cult of Radegund can function like a mirror of the society that produced them by reflecting broader systemic changes in attitudes towards women and female spirituality. The division of this dissertation into seven chronologically organized chapters is intended to draw out the most significant consolidating moments of Radegund's cult that offer the best opportunities for observing evidence of broader political, religious, and social change. All of these moments are distinguished by particularly formative developments and resurgences of interest in the cult of Radegund characterized by the production of significant texts, artistic imagery, and new cultic traditions.

### ***A Revolving Kaleidoscope of “Radegunds”***

In addition to a chronological organization, I have also presented each chapter as a particular identity – or as several different identities – which reflected the ways Radegund

---

<sup>7</sup> Moshe Sluhovsky, *Patroness of Paris: Rituals of Devotion in Early Modern France* (Koninklijke Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands, 1998), 8.

was interpreted over the course of her afterlife. This design reflects the central premise of this project that the two distinctive *Lives of Radegund* produced around the turn of the sixth century created opportunities for later authors, artists, and devotees to construct an astonishing array of “Radegunds.” Fortunatus, Radegund’s first hagiographer, shaped her primary persona as a *sponsa Christi*, as a (justified) runaway wife, as a passive recluse, as a self-abnegating and even self-effacing ascetic, and as a caregiver whose healing powers and domestic chores formed the basis of her sanctity. Baudonivia’s Radegund could not be more different. Likely in response to Fortunatus’ portrayal, Baudonivia presented her as an authoritative queen and monastic leader actively involved in the political milieu of her time, as an educator, and as a devout laywoman turned nun who successfully united the roles of queen, wife, and holy woman.

Subsequent versions of Radegund were built on these foundations as new individuals and groups reinterpreted aspects of the Radegund tradition in response to new sets of expectations, circumstances, events, and agendas. In the centuries after Radegund’s death, the church of Sainte-Radegonde and the abbey of Sainte-Croix promoted Radegund’s identity as a nun and monastic foundress. In the twelfth century, the Gregorian Reform inspired the author of the first new adaption of Radegund’s *Life* to retain her passivity and self-abasing spirituality. But he also added to this persona an emphasis on emerging ideals of Church reform as a way to guide the “proper” behavior of women in authority. At the same time, Norman elites in the recently conquered territories of Norman England and Sicily promoted the image of Radegund as a dynastic saint and as a Frankish/French cultural artifact to support their claims of dynastic continuity. This identity became popular in France in the fifteenth century when it served the interests of King Charles VII to acknowledge



Radegund as royal patroness of the Valois and savior of France. Radegund was widely acknowledged as both a protectress of Poitiers and of all French people. Thanks to the expansion of the popular cult of Radegund, we also see Radegund's persona branch off into that of pilgrim and grain protectress in the French countryside. In the sixteenth century, the contradictory personas of virginal abbess and dutiful wife emerged for Radegund simultaneously in her first two vernacular *Lives*. The Protestant Reformation influenced an eruption of new personas for Radegund so that we see her depicted as a militant soldier of Christ, as a martyr, and as an explicitly French and royal saint. Many of Radegund's previous identities were retained, although they were exhibited to a different degree and in response to new concerns. Again in the seventeenth century, the contradictory personas of virgin and wife reappeared, but in even more extreme iterations as Catholic spiritual ideals were reaffirmed or renegotiated in reaction to the Protestant threat. After the French Revolution, the emergence of Radegund as royalist, as republican, and as colonizer developed in conjunction with the urgent reexamination of French history and identity as the nation weathered numerous crises at home, even as it navigated a global presence abroad. Within the context of these three new nineteenth-century personas of royalist, republican, and colonizer, we also see Radegund reimagined as a mother figure – both as the politically centered “mother of the fatherland” and in conjunction with the explicitly gendered rise of patriotic motherhood. The long-forgotten Radegund-as-caregiver came to the fore again as patroness of consumptives and as a model for the women's nursing profession, representing an updated *fin-de-siècle* manifestation of her sixth-century identity as a healer of lepers and the poor. And finally today, Radegund is still imagined as the ideal Christian wife and queen from a theological perspective. But the secularizing efforts of the nineteenth century to

reconstruct Radegund as an object of French patrimony resulted in her more religiously and politically neutral perception as a tourist destination and as part of the “Poitou brand.”

How and why new “Radegunds” developed was always influenced by shifting trends in expectations for gendered behavior and shaped by reactions to transformative political events. All of these different “Radegunds” were inextricably interwoven so that while new personas might emerge, there was always a core “idea of Radegund” that remained consistent. The most effective way of deconstructing the multi-faceted Radegund is to consider the interconnected and often overlapping political and gendered turning points that led to the appearance of Radegund’s kaleidoscope of personas.

### ***The Cult of Radegund, Gender, and Women’s History***

Gender and the role of women are central concerns in this project. Radegund’s hagiographers presented her not only as a saint – the model of Christian virtue worthy of imitation – but as an ideal woman, queen, and wife. Using Radegund’s *Lives* as a case study, I look at how authors used hagiography to promote ideal forms of behavior and spirituality for women in response to changing attitudes, needs, and expectations. Analysis of the texts, art, and traditions produced throughout the more than fourteen-hundred years covered in this study provides valuable insights into changing ideals of sanctity that also carry important gendered implications. In particular, the ways that Radegund was reinterpreted in various social, religious, and political contexts can help us understand changing expectations and behavior for women both inside and outside the convent, conventions of elite and royal women's spirituality, attitudes towards marriage and sexuality, and ideals of women’s charitable service. In the sixth century, Radegund's "identity" was first constructed by her two hagiographers, Fortunatus and Baudonivia. These two authors recognized that the

performance of the archetypal elite woman's sanctity was dependent upon her sexual status as the ruler's wife. But they also emphasized her extreme asceticism, positioning her social status as the most important obstacle to be overcome in the pursuit of sainthood for a holy queen. About a thousand years later, we see one new *Life of Radegund* that insists upon her virginity (a status never claimed for her in the sixth century) and another that imagines her as the model of a dutiful wife (despite the fact that the historical Radegund abandoned her still-living husband to found a convent). This fascinating paradox occurs in many unexpected ways over the course of her long afterlife and is a crucial part of what makes Radegund's cult such a valuable subject of study. While these kinds of alterations certainly reflect the agenda of the new authors, they are also indicative of the changing attitudes and expectations of the wider audience.

The first chapter lays the foundation for "Rewriting Radegund" by interrogating the gendered implications of Fortunatus' unusually graphic descriptions of Radegund's asceticism and the extremity of the self-abasing domestic service she engages in. Attempts to explain his account of her behavior is the most popular scholarly approach to Radegund, and the general tendency of this scholarship is to suggest that Fortunatus must have felt a pressing need to compensate for Radegund's non-virginal status by exaggerating her "penitential" actions. This interpretation is problematic because it implies the mutual exclusivity of marriage and sanctity. My analysis of fifth- and sixth-century attitudes towards women's sainthood – and especially the saintly-queen model – overturns this earlier argument. Rather, I propose that it was Radegund's potentially scandalous abandonment of her husband that warranted compensation. I argue that Fortunatus recognized that the performance of the archetypal elite woman's efforts towards sanctity was *dependent* upon her

marital status, and he took deliberate steps in his *Vita Radegundis* to emphasize her lack of consent to her marriage and the necessity of her escape into the religious life by accentuating her husband's cruelty. His strategic choice to shock his audience with Radegund's more extreme religious behavior was intended to raise her above her saintly predecessors who did not have such a scandal to overcome.

Chapter 2 and Chapter 5, which investigate Radegund's cult in the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries, respectively, focus on the first new adaptations of her life since the original sixth-century *vitae* by Fortunatus and Baudonivia. Chapter 2 represents the first comprehensive study of Hildebert of Lavardin's *Vita Radegundis*. Hildebert is most well-known among medievalists for his theological treatises and letters, while his hagiographical work – especially those pieces on female saints – have been almost entirely bypassed by modern scholars. My analysis of Hildebert's alterations to the original narrative shows how he used Radegund as a vehicle for exhibiting the proper behavior and place a woman should assume within the hierarchy of the Church of the Gregorian Reform. Similarly, Chapter 5 breaks new ground by comparing the first vernacular printed *Lives of Radegund* produced in the early sixteenth century. While Henry Bradshaw, the English monk, reconstructs Radegund as a virgin and an abbess, Jean Bouchet, the French bourgeois lawyer, reimagines her as the perfect wife, despite the fact that she was neither according to her sixth-century biographies. Both chapters consider transformations in the gendered expectations of elite and royal women through the lens of hagiographical genre conventions and the hagiographers' personal agendas. As I demonstrate, the sub-genres of twelfth-century "reform hagiography" and sixteenth-century "humanist hagiography" tended to ignore the *vitae* of female saints. The most plentiful and obvious examples of these genres come from the lives of male saints

(especially bishops), and there is a general assumption among scholars that the Gregorian Reform, Humanism, and the hagiography shaped by these intellectual movements were male-oriented. My intervention here is significant because I examine how characteristically male ideals of saintliness within the Gregorian Reform and Humanist contexts were strategically refashioned for use in female saints' lives.

Recent work on “reform hagiography” carries the assumption that women’s only real involvement in the Gregorian Reform was in their capacity as victims – victims of clerical misogyny and of Church decrees limiting their freedoms in monastic institutions. For example, Maureen Miller’s 2003 study on hagiography within the context of the Gregorian Reform suggests that “the movement was about men.”<sup>8</sup> In her article, “Women and Reform in the Central Middle Ages,” Fiona Griffiths pushes back against this assertion by calling for scholars to recognize the considerable gap between rhetoric and practice. Discourse against women during this period is “striking and quotable,” but there are many more numerous instances of women’s increased attraction to the religious life, positive reports of men’s involvement with women, and evidence of an expansion in female monasticism.<sup>9</sup> This contrasts sharply with earlier studies, like JoAnn McNamara’s “The Herrenfrage” (1990) that highlights clerical misogyny and the Church’s deliberate exclusion of women from positions of religious authority.<sup>10</sup> Sharon Farmer’s “Persuasive Voices: Clerical Images of Medieval Wives” is a notable early exception which highlights overlooked theological discourse from the eleventh through thirteenth centuries on women’s capacity as a moral force for their

---

<sup>8</sup> Maureen Miller, “Masculinity, Reform, and Clerical Culture: Narratives of Episcopal Holiness in the Gregorian Era,” *Church History* 72, no. 1 (2003): 25–52.

<sup>9</sup> Fiona J. Griffiths. “Women and Reform in the Central Middle Ages,” *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, eds. Judith Bennett and Ruth Karras (Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> JoAnn McNamara, “The Herrenfrage: The Restructuring of the Gender System 1050-1150,” *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

husbands and their growing interest in religious life and practice.<sup>11</sup> My investigation of Radegund's cult in the twelfth century therefore responds to Griffiths and Farmer's invitations for a more nuanced approach to the study of gendered attitudes towards women's spirituality and behavior expectations within the context of twelfth-century theological reform.

Scholarship on "Humanist hagiography" has been similarly limited to the *Lives* of male saints and, especially, to the *Lives* of Renaissance reforming bishops. As the most in-depth study of "humanist hagiography," Allison Frazier's *Possible Lives: Authors and Saints in Renaissance Italy* provides a blueprint for discovering and analyzing humanist elements in Radegund's French and English lives. "Rewriting Radegund" takes her work a step farther by looking for ways that humanist conventions were reimagined in female saints' *Lives*. For example, Frazier argues that the addition of a death bed speech became standard in humanist hagiography during this period and that the issues treated in this speech reflected specific concerns attributed to reforming bishops. I found that this same strategy was applied in the case of Radegund as a female leader of a religious community. As I note in Chapter 5, in the sixteenth century Henry Bradshaw and Jean Bouchet both create death bed speeches for Radegund who reminds her assembled community to observe their Rule and religious obligations, to remain worthy of receiving alms, and to live virtuously, among other entreaties. Radegund was not a bishop but Bradshaw and Bouchet's choice to invent this death bed scene in which she effectively follows the model of the "bishop's testament" certainly demonstrates an awareness of this popular humanist convention. It also shows a desire to and a market for reformulating these conventions for use in a female saint's life.

---

<sup>11</sup> Sharon Farmer, "Persuasive Voices: Clerical Images of Medieval Wives," *Speculum* 61 (1986): 517-543.

Chapter 3 concentrates on the spread of Radegund's cult into Norman England and Sicily in the twelfth century. While this chapter mostly focuses on the political uses of Radegund by elite Normans abroad, the latter half looks closely at the specific gendered uses of the Radegund tradition within this larger political context. I argue that one of the reasons for Radegund's popularity in these locales was her strong potential as a model for the exogamous marriages that Anglo-Normans and Sicilian Normans relied on to consolidate their power. Radegund's historical association with cross-cultural marriage as a war-captive bride would have made her particularly relatable to the Anglo-Saxon heiresses married off to Norman magnates and for the French noblewomen sent to Sicily to become Sicilian-Norman queens and princesses.

Chapter 6, which traces new developments in Radegund's cult during the volatile periods of the Protestant Reformation and the seventeenth-century Catholic Revival, investigates two areas that provide rich sources for understanding the dynamically shifting attitudes towards women's spirituality: the reforms of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and the influence of the Bourbon princess, Abbess Charlotte-Flandrine de Nassau, on the revival of Radegund's cult in Poitiers. Through a detailed comparison of three new *Lives of Radegund* produced within two decades of each other, I disentangle the institutional concerns, the influence of emerging spiritual trends for women, and the personal agendas of the three hagiographers that shape Radegund's post-Reformation identity. The influence of the Tridentine Reforms is central to the ways all three authors frame the highly gendered issues of enclosure, marriage, virginity, consent, charity, lay and monastic devotional practices, and education. Abbess Flandrine commissioned, or at least had some influence in the production of, two out of three of these new *Lives*. These texts were integrated into her

grand project of reviving Radegund's cult and restoring the abbey of Sainte-Croix as a center of art, learning, and local authority that was morally above reproach. The most significant finding is that for at least two of Radegund's seventeenth-century hagiographers, the two central theatres for female sanctity – the cloister and the court – no longer appear to have the same possibility for overlap in the seventeenth century as they did in previous periods. One author takes great pains to “prove” Radegund remained a virgin after her marriage for the benefit of his audience of nuns. The other actually avoids details of Radegund's convent life because, as he explains, that mode of living would be only admirable and not imitable for his audience of ladies, princesses, and queens who would only be interested in how Radegund piously exercised her duties as an exceptional ruler and accommodating wife.

In Chapter 7, we see a general intensification of Radegund's femininity in the century after the French Revolution through a new association of Radegund with motherhood during the Third Republic. Her title of "Mère de la Patrie Française" (“Mother of the French Fatherland”) is an obvious expression of this trend, but we can also see this connection between femininity, motherhood, and monarchism in the activities and requirements of the Confraternity of the Christian Mothers of Saint Radegund. Even though the historic Radegund was childless, fled the royal court, and left her husband to live as a nun, this group of French Catholic monarchist mothers appropriated her as their patroness by reidentifying her as an exemplary queen and maternal wife. I trace this paradoxical development in Radegund's nineteenth-century identity to the growing association of motherhood with French nationalism. As a way to curb the campaign for women's rights and to mitigate a perceived population crisis, writers and politicians attempted to compensate women for denying their political advancement by elevating motherhood to new patriotic heights. Since



Radegund was already established as a national French saint and favored by monarchists as a royalist symbol, she could only continue being relevant to her devotees by adjusting her historical identity to better reflect contemporary gendered expectations. We can see this pattern emerge again in a different context at the turn of the twentieth century. On the eve of World War I, a French Catholic Algerian newspaper presents Radegund as the patroness « des Sociétés de secours aux blessés militaires, » (a sort of precursor to the French Red Cross), to recruit nurses for military service. Reconceived as a “distinctly feminine” profession, nursing became a highly contested field when anxieties arose over women entering the workforce en masse. As the first female nurse and “hospital chief,” Radegund’s role as a medical caregiver, as opposed to miracle-worker, was harnessed to legitimize women’s medical training at the turn of the twentieth century.

### ***The Political Functions of the Cult of Radegund***

As a Merovingian queen-saint, Radegund’s royalty – whether its emphasis or its denial – was central to her value as a political instrument. Several studies have scratched the surface of Radegund’s political uses, such as Brian Brennan who investigated her association with royalism in nineteenth-century Poitiers and Jennifer Edwards whose studies on Radegund’s monastic institutions concentrate on themes like royal patronage, administration, and institutional conflict. Scholars have yet to explore the bumpy fourteen-hundred-year trajectory of Radegund’s construction as a Merovingian dynastic saint and her eventual recognition as a national, decidedly “French,” saint. This dissertation situates the textual, artistic, and cultic expressions of Radegund’s cult in terms of her numerous – and often contradictory – political associations.

In Chapter 1 and 2, my discussion of Radegund's queenship lies at the junction of where the political and the theological merge. The first chapter looks more broadly at the ways early medieval queens and elite women exercised sanctity in their capacity as rulers. I also analyze numerous canonical decrees and writings on the regulation of and contentious attitudes towards consecrated virgins, widows, and deaconesses regarding their position in the hierarchy of the Church. Chapter 2 examines Hildebert of Lavardin's characterization of Radegund as an exemplary queen. As an influential Church reformer and bishop, Hildebert found himself at the center of debates on lay investiture, simony, and marriage regulation. His refusal to relinquish Church authority to lay rulers who sought to interfere in ecclesiastical affairs resulted in his capture and imprisonment when he declined to tear down the towers of his Cathedral at Le Mans at the demand of William Rufus. I argue that Hildebert altered the Radegund tradition with the aim of presenting her as the ideal lay female ruler from a reforming bishop's perspective. His correspondence with numerous elite Anglo-Norman women, several of whom were rulers in their own right or held regencies for their husbands or sons, is crucial to understanding his portrayal of Radegund's queenship. Hildebert's letters to these women are full of advice (and the occasional reprimand), suggesting that he envisioned them as his audience when he described Radegund's condescension towards the clergy, her lack of intervention in Church affairs, and her habit of financially supporting clergy and exempting them from taxation.

The first substantial movement towards constructing Radegund as a Merovingian dynastic saint occurred in the twelfth century. Chapter 3 traces Radegund's cult to Norman England and Sicily and suggests that the Norman nobles who imported her cult to these locales promoted her legacy as one of the first Merovingian queens as a strategy to highlight

their (sometimes imagined) Frankish heritage. My consideration of Radegund's political uses here is based on Felice Lifshitz's argument in *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria: Historiographic Discourse and Saintly Relics 684-1090* (1995) that the institution and elaboration of saints' cults was generated by fundamentally "political" impulses and participation in festivities associated with these saints had the power to shape both people's identities and the ways they understood their past. It is well established that the Norman kings of Sicily and the ruling Norman elite in England used various strategies to project their associations with the Frankish/French monarchy as a way to establish their legitimacy. I argue that Radegund was a small but significant part of this by examining the Norman patronage of institutions dedicated to Radegund in England and the integration of her image into Sicilian royal mosaic programs.

Since the foundation of Radegund's convent in 552, members of the ruling family and the local nobility had always taken active interest in Sainte-Croix which benefited from their privileges, patronage, and a constant succession of royal abbesses. But it was not until the fifteenth century that we see French monarchs take a personal interest in Radegund herself. Chapters 4 and 5 trace the origins of what will become an enduring relationship between Radegund and the French monarchy.

In Chapter 4, I suggest that the proliferation of Radegund's cult outside of Poitiers and throughout France resulted in a new secular and agrarian image for Radegund that was fundamentally different from her identity in Poitiers as a nun and monastic foundress. The Radegund of the Loire was remembered for visiting towns and villages as a pilgrim-queen before finally settling in Poitiers to found her monastery. Communities established shrines dedicated to Radegund in places where she touched the local natural environment with her

divine presence: she miraculously left her footprints in stones, conjured springs, and left other holy traces that were memorialized for centuries with chapels, churches, fountains, and unique local rituals.<sup>12</sup> I contend that during Charles VII's itinerate kingship during the Hundred Years War, he and his entourage experienced Radegund's cult filtered through local expressions of popular piety. This exposure to non-monastic articulations of her cult, together with her historical identity as one of the first "French" queens, was the central factor in Radegund's ascendancy as the patroness of the Valois dynasty and gave rise to the belief that her divine intervention extended beyond her tomb in Poitiers for the benefit of all French people.

Chapter 5, which analyzes the first two vernacular printed *Lives of Radegund*, considers how her hagiographers' local political interests shaped their very different versions of Radegund. The English monk, Henry Bradshaw, uses his *Life of Radegund* to promote Benedictine monasticism after the dissolution of St. Radegund's Priory in Cambridge on the grounds of the nuns' immorality and inability to maintain financial stability. The French Jean Bouchet's desire to ingratiate himself with the royal family and to gain admittance for his daughter as a nun at Sainte-Croix was at the heart of his particularly courtly version of Radegund. Bouchet's efforts to present Radegund as the Valois' illustrious and holy dynastic ancestor resulted in a version of Radegund whose grueling early medieval style of asceticism and *contemptus mundi* was transformed into a tamer more comfortable piety for the sixteenth-century courtly woman. He also inaugurated what would become the lasting trend of situating the story of Radegund's sainthood within a broader history of the emergence of

---

<sup>12</sup> Traditions surrounding Radegund's footprints in stone and miraculous springs referenced the prototypical miracles of Christ's footprints left in stone after his ascension on the Mount of Olives and Moses striking a rock with his staff to produce a spring in the desert.

the French nation. The implication in Bouchet's *Life of Radegund*, and in the *Lives* of later historians who followed his lead, was that France's present greatness was the result of the long line of pious French monarchs beginning with Radegund.

Bouchet's unprecedented emphasis on Radegund's royal identity and exemplary behavior as queen laid the foundation for her most contentious uses to date in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution. Chapter 6 explores the patterns of destruction and revival that characterized the cult of Radegund in France from the arrival of the Wars of Religion in Poitiers in 1562 through the last new *Life of Radegund* composed before the Revolution in 1686. Here, I focus on the complex process of rebuilding and remembering iconoclastic events, which has received comparatively little scholarly attention to instances of interconfessional violence. In particular, I investigate the ways that Catholics used the Radegund tradition in Poitiers and beyond to reconstruct a "counter-memory" of the Wars of Religion. The Radegundian art and texts increase exponentially during this period, but the most significant sources are three post-Reformation French vernacular printed *Lives of Radegund* written by Etienne Moquot (1621), Joseph Dumonteil (1627), and Jean Filleau (1643). This spread of secular and religious authors all frame their biographies around the Huguenot threat and set Radegund up as the embodiment of French, royal, Catholic tradition. These *Lives* draw on Radegund's royalty as a way to explicitly characterize the destruction of Catholic institutions and objects as an attack on the monarchy. I argue that Radegund's identity was shaped by – and in turn shaped – sixteenth-century inter-confessional conflict.

Thanks to the centuries of art, text, and traditions that helped to establish Radegund as a representative of French conservative values, Radegund's political use throughout the nineteenth-century culture wars took on a new volatility. Chapter 7 examines another

paradoxical development in the Radegund tradition when she was simultaneously invoked by republican secularists and Catholic royalists as a way to define their worldviews. Colonialism takes center stage in this chapter as I examine the complex process by which Radegund's identity as an instrument of civilization was mutually constructed both at home and abroad in the nineteenth century. Within the context of France's colonizing project, both Catholics and Republicans cultivated Radegund's image as the great civilizer of a barbarian Gaul. For Catholics, this also became a rhetorical tool to bolster the royalist vision of France as a traditionally Catholic monarchy during the Third Republic. Republicans also harnessed the Radegund tradition, but, divorced from her usual monastic and royal attributes, she was made "safe" as a symbol of the pure Christian origins of French civilization before the corrupt influence of the medieval Church. My analysis of nineteenth-century *Lives of Radegund*, sermons, public speeches, missionary memoirs and contemporary histories, monumental art, and newspaper articles shows that for Catholics and Republicans alike, Radegund became a part of the new French narrative of superiority that was used to justify colonial expansion.

#### §

From peacemaker to dragon-fighter; from perpetual virgin to perfect wife, Radegund has been created and recreated countless times through a myriad of texts, art, and devotional practices that have appeared since her death. While I have attempted to dedicate at least a small portion of this study to centering Radegund as a person, disentangling truth from fiction to discover the "authentic" Radegund is not my aim here. Ultimately, "Rewriting Radegund" is about how this sixth-century woman has remained relevant to so many different groups over such a great length of time and what that can reveal about how the cult of the saints fits into the political, social, religious, and very much gendered fabric of daily

life. This dissertation reimagines traditional medieval history by expanding the scope of interest beyond conventional themes and periodization, making this work relevant and approachable to scholars outside of medieval history.

But most importantly, my research considers how images of the ideal – the ideal Christian woman, the ideal queen, the ideal nun, the ideal wife – shaped and were shaped by shifting needs on both the individual and communal level, by gradual structural changes and transformative events. Researching and writing this dissertation during the COVID-19 pandemic has put into stark relief the enduring inequities of gendered expectations. The switch to remote work and education has disproportionately affected women, too many of whom have found themselves stretched to the breaking point between the duties of mother, wife, and career. As I analyze a medieval bishop’s backhanded compliment to a ruling woman congratulating her on overcoming her natural shortcomings only by God’s grace or nineteenth-century pseudo-scientific arguments about women’s natural role as submissive caretakers, it is impossible not to see echoes of these patterns in the news articles that assail us today. For example, a 2021 study by the Pew Research Center paints a bleak picture of working mothers being twice as likely as their male partners to take on the role of primary childcare provider while also maintaining a full-time career. While these expectations are hardly new, the disruptions caused by the pandemic have raised questions about the overwhelming tendency for women to become “default caregivers,” which many fear point towards “long-lasting consequences for gender equality.”<sup>13</sup> In an interview with *Reuters*,

---

<sup>13</sup> Amanda Barroso and Juliana Menasce Horowitz, “The pandemic has highlighted many challenges for mothers, but they aren’t necessarily new,” *The Pew Research Center*, March 17, 2021, <https://pewrsr.ch/2OXoY6l>; Claire Cain Miller, “The Pandemic Created a Child-Care Crisis. Mothers Bore the Burden,” *The New York Times*, May 17, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/05/17/upshot/women-workforce-employment-covid.html>.

Carlien Scheele, director of the European Institute for Gender Equality, said, "It is one step forward and three steps back," referring to the fact that during lockdowns, women shouldered the bulk of the extra household labor.<sup>14</sup> Understanding how expectations for women developed and evolved in the past will make us more observant about how expectations are changing today. I sincerely hope that this awareness will ultimately foster greater equity for women both at home and in the workplace.

---

<sup>14</sup> Emma Thomasson, "Gender equality takes one step forward, three back during COVID," *Reuters*, December 2, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/funds/gender-equality-takes-one-step-forward-three-back-during-covid-2021-12-02/>.



## **Chapter 1**

### **From Runaway Wife to Sainted Queen: Constructing a Model of Saintly Queenship in Merovingian Gaul**

All the *Lives of Radegund* I analyze in this study are based – some more loosely than others – on two sixth-century Latin hagiographies composed in Poitiers around the year 600 by Venantius Fortunatus and Baudonivia. The events of Radegund’s life related in each of these narratives are so dissimilar that they could almost be describing two different women. It is crucial to our understanding of how Radegund’s afterlife was actively shaped to first situate the earliest written evidence for her cult within the social and political milieu in which it was produced. Fortunatus and Baudonivia’s divergent hagiographical accounts have captivated Merovingian historians for decades. While many scholars have attempted to explain *why* these texts are so different with varying degrees of success, I am primarily concerned with addressing the larger question of *how* these differences were significant and what they can tell us about the social construction of women’s sanctity in the Merovingian era. Part I presents an overview of Radegund’s life according to the available documentary records and the historical context of the origins of her cult in Poitiers. This is followed by Part II, where I delve more deeply into the contentious issue of how Radegund’s marriage was approached by her hagiographers and to what degree this conforms to or subverts the early Christian model of saintly queenship.

#### ***Part I***

#### ***Constructing the Beata Regina of Sainte-Croix: Two Portraits of Radegund’s Life in Merovingian Gaul***

Baudonivia highlights Radegund’s very public role by recounting events in which she exercised her royal authority as queen and her ecclesiastical authority as spiritual leader of

Sainte-Croix. Baudonivia positions her within a network of some of the most influential male figures of the Merovingian era, emphasizing her ability to exert authority over them and her skill in working successfully with them to achieve her goals. She praises Radegund's exemplary behavior as a devout laywoman who successfully united the roles of queen, wife, and holy woman. Baudonivia's Radegund actively reinvented herself as the *Beata Regina* of Sainte-Croix when she fled the Frankish court, creating a new locus for the exercise of her queenly power and spiritual influence. Her more intimate account of life within the convent walls reveals Radegund's active role as a preacher and teacher to her spiritual daughters. As peacemaker and diplomat, Radegund secured the prosperity of her convent in Poitiers and even the greater Frankish Kingdom – although both erupted into violence after her death.

This portrait of the *Beata Regina* is in sharp contrast to Fortunatus' account of Radegund the ascetic, passively occupied in listening to the spiritual advice of visiting ecclesiastics. He strategically deemphasizes Radegund's public authority by shifting that authority into the domestic role of a caretaker. Constantly struggling with the obstacles of her marriage and social position, Fortunatus' Radegund threw herself into domestic subservience, preparing meals, cleaning lavatories, and caring for the sick. He styles her as a reclusive miracle worker who engaged in gruesome self-mortification of such an extremity that it is unprecedented in Merovingian hagiography.<sup>1</sup>

Despite these significant divergences in Radegund's character and activities, the rough outline of her eventful life is fairly well established thanks to the unusual quantity of available contemporary sources. Radegund was born in the kingdom of Thuringia around the year 520. Her father, King Bertachar, was killed by his brother Hermenefrid, and she spent

---

<sup>1</sup> McNamara, *Sainted Women*, 81, fn71; John Kitchen, *Saints' Lives and the Rhetoric of Gender: Male and Female in Merovingian Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 117.

her childhood years in the household of her father's murderer.<sup>2</sup> As Gregory of Tours relates, when her uncle Hermenefrid broke his treaty with the Franks and slaughtered his Frankish hostages, the two sons of Clovis, Clothar and Theoderic, invaded Thuringia in 531. They wiped out the Thuringian ruling house and claimed the territory for the Frankish empire.<sup>3</sup> Clothar took Radegund as a spoil of war and placed her in his villa at Athies to be educated. Clothar and Radegund married, very much against her will, in 538 at Clothar's capital of Soissons. Clothar is reported to have married at least six other women, including Ingunda, Ingunda's sister Aregunda, Chlotsinda, Chunsina, his brother's widow Guntheuca, and Wuldetrada.<sup>4</sup> Scholars believe at least some of these marriages were polygynous, though it is not possible to determine if Clothar was married to any other women at the time of his union with Radegund.<sup>5</sup>

Radegund was crowned queen of the Franks and she remained married to Clothar for twelve years.<sup>6</sup> Despite later associations of Radegund with motherhood, there is no indication that the couple had any children together. By all accounts, their marriage was an unhappy one. Nonetheless, Radegund fulfilled her duties as queen and was celebrated for her success. She supported the Church, cultivated partnerships with important clergy, and advocated for prisoners. She established a hospital at Athies and devoted herself to caring for the sick and other charitable works. When Clothar killed her only surviving brother in 550, Radegund fled the Frankish court and took refuge at a villa in Saix, given to her by Clothar as part of her dower.<sup>7</sup> When the opportunity finally presented itself, she was consecrated as a deaconess by

---

<sup>2</sup> McNamara, *Sainted Women*, 60.

<sup>3</sup> Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, translated with an introduction by Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1974), 3.7.

<sup>4</sup> Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 4.3; 3.6

<sup>5</sup> McNamara, *Sainted Women*, 60.

<sup>6</sup> Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de l'abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, 29.

<sup>7</sup> McNamara, *Sainted Women*, 62.

Bishop Médard of Noyon and Clothar agreed to endow a convent for her in Poitiers. Historians place the foundation between 552 and 557. The church was dedicated to the Virgin Mary (Sainte-Marie-Hors-les-Murs) in 561 - the same year as Clothar's death.<sup>8</sup> After her death, it was renamed Sainte-Radegonde in honor of its foundress' miracle-working relics. Radegund adopted the Rule of Saint Caesarius of Arles, adapted for his sister Caesaria's convent, around 570 and appointed her adoptive daughter, Agnes, as the first Abbess.<sup>9</sup>

Radegund had been an avid relic collector ever since her retirement to Saix. But in 569 Emperor Justin sent her one of the most prestigious relics, a remnant of the True Cross. After a great deal of conflict with the local bishop, it was finally installed with all due honor and the convent was renamed Sainte-Croix.<sup>10</sup> As JoAnn McNamara relates, when the convent was dispersed during the French Revolution the abbess managed to rescue the relic. Most of the abbey buildings were destroyed, but Radegund's fragment of the True Cross is still offered for veneration today by the nuns of Sainte-Croix in their new location just outside the city of Poitiers.<sup>11</sup>

Radegund's death was mourned by the nuns of Sainte-Croix and the city of Poitiers on Wednesday the 13<sup>th</sup> of August in 587. Because the Rule of Caesarius prevented any who had taken the vow to leave the convent walls, Radegund's community of nuns stood on the walls and watched her body carried out in procession. Baudonivia writes that their grief-

---

<sup>8</sup> Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, 35.

<sup>9</sup> Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, 37.

<sup>10</sup> Radegund's relic collecting (Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 14.21), Emperor Justin's gift of the True Cross (Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 16.25), Installation of the True Cross at Radegund's monastery (Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 16.26). For the approximate date, see Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, 39.

<sup>11</sup> McNamara, *Sainted Women*, 98 fn 119.

stricken laments were so loud that the psalms were drowned out, so that tears took the place of psalms, groans for canticles, sighs for alleluias.<sup>12</sup>

### *Radegund's Hagiographers*

The ways that Fortunatus and Baudonivia constructed their histories of Radegund was determined by the historical context in which they were writing, as well as their own identities and values. Not only were Fortunatus and Baudonivia of different genders, but they also had different nationalities, different social roles, different personal ambitions, and different relationships to Radegund – all of which contributed to their particular images of her. Identifying the origins of these two texts that provided the foundation for so many later adaptations is crucial for understanding how and why Radegund became so versatile.

Venantius Honorius Clementianus Fortunatus (540-609) was a northern Italian who received a classical education at Ravenna. His various writings demonstrate the strong influences of both the classical Latin and Christian poets, as well as some knowledge of Greek language, philosophy, and literature. He travelled to Merovingian Gaul in the spring of 566. Whether as a pilgrim to the shrine of Saint Martin, or in the “guise of a wandering minstrel” just on another adventure, his ultimate destination was the court of King Sigibert.<sup>13</sup> Likely with the help of letters from his patrons, Fortunatus arrived in Metz on the day of Sigibert’s wedding to the Visigothic princess Brunhild and delivered an epithalamium and panegyric in their honor. Fortunatus quickly rose in favor and secured many important patrons in both Sigibert’s court and that of his brother, Charibert. Due to the political unrest

---

<sup>12</sup> “...tota congregatio supra murum lamentans, ita ut planctus earum superaret ipsum psallentium, pro psalmo lacrymas, pro cantico mugitum, & gemitum pro Alleluya.” Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum: the Full Text Database* (Chadwyck-Healey, 2002): 5.24.

<sup>13</sup> Judith W. George, *Venantius Fortunatus: a Latin poet in Merovingian Gaul* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 25.

that followed Charibert's death in 567/568, Fortunatus left the court, secured letters of introduction to Radegund, and presented himself to her in Poitiers, where he resided for the remainder of his life. Fortunatus also acquired the patronage and friendship of Gregory of Tours who encouraged him to publish his various works. Gregory himself was also an intimate friend of Radegund. As Yvonne Labande-Mailfert writes in *Histoire de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, "For the foundress queen and the nuns of Sainte-Croix he was a guide and protector, as wise as he was firm, respected and esteemed by the sons of Clothar no less than by his fellow bishops."<sup>14</sup> The three moved in the upper echelons of Frankish society.

Radegund seemed to have recognized Fortunatus' potential as a useful instrument when she asked him to remain with her in Poitiers, as Fortunatus writes, "I am researching Martin, I am staying at the wish of Radegund the Thuringian."<sup>15</sup> Under Radegund's patronage, Fortunatus not only served her in the role of a court poet, composing poems and panegyrics in her honor. He also played an important political role by writing on her behalf to the Eastern Roman Emperor Justin and engaging in other diplomatic functions in Radegund's pursuit of kingdom-wide peace. Fortunatus was ordained as a priest in 576 and was elevated to Bishop of Poitiers in 599, about 12 years after Radegund's death.<sup>16</sup>

Far less is known about Baudonivia's life. She was a nun at Radegund's convent of Sainte-Croix in Poitiers, but the extent of her relationship with Radegund remains unknown. In her preface, she identifies herself, "I am the least of all the least, whom she [Radegund]

---

<sup>14</sup> Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, 25.

<sup>15</sup> Fortunatus, *Carmina*, edited by F. Leo, *M.G.H., Auctores antiquissimi*, IV, 1 (Berlin: 1881), 8.1.

<sup>16</sup> For Fortunatus' ordination, see the explicit of his *Life of Saint Martin*. Fortunatus, *Vita S. Martini*, edited by Bruno Krusch, *M.G.H., Auctores antiquissimi*, IV, 1, (Berlin: 1881), 370. For the approximate dates, see Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, 26.

raised familiarly from the very cradle at her feet as her own servant.”<sup>17</sup> However, whether she was truly raised by Radegund, or if this is simply the rhetoric of affection, cannot be ascertained. The second clause, “*quam ab ipsis cunabulis ante sua vestigia peculiarem vernulam familiariter enutrivit,*” was copied directly from Fortunatus’ preface of his *Life of Saint Hilary*.<sup>18</sup> Fortunatus was certainly not physically reared by Saint Hilary, who died over a century before Fortunatus was born. It is clear that he used this language to indicate a relationship of spiritual nurturing. Baudonivia may also be using this expression to mean that she was reared through the spiritual wisdom of Radegund, but this does not necessarily imply an intimate relationship. According to Baudonivia, Radegund would often address all the nuns as her chosen *filiis*. Nevertheless, the fact that Baudonivia lived her day-to-day life as a nun under Radegund’s guidance gives her account a dimension that is lacking in Fortunatus’. We know from other sources that Radegund and Fortunatus had a close relationship. His charming verses reveal the profound intimacy he shared with the nuns of Sainte-Croix that is wholly absent from his more detached account of her life in the *Vita Radegundis*. But completely unlike Fortunatus, Baudonivia’s frequent incorporations of her own personal experiences with Radegund through her use of the first person interlace her biography with a sense of personality and with the authenticity that comes from such an intimate narrative.

It is impossible to confirm Baudonivia’s social status, but Sainte-Croix was a royally endowed convent and many of the nuns were princesses and daughters of the Frankish aristocracy. For example, we know that Basina and Clothild, Clothar’s granddaughters from two different sons, were some of the more aristocratic additions to Sainte-Croix. In fact,

---

<sup>17</sup> “...sim igitur minima omnium minimarum, quam ab ipsis cunabulis ante sua vestigia peculiarem vernulam familiariter enutrivit.” Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, Prologus 2.

<sup>18</sup> Fortunatus, *Vita S. Hilarii*, edited by Bruno Krusch, *M.G.H., Auctores antiquissimi*, IV, 1, (Berlin: 1881), 293.

perceived offenses to their noble status became the impetus for Clothild to lead an armed rebellion with Basina against Abbess Leubevera after Radegund's death. Gregory of Tours discusses the rebellion at length in his *History of the Franks*, quoting Clotild's complaint, "I am going to my royal relations, to tell them about the insults which we have to suffer, for we are humiliated here as if we were the offspring of low-born serving women, instead of being the daughters of kings!"<sup>19</sup> While much is known about the events of the nun rebellion, Baudonivia's position in society and family connections can only be guessed at. Radegund adopted the Rule of Caesarius of Arles around 561, which required all nuns to learn to read.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, it can be assumed that Baudonivia's exceptional level of education and skill in writing secured her the commission to rewrite the *Life of Radegund* from the nuns' perspective.

While we do not know the circumstances surrounding Fortunatus' decision to write his biography of Radegund, we do know that the Abbess of Sainte-Croix, Dedimia, commissioned Baudonivia to write this second *Vita Radegundis*.<sup>21</sup> This begs the crucial question of why the women of Sainte-Croix felt that it was necessary to produce another biography so shortly after the illustrious Fortunatus completed his. By the time that Baudonivia was writing, Fortunatus had already been ordained as Bishop of Poitiers, as she states in her preface. He was certainly qualified for such an undertaking, having written panegyrics to kings and being able to boast of a long list of notable patrons.

The nuns of Sainte-Croix were certainly very familiar with Fortunatus' version. Baudonivia references it several times in her account. Addressed to the *Dominabus sanctis*,

---

<sup>19</sup> Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 9.39

<sup>20</sup> Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, 44.

<sup>21</sup> Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, Prologus 1.



*Dedimiae Abbatissae, and omni congregationi gloriosae Dominæ Radegundis*, Baudonivia's preface also states that,

We will not repeat the same things which the apostolic man, bishop Fortunatus, composed concerning the life of the Blessed One, but [we will include] those things, which he omitted for the sake of length. As he wrote in his book, when he spoke regarding the virtues of the Blessed One: Let a small amount suffice, lest the abundance be scorned. But let it not be considered too little, when from this small amount her greatness may be recognized.<sup>22</sup>

Baudonivia does not intend to repeat the details that Fortunatus already included in his book, rather, her purpose is to record what Fortunatus omitted – either due to his concern for prolixity, as he stated, or, more likely due to his own interest in advancing his ecclesiastical career.

Baudonivia includes a wealth of details about Radegund's political activities, preaching, relationships with other important bishops, her mission of relic gathering, and her public life in general. Fortunatus avoids all of these subjects, presenting readers with a lengthy catalogue of miracles and ascetic feats. It could be argued that Fortunatus' education and close relationship with Gregory of Tours, a prolific writer of saints' lives himself, may have provided him with a clear *vita* model which he saw fit to incorporate. As René Aigrain argues in his 1918 study of Radegund, "Fortunatus follows more closely the common framework of hagiographers."<sup>23</sup> However, this theory does not explain his silence regarding Radegund's great triumph of securing the eponymous relic of the True Cross, which conferred the name of Sainte-Croix upon Radegund's convent. Were the nuns of Sainte-Croix disappointed with Fortunatus' rendering of their founding mother's active life into one

---

<sup>22</sup> "Non ea, quæ vir apostolicus Fortunatus episcopus de Beatæ vita composuit iteramus; sed ea, quæ prolixitate sui prætermisit, sicut ipse in libro suo disseruit, cum diceret de Beatæ virtutibus: Sufficiat exiguitas, ne fastidiatur ubertas, nec reputetur brevissimum, ubi de paucis agnoscitur amplitudo." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, Prologus 2.

<sup>23</sup> L'Abbé René Aigrain, *Sainte Radegonde* (Paris, 1918), ix.

of retirement, miracles, and one gruesome act of asceticism and self-mortification after another?

### *The Two Radegunds*

Most of what we know about Radegund's life before Sainte-Croix comes from Fortunatus' *vita* which begins with the Frankish destruction of Thuringia. He describes how the quarrel over the captive Radegund would have driven Clothar and his brothers to blows if Clothar had not won her from them in a dice game. The epic quality of this episode does justice to Fortunatus' classical education. Following this, he then goes on to recount Radegund's unusual childhood and her desire, even at that early age, to become a martyr. As Fortunatus writes, "She would frequently say to the children, that she wanted to become a martyr, if fate conferred it in her time," because, "Already as a youth her merits revealed [the nature] of an older woman."<sup>24</sup>

Baudonivia's introductory chapter passes over Radegund's childhood and the traumatic experience of her capture. As Yvonne Labande-Mailfert suggests, "For Baudonivia, Radegund's true story begins at the foundation of her monastery."<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, Baudonivia does provide her readers with a very brief sketch of Radegund's life at the palace. She discusses the circumstances of Radegund's marriage to Clothar and her devout and charitable behavior as a lay queen. But immediately following this, the first anecdote of her book evokes images of Radegund as a queenly Saint Martin. While on her way to matron Ansifrida's *prandium*, Radegund took a detour from her route to burn down a pagan temple. Even though a raging mob of Franks came to the temple's defense with swords

---

<sup>24</sup> "... frequenter loquens cum parvulis, si conferret sors temporis, martyr fieri cupiens. Indicabat Adolescens jam tunc merita senectutis, obtinens pro parte, quæ petiit." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.2.

<sup>25</sup> Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, 27.

and sticks, Radegund, “persevering unmoved and bearing Christ in her heart,” refused to move her horse until the temple was burned completely. She then performed her first recorded act of diplomacy by entreating the Frankish pagans to establish peace.<sup>26</sup> This episode concludes with the now tranquil mob admiring the virtue and constancy of the *Beata Regina* and blessing God, presumably now converted to Christianity. Whether this act of conversion truly proceeded so smoothly as Baudonivia relates cannot be confirmed. Nonetheless, it emphasizes Radegund’s very public authority as both queen and converter (perhaps even an allusion to her mother-in-law, Queen Clothild, whose conversion of her husband, King Clovis, resulted in the conversion of the Frankish kingdom).<sup>27</sup>

It is interesting to note that both Gregory and Fortunatus wrote lives of Saint Martin. These undoubtedly would have been in circulation at Sainte-Croix, as well as the earlier version composed by Sulpicius Severus, whose work likely served as their model. In Giovanni Palermo’s introduction to his translation of Fortunatus’ *Vita Martini*, he states that it is very probable that Radegund was actually the stimulus for the composition.<sup>28</sup> In his preface to the *Life of Saint Martin*, Fortunatus addresses Radegund and Agnes, whom he devoutly honors, and requests their prayers to help him complete his task.<sup>29</sup>

Martin’s fame and importance in Gaul is undisputed. By the time Gregory and Fortunatus were writing their accounts of his life, Sulpicius had already promoted Martin’s image as a model of sanctity.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, Baudonivia’s choice to include this Martinesque

---

<sup>26</sup> “... sancta vero Regina immobilis perseverans, & Christum in pectore gestans, equum, quem sedebat, in antea non movit, antequam & fanum perureretur, & ipsa orante, populi inter se pacem firmarent.” Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.4.

<sup>27</sup> Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 3.31

<sup>28</sup> Giovanni Palermo, *Vita di San Martino di Tours* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1985), 23

<sup>29</sup> Palermo, *Vita di San Martino*, 47.

<sup>30</sup> Raymond Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 12-13.

episode and to place it so prominently in her book as the second chapter, indicates her intention of establishing a claim first and foremost for Radegund's saintliness. Martin's saintly career is characterized by the destruction of many pagan shrines, altars, sculptures, and trees. These demolitions typically involved Martin fearlessly standing his ground against unruly mobs whose ultimate conversion to Christianity was owing to Martin's impressive virtue.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Martin was credited for spearheading the spread of monasticism in the Frankish empire. Therefore, such a prominent association with the deeds of Saint Martin seems to be a deliberate choice intended to invoke the authority and tradition inextricably linked to Martin's spiritual and historic position. It is also likely intended to foreshadow Radegund's own establishment of the convent of Sainte-Croix, one of the first female monasteries in the Frankish kingdom.<sup>32</sup>

This anecdote also anticipates Radegund's later acts of diplomacy which inspired the French government to institute a national holiday in her honor in 1921 for her peacemaking services.<sup>33</sup> While Fortunatus does not include any details of these efforts, Baudonivia describes her as, "always solicitous of peace, always concerned for the welfare of the fatherland."<sup>34</sup> In fact, Baudonivia's Radegund took a very active role in her peacemaking efforts. Radegund would tremble all over if she heard that bitterness had arisen among any of the various kings of Francia. She sent letters begging them to avoid going to war and she encouraged them to make peace instead. She also wrote to the kings' nobles to urge them to council their kings to promote the welfare of the populace. Radegund's mediation efforts

---

<sup>31</sup> Some examples: Sulpicius Severus, *vita Martini*, chapter 13 (falling the holy tree), 14 (burning down temples), 15 (conciliates the heathens, they destroy their own temple).

<sup>32</sup> There were only 9 convents for women in Gaul at this time. Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, 25.

<sup>33</sup> Aigrain, *Sainte Radegonde*, 73.

<sup>34</sup> "... semper de pace sollicita, semper de salute patriæ curiosa." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.16.

brought peace to the land as she had hoped when King Guntram and Queen Brunhild signed the Treaty of Andelot, making their son, Childebert II, Guntram's heir and ally.<sup>35</sup> The public rejoiced, aware of Radegund's intercession. Unfortunately, this tranquility was short-lived and the Frankish peace died with Radegund. The treaty was soon broken after her death and the land was again plunged into nearly constant warfare for many decades.

While taking such an active part in the wellbeing of the kingdom, Radegund also took measures to ensure the spiritual welfare and prominence of Sainte-Croix. Baudonivia devotes several chapters to Radegund's fervent relic-collecting mission. She began gathering saints' relics while she was still at the villa of Saix, but after she established Sainte-Croix in Poitiers, her efforts became increasingly more impassioned.<sup>36</sup> As Baudonivia relates, "She obtained from everywhere the precious gems which Paradise has and Heaven hid away - as many came to her as gifts as by her prayers." When Radegund learned that the *membra* of Lord Mammas the martyr were at rest in Jerusalem, "she drank it in greedily and thirstily, just as the dropsical, who draws too much from the fountain, worsens his thirst, but she was inflamed more, soaked by water from God."<sup>37</sup> She sent the priest, Reoval, to the patriarch of Jerusalem to request a relic (*pignore*) from the blessed Mammas. The saint complied, allowing Reoval to carry off the little finger with only a slight pull.<sup>38</sup>

Baudonivia compares Radegund with another saintly queen and relic-collector, Helena, mother of the emperor Constantine. "Just like the blessed Helena, imbued with

---

<sup>35</sup> Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, 57.

<sup>36</sup> "... quia undique pretiosas gemmas caeloque reconditas, & quas paradisus habet, ipsa devota tam muneribus, quam precibus sibi obtinuit." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.21.

<sup>37</sup> "... avida ac sitibunda potabat, veluti hydrops, qui quantum fontem trahit, tantum sitis addita crescit; ista vero de rore Dei plus madefacta calet." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.21.

<sup>38</sup> It was commonly believed that saints could and did give their consent to the discovery, exchange, and occasional theft of their relics in the Middle Ages. Suspicious acquisitions were often justified by the simple fact that the saint must have been willing to have his or her relics relocated. See Patrick Geary, *Futa Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978).

wisdom and full of the fear of God,” Radegund desired more than anything else to obtain a piece of the True Cross.<sup>39</sup> Baudonivia again reveals the saint’s queenly diplomatic efforts: “Because she wishes to do nothing while she lives in this world without counsel,” she wrote to her stepson, King Sigebert, with whom she maintained a good relationship after her departure from his father’s court.<sup>40</sup> She humbly requested his permission to ask Emperor Justin II for wood from the Lord’s Cross and he most benevolently acquiesced to the petition of the *Sancta Regina*. As Baudonivia relates, Radegund framed this request around her concern for the welfare of the kingdom, believing that Sigebert should support her designs of bringing this most prized relic to Gaul, “for the health of his fatherland and the stability of his reign.”<sup>41</sup>

With the support of King Sigebert, Radegund sent her messengers to the emperor to make her request in 568.<sup>42</sup> However, she did not send any gifts (*munera*) with her messengers, as she would if she was still a secular queen. In adopting the Rule of Caesarius of Arles for Sainte-Croix, Radegund, just like all of the other members of her convent, had renounced all of her possessions as stipulated in her vows.<sup>43</sup> She only sent her prayers along with the company of saints whom she “incessantly invokes.” Justin’s response exceeded Radegund’s request: his legates arrived in Poitiers with a whole “congregation of saints.” Not only did he send wood from the True Cross ornamented with gold and gems, but also the

---

<sup>39</sup> “... sicut beata Helena sapientia imbuta, timore Dei plena.” Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.24.

<sup>40</sup> “Et quia sine consilio, dum vixit in mundo, nihil facere voluit.” Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.24.

<sup>41</sup> “... ut ei permitteret pro ejus patriæ salute, & regni ejus stabilitate.” Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.24.

<sup>42</sup> McNamara, *Sainted Women*, 97.

<sup>43</sup> “Cuique, formam apostolicam observantes, tam ego quam sorores de substantia terrena quae possidere videbamus, factis chartis tradidimus, metu Ananiae et Saphirae, in monasterio positae nihil propriam reservantes.” Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 9.42.

relics of many other saints that had long resided in the East, along with a copy of the gospels richly decorated with gold and gems. As Baudonivia recounts triumphantly, “What Helena did in Oriental lands, Radegund herself did in Gaul.”<sup>44</sup> Fortunatus takes great pains to emphasize Radegund’s seclusion from the world, portraying her almost as a recluse once she took her vows. But from Baudonivia, we learn that Radegund still retained her political connections and she was ready to make use of them to promote her interests. Furthermore, the favorable responses of the king and emperor to Radegund’s petitions reveal the reality of her position. It does not seem likely that the emperor would send fragments of the True Cross, along with other costly gifts, to some reclusive holy woman, regardless of her popularity. They recognized her as part of their political circle and treated her as such.

It might seem surprising that Fortunatus chose to omit this significant episode of Radegund’s life at Sainte-Croix – especially since it holds so much religious significance for Radegund’s saintly image. Some historians speculate that Fortunatus’ omission stems from his reluctance to implicate himself in the dramatic conflict that occurred between Radegund and Maroveus, the bishop of Poitiers, upon the arrival of the relics to the city gates. Both Baudonivia and Gregory of Tours report that Bishop Maroveus declined to receive the glorious relics into the city and, furthermore, he refused to install them in Radegund’s convent. In response, Baudonivia states that Radegund sent letters to King Sigebert to inform him of this dishonor, while she hid the relics in a royally endowed monastery which the king himself had founded in Tours. Sigebert again showed his unwavering support in acquiescing to Radegund’s plea. He sent “his trusted man,” the illustrious Count Justin, to instruct Bishop

---

<sup>44</sup> “Quod fecit illa in Orientali patria, hoc fecit ista in Gallia.” Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.24.

Eufronius to install the relics with due honor.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps because Fortunatus was aspiring to be elevated to bishop, which he finally achieved in 599, he did not want to compromise his position by appearing to take sides. If he related the story in Maroveus' favor, it would only diminish the humble, ascetic, saintly image of Radegund he was attempting to construct. Similarly, if he were to portray Maroveus' role in the affair negatively, Fortunatus would essentially be making a public stand against the bishop and his supporters. Furthermore, because Fortunatus composed this biography after the death of his noble patroness, he could no longer benefit from her influence – or protection. He needed to consider the stability of his position in Poitiers amongst Radegund's enemies.

Interestingly, we know that Fortunatus actually played a rather important part in the conflict and that his loyalty ultimately lay with Radegund. In 569, Fortunatus composed the famous hymn, "Vexilla Regis," which was sung to commemorate the True Cross as it traveled in great procession from its temporary resting place in Tours to Radegund's convent in Poitiers. The hymn is still used almost 1500 years later on Good Friday when the Eucharist is carried in procession from the repository to the high altar.<sup>46</sup> The first line begins, "The banner of the king goes forward..." paying due honor to King Sigebert whose intercession against Meroveus made the installation possible. Thereafter, the convent was renamed Holy Cross, to commemorate its prestigious and greatly celebrated relic. Furthermore, Fortunatus composed a letter to the Emperor and Empress, thanking them for the relics on behalf of

---

<sup>45</sup> "... fidelem suum virum illustrem Justinum Comitem." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.26.

<sup>46</sup> "Its original processional use is commemorated in the Roman Missal on Good Friday, when the Blessed Sacrament is carried in procession from the Repository to the High Altar. Its principal use however, is in the Divine Office, the Roman Breviary assigning it to Vespers from the Saturday before Passion Sunday daily to Maundy Thursday, and to Vespers of feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14), and in pre-Vatican II breviary also for the feast of the Finding (May 3), and of the Triumph of the Holy Cross (July 16)." Hugh Henry, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 15 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), s.v. "Vexilla Regis Prodeunt."



Radegund. If Fortunatus was motivated by concern for his episcopal reputation, he would not be able to mention any part of the story of the True Cross without implicitly drawing attention to his involvement.

Baudonivia, on the other hand, has no such reservations and, while she does not actually name Maroveus, her reference to “the Enemy of Mankind” (*inimicus humani generis*) who refused to receive the holy relic into the city leaves no room to doubt whom she meant. Baudonivia’s language maintains a high level of force and poignancy throughout this chapter on the installation conflict. She aggressively supports Radegund’s interests, making her own position on the subject very clear. The *pontifex loci*, which could only refer to Maroveus, and his *satellites* are compared to the “Jews” and she states that their envy inflicted no less injury on the Holy Cross than on the Lord himself when he had to suffer every wickedness patiently before the governors and judges.<sup>47</sup> In fact, her language implies that Maroveus and his supporters were actually rejecting Christ himself in refusing to receive the relics into Poitiers, stating that they were rejecting the “world’s ransom” (*pretium mundi*).<sup>48</sup> Baudonivia’s description of Radegund’s reaction is especially evocative, “With her spirit inflamed and her soul in a fighting mood, she sent again to the most benevolent king because they did not wish to receive salvation into the city.”<sup>49</sup> This powerful image of Radegund displaying her queenly wrath and using her relationship with King Sigebert to take

---

<sup>47</sup> “... pontifex loci cum omni populo devote hoc vellet excipere, inimicus humani generis per satellites suos egit, ut pretium mundi repellerent, nec in civitate recipere vellent. Qualiter beata Radegundis tribulationibus subjaceret, aliud pro alio asserentes Judaico ordine; quod nostrum non est disserere, ipsi viderint. Dominus novit, qui sunt ejus.” Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.25.

<sup>48</sup> McNamara, *Sainted Women*, 98

<sup>49</sup> “Sed illa spiritu ferventi & animo dimicante iterum ad benignissimum regem dirigit, quia in civitate salutem recipere noluisse.” Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.25.

action against Maroveus' opposition is very different from Fortunatus' Radegund, who humbly cleans out the latrines and extracts worms from the putrid flesh of paupers.<sup>50</sup>

Just as Baudonivia reveals Radegund's passionate indignation, she also expresses Radegund's unreserved agony as she awaits the king's response to her appeal.

In what torment did she place herself? In fasts, in vigils, in a profusion of tears with her whole congregation, until the Lord saw his handmaid's humility and he moved the heart of the king so that he would execute judgement and justice in the midst of the people.<sup>51</sup>

This moving description of Radegund's anguish and the solidarity of her whole community as they wailed alongside her adds a unique depth and presence to the situation. Baudonivia's description of her joy and exultation when, through the king's intervention, Bishop Eufronius finally installed the relics in her monastery is equally poignant. Baudonivia's maintenance of this high level of emotionality throughout her account further distinguishes it from the more formulaic structure and classical grammar of Fortunatus' work.

Why would Maroveus make such a strong opposition to this relic that would bring fame and pilgrims to Poitiers? Albert Marignan interprets this conflict between Maroveus and Radegund as a product of the strain created by the rising influence of ascetics threatening to displace or complicate the episcopal role in the Frankish Church.<sup>52</sup> Kitchen also takes the view that Radegund's extreme asceticism, as related by Fortunatus but not by Baudonivia, may have been perceived as a threat to episcopal ascendancy. Mother Maria Caritas McCarthy, translator of *The Rule for Nuns of St. Caesarius of Arles*, positions the conflict

---

<sup>50</sup> "Secretum etiam opus purgare non tardans, sed scopans ferebat foetores stercoris;" "vermes extrahens." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.19.

<sup>51</sup> "In quanto se cruciatu posuit? In jejuniis, in vigiliis, in profusione lachrymarum cum tota congregatione sua, usque quo respexit Dominus humilitatem ancillae suae; qui dedit in corde regis, ut faceret iudicium & iustitiam in medio populi." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.26.

<sup>52</sup> Albert Marignan, *Études sur la civilisation française* (Paris: É. Bouillon, 1899).

amidst tensions between episcopal and royal jurisdiction.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, McNamara agrees with Aigrain, who situates the adoption of Caesarius' Rule, which severely limits episcopal authority, with Radegund's desire to be free of episcopal interference.<sup>54</sup> Raymond Van Dam, on the other hand, offers an entirely different theory. He argues that the factional politics of Merovingian Gaul and family-supported saints' cults were truly at the heart of the divide between Maroveus and Radegund. While scholars offer their speculations about this perplexing event, just as they do for Fortunatus' omission of it, Baudonivia's account gives us a hint which confirms Van Dam's role of factional competition as the only possible motivation.

Baudonivia's history of the installation conflict concludes with the following line, "With divine testimony she [Radegund] commended her monastery to the most excellent lord king [Sigebert] and most serene queen Brunhild, whom she esteemed with dear affection, and to the sacrosanct churches and their bishops."<sup>55</sup> Baudonivia is clearly referring here to the steps Radegund took to secure the protection of her allies for Sainte-Croix to ensure that her convent continued to remain independent after her death. In the 560s, Radegund wrote a letter addressed to "the holy lords most worthy in their apostolic seat, fathers in Christ, all the bishops," from, "Radegund the sinner."<sup>56</sup> In this letter, Radegund appeals to all the bishops (*omnibus episcopis*) and the most excellent lord kings (*praecellentissimos domnos reges*) to defend Sainte-Croix, "should any prince or pontiff or powerful person or anyone among the

---

<sup>53</sup> Mother Maria Caritas McCarthy, *The Rule for Nuns of St. Caesarius of Arles* (Washington: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1960), 159.

<sup>54</sup> McNamara, *Sainted Women*, 99.

<sup>55</sup> "Præcellentissimis enim dominis regibus & serenissimæ Brunichildæ reginæ, quos caro dilexit affectu, & sacrosanctis ecclesiis vel pontificibus eorum cum contestatione divina suum commendavit monasterium." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.27.

<sup>56</sup> "Domnis sanctis et apostolica sede dignissimis, in Christo patribus, omnibus episcopis, Radegundis peccatrix." Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 9.42.

sisters dare to diminish or attempt to revoke to themselves by sacrilegious oath those things which others conferred for the benefit of their souls or the sisters there from their own possessions, let them incur your sanction and that of your successors after God.”<sup>57</sup> She calls specifically on Charibert, Guntram, Chilperic, and Sigibert, the sons of Clothar and her own stepsons, “who vowed by sacrament [oath] and the subscription of their hands [their signatures/signs]” to defend Sainte-Croix from anyone who might attempt to interfere with it.<sup>58</sup>

This letter not only demonstrates Radegund’s queenly political standing in her ability to invoke the support of such powerful allies, but also reveals something about the nature of the political climate surrounding late sixth-century Poitiers. Radegund commended Sainte-Croix specifically to the care of the bishops and princes with the obligation to defend it against *other* bishops and princes who would attempt to interfere with its independence. Therefore, the conflict between Radegund and Bishop Maroveus cannot be oversimplified as the case of a popular ascetic threatening the supremacy of the local bishop, nor can it be explained as a struggle for jurisdiction between the neatly polarized royal family and the ecclesiastics. Rather, the evidence aligns with Van Dam’s ultimate conclusion that the installation conflict was motivated primarily by competition among the Merovingian family-based factions, each vying for control and using their relationships with specific familial saints’ cults to secure it.

---

<sup>57</sup> “... aut ex his quae alii pro animarum suarum remedio, vel sorores ibidem de rebus propriis contulerunt, aliquis princeps, aut pontifex, aut potens, aut de sororibus cujuslibet personae ausi minuere, aut sibimet ad proprietatem revocare sacrilego voto contenderit, ita vestram sanctitatem successorumque vestrorum post Deum, pro mea supplicatione et Christi voluntate, incurrat.” Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 9.42.

<sup>58</sup> “... cum sacramenti interpositione, et suarum manuum subscriptionibus obtinui confirmari.” Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 9.42.

In his discussion of Merovingian politics in *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul*, Van Dam writes, “Among Gallic aristocrats in general, alliances with various saints’ cults now molded marriages and careers, and any analysis of aristocratic and ecclesiastical factions in late Roman and early Merovingian Gaul should include a prosopography of saints and their cults.”<sup>59</sup> As he goes on to explain, the bishops and the city of Poitiers had long been strongly associated with the cult of St. Hilary. Bishop Maroveus presided over his diocese from the Church of St. Hilary, deriving his authority and reputation from his connection with the saint whose relics rested under his control. However, the Merovingian kings always chose to distance themselves from the dominant cults of Martin and Hilary. The kings held sway in the selection process of Poitiers’ bishops, but Gregory does not allude to any royal patronage or financial support for the Church of St. Hilary. While the Merovingian kings recognized the influence of these long-established patrons, they preferred to promote new saints’ cults in the sixth century.<sup>60</sup> The cult of Radegund, which was simultaneously being constructed by King Sigibert’s faction and by Radegund herself, is a clear instance of this. Baudonivia’s penultimate chapter indicates that a very real rivalry did actually exist between St. Hilary’s Basilica and Radegund’s foundations. As she relates, on the eve of Hilary’s feast day, all the abbots of the area and their brethren customarily gathered at the church of St. Hilary to hold a vigil together. But on this particular night, their prayers were disturbed by a group of possessed women whose demonic wailing shook the very walls. When Arnegiselus, the abbot of Radegund’s church, gathered up his monks and began making his way back to Sainte-Radegonde, the demoniacs followed them. Upon entering Radegund’s church, the women, including one who had suffered from possession for fifteen years, prayed aloud to

---

<sup>59</sup> Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles*, 67.

<sup>60</sup> Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles*, 29; 49.

Saint Radegund to heal them. As the monks sung Matins, the demons left their hosts and never troubled them again. Baudonivia diplomatically concludes her narration by stating, “Some [demoniacs] were liberated at the holy man’s basilica while others were brought to Lady Radegund’s basilica, for as they were equal in grace, so were they both shown equal in value.”<sup>61</sup> But the message is clear: Hilary failed to cure those women in his own basilica – even on the eve of his feast day – while Radegund succeeded. Baudonivia’s desire to relate Radegund’s triumphs in both life and death over Poitiers’ bishop and over the bishop’s patron saint lend additional support to Van Dam’s argument.

Radegund’s letter commending Sainte-Croix to the care of the bishops and princes also served another diplomatic function which further establishes the reality of these factional dynamics at play in Poitiers. As previously mentioned, Clotild and Basina lead a group of 40 nuns in violent rebellion against Abbess Leubevera shortly after Radegund’s death. In reaction, Leubevera directed copies of Radegund’s letter to all the neighboring bishops to remind them of their obligation to defend Sainte-Croix against its enemies, “should any prince or pontiff or powerful person or anyone *among the sisters*” threaten the convent.<sup>62</sup> She also read the letter aloud to King Guntram and the bishops assembled at the council established to end the revolt. Additionally, when Clotild first left Sainte-Croix, she took her 40 nuns to Gregory of Tours, hoping to place them into his care while she rallied support from her royal relations. However, Gregory came down firmly on Radegund’s side, admonishing Clotild for wantonly destroying the community Radegund had built. Gregory then read her the response to Radegund’s letter composed by the bishops Eufronius,

---

<sup>61</sup> “Ad basilicam sancti viri sunt alii liberati; alii vero basilicæ dominæ Radegundis sunt directi, ut sicut æqualis gratiæ erant, ita æqualis & virtus ostenderetur.” Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 5.27.

<sup>62</sup> Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 9.42.

Praetextatus, Germanus, Felix, Domitianus, Victorius, and Donnolus, emphasizing the gravity of leaving the cloister after taking vows.<sup>63</sup>

Clotild's rebellion not only violated the Rule of Caesarius which required perpetual cloistering, but it also had deeper political implications. When King Charibert died in 567, Sigibert gained control over Poitiers. However, his possession of the city was insecure and their brother, Chilperic, attempted to seize Poitiers by force. Van Dam suggests that Sigibert and Brunhild's persistent support for Radegund "was perhaps an attempt to solidify authority at Poitiers."<sup>64</sup> Sigibert formed a strategic connection with Radegund, promoting her cult and positioning her within his faction against his brothers. When Clotild and Basina revolted, it could not be a coincidence that they were the daughters of Charibert (the former lord of Poitiers) and Chilperic (the near-usurper of Poitiers). Their outrage that they were not treated as "daughters of kings" was therefore likely motivated more by competition between factions than by vanity and a willful nature as some scholars suggest. Clotild felt entitled to the position of Abbess, binding the rebel nuns by an oath to expel Leubevera and to select herself as Abbess instead.<sup>65</sup> But Radegund's letter to the bishops was clear: the Abbess was to be elected by the congregation and no one could impose another Abbess than she who was elected.<sup>66</sup> It should come as no surprise that the rebel nuns took refuge at the Church of St. Hilary – a calculated decision which made their opposition to Leubovera's authority starkly clear.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 9.39.

<sup>64</sup> Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles*, fn 105, 31.

<sup>65</sup> Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 9.39.

<sup>66</sup> Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 9.42.

<sup>67</sup> Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles*, 38.

One of the less obvious – but no less significant – contrasts between Fortunatus’ and Baudonivia’s *vitae Radegundis* is their description of Radegund’s teaching, preaching, and learning. Fortunatus portrays her as an educated woman who eagerly attended to the wisdom of visiting bishops. Baudonivia, on the other hand, reveals a much more active picture of Radegund as a compelling preacher and dedicated teacher.

As Fortunatus relates, under the care of guardians at Clothar’s villa in Athies, “the girl was educated in literature/letters, among other things, which are suitable to her sex.”<sup>68</sup> He does not provide any details concerning the specific nature of this education, but we can assume that it consisted of biblical scripture, the works of church fathers, and may have included some canon and civil law.<sup>69</sup> According to Labande-Mailfert, it is likely that Radegund and her nuns had access to Latin extracts of Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil, Athanasius, Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Sedulus, Orosius, as well as numerous saints’ lives, in particular that of Martin, Marcellus, and Germanus.<sup>70</sup> In a letter to Radegund, Abbess Caesaria advised Radegund to read the gospels and meditate on them with her whole mind. Furthermore, Caesaria reminded Radegund to promote education according to the rule of Caesarius of Arles and ensure that everyone who entered as a nun learned her letters and memorized the psalter.<sup>71</sup>

In his account, Fortunatus relates how, with celestial joy, Radegund would rush out to meet visiting “servants of God” so that she could wash their feet and welcome them. She

---

<sup>68</sup> “Quæ puella inter alia opera, quæ sexui ejus congruebant, litteris est erudita.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.1.

<sup>69</sup> Suzanne Fonay Wemple, *Women in Frankish society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500 to 900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 176.

<sup>70</sup> Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de l’Abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, 50.

<sup>71</sup> “Letter from Abbess Caesaria of Saint Jean of Arles to Radegund,” *MGH. vol. 7, Epistolae Aevi Merovingici Collectae*, 450-53, ep.11.



would then wholly occupy herself with their words and teachings concerning salvation.<sup>72</sup> In addition to the chanting of psalms, these are the only mention of Radegund's educational interactions. This brief mention of Radegund's passive role as a student contrasts sharply with Baudonivia's multiple references to Radegund actively teaching, reading, and preaching to the nuns of Sainte-Croix. Throughout her biography, Baudonivia specifically refers to Radegund preaching using some variant of *prædicare* or *prædicatione* a total of seven times. She mentions her teaching twice, using the word *doctrina*, and offers several other anecdotes about Radegund's methods and motivations for the instruction of her flock.<sup>73</sup> Interestingly, Baudonivia seems to refer to the same practice of listening to the words and teachings of the visiting "servants of God" which Fortunatus mentions. However, her version is quite different.

Whenever a servant of God would come, she would question him anxiously about the manner in which he served the Lord. If she found something new from him, which she was not used to doing, with alacrity she would first impose it on herself, and afterwards to her congregation with such words as she showed by example.<sup>74</sup>

Here we see a sharp contrast between Fortunatus' image of passive learning and Baudonivia's description of Radegund actively questioning the visitor about his methods. Rather than blindly adopting the new practice at Sainte-Croix, she tested out his approach on herself first before finally instructing her congregation. Baudonivia continues,

with pious solicitude and maternal affection... she did not cease preaching that which the readings contained for the salvation of the soul. Just as a bee

---

<sup>72</sup> "Ad cuius opinionem, si quis servorum Dei vel per se, vel vocatus, visus fuisset occurrere, videres illam, cælestem habere lætitiã; & hora noctis recursa, cum paucis pergens in thermis per nivem, lutum, vel pulverem, aqua calida parata, ipsa lavabat & tergebat venerandi viri vestigia, nec resistente servo Dei, propinabat ei pateram. Sequenti die curam domus committens creditariis, ipsa se totam occupabat circa viri justi verba, circa salutis instituta." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.7.

<sup>73</sup> See for example, Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.9.11-14; 4.17.30-34.

<sup>74</sup> "Undecumque servus Dei venisset, sollicitè perquirebat, qualiter Domino serviret. Si quid vero novi ab eo agnovisset, quod ipsa non faceret, continuo cum omni alacritate sibi prius imposuit, & post congregationi tam verbo quam exemplo ostendit." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.13.

collects from various kinds of flowers to make honey, so also did she strive to gather little spiritual flowers from those whom she invited, whence she brought forth the fruit of good works as much in herself as in those who followed her.<sup>75</sup>

This charming analogy reflects an entirely different dimension to Radegund's very personal and active role in the education of her convent. Radegund consciously chose and assembled knowledge from both texts and clerics which she then preached to the nuns of Sainte-Croix.<sup>76</sup> Even after Radegund's death, Baudonivia relates how "we reminisce about her preaching" and "we desire her teaching."<sup>77</sup> Throughout her account, Baudonivia's use of the first person positions her and her fellow nuns as the object of Radegund's instruction or preaching. This contributes to a sense of personal intimacy between the author and her subject which lends considerable authenticity to Baudonivia's portrait of Radegund as a very active preacher and teacher at Sainte-Croix.

Perhaps this was a side of Radegund that Fortunatus did not often see. His position as priest granted him access to the convent. But the extent to which he might be permitted to witness the daily exercises of the nuns is uncertain. He may not have been present during these events which Baudonivia clearly experienced first-hand. However, in one of Fortunatus' poems to Radegund, he praises the power of her words saying,

You have given me great verse on small tablets, you can create honey in the empty wax; you bestow a feast of many courses in the joyful festivities, but your words are sustenance to me for which I am even more eager; you send little verses composed of charming speech, by whose words you bind our heart. All the delicacies you produce are sufficient for the others, but to me may your tongue grant pure honey.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> "... illa pia sollicitudine, maternoque affectu; quod lectio continebat, ad animæ salutem prædicare non cessabat. Sicut enim apis diversa genera florum congregat, unde mella conficiat, sic illa ab his, quos invitabat, spirituales studebat carpere flosculos, unde boni operis fructum tam sibi quam suis sequacibus exhiberet." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.13.

<sup>77</sup> "Nos vero humiles... desideramus in ea doctrinam;" "reminiscimur de prædicatione." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 4.33-34.

<sup>78</sup> George, *Venantius Fortunatus*, 120.

Fortunatus' poems reveal an intimacy he shared with the women of Sainte-Croix, entirely unexpressed in his *vita*. The way Fortunatus refers to the honey of her words in these particular verses is very similar to Baudonivia's image of Radegund gathering little spiritual flowers like a bee. While Fortunatus' description of her "little verses" of "charming speech" certainly does not bear the same gravity of Baudonivia's emphasis on Radegund's preaching and teaching, it is clear that he places high value on her writing and speech. Why doesn't Fortunatus portray Radegund in his *vita* in the same way that his poetry suggests that he truly saw her? It seems clear that his conscious choice to emphasize Radegund's passivity indicates his aim of constructing a particularly domestic and reclusive image of Radegund. The exact reasons for this will be elaborated in Part 2 of this chapter.

Nowhere in Fortunatus' *vita* is Radegund's domesticity so apparent as in his description of her charitable practices and palliative care for the sick. According to his account, Radegund began engaging in charity and service during her childhood at Athies. Seating a group of poor children on chairs, Radegund ministered to them, washing their heads, and offering them food and water. But after Radegund's marriage to Clothar, her interest in palliative care expanded:

Yet turning her mind to works of mercy, she built a house at Athies, in which place beds were arranged elegantly, for the needy women congregated. She herself washing them in warm baths, attended to the purification of their illnesses, washing the heads of the men, doing service. Before she washed them, she mixed a potion for the same [the men] with her own hand, so that she might restore those fatigued from hard labor. Thus the devoted woman, queen by birth and marriage, mistress of the palace, served the poor as a maid.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> "Adhuc animum tendens ad opus misericordiae, Ateias domum instruit; quo lectis culte compositis, congregatis egenis feminis, ipsa eas lavans in thermis, morborum curabat putredines, virorum capita diluens, ministerium faciens, quos ante laverat, eisdem sua manu miscebat l, ut fessos de sudore sumpta potio recrearet. Sic devota Femina, nata & nupta regina, palatii domina, pauperibus serviebat ancilla." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.4.

The establishment of this hospital at Athies is mentioned nowhere in Baudonivia's account, nor are the increasingly graphic descriptions of palliative care, subservience, and humiliation which Fortunatus depicts throughout his *vita*.

Before she entered the convent at Poitiers, Radegund went on a pilgrimage of charity around the Frankish kingdom. She visited hermits' cells and monasteries, shedding all her worldly possessions for the enrichment of the Frankish centers of monastic life. She stopped at the basilica of St. Martin in Tours, as well as his shrine in Candes, where she laid her costly clothing and jewelry as offerings upon the altars. She then proceeded to her villa at Saix to continue a more prolonged program of charitable and palliative works.

At Saix, Radegund would provide a daily meal to a group of dependent paupers (*matriculam*) and on Thursdays and Saturdays she prepared a bath for them. She would wash their heads and felt no aversion to their scabs, scabies, lice, or pus. She extracted worms, cleansed their putrid skin, and applied unguents to their ulcers.<sup>80</sup> While fasting herself, she would serve bread and meat to the poor and she spoon-fed the blind and weak.<sup>81</sup> While she had two women there to assist her in her ministrations, Fortunatus insists that Radegund alone served her guests and he styles her as a "new Martha."<sup>82</sup> She would also minister to lepers, embracing them, feeding them, and applying unguents to their sores.<sup>83</sup> While both

---

<sup>80</sup> "... crustæ, scabiei, tineæ, nec purulenta fastidians, interdum & vermes extrahens, purgans cutis putredines;" "Ulcera vero cicatricum, quæ cutis laxa detexerat, aut ungues exasperaverant." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.3.

<sup>81</sup> "... stans ante prandentes jejuna, præsens convivis ipsa incidebat panem, carnem, vel quidquid apponeret. Languidis autem & cæcis non cessabat ipsa cibos cum cochleari porrigere." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.13.

<sup>82</sup> "hoc non præsentibus duabus, sed se sola serviente, ut nova Martha satageret." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.13.

<sup>83</sup> "Ipsa exinde mulieres variis lepræ perfusas maculis comprehendens in amplexu, osculabatur in Deo, eas toto diligens animo. Deinde posita mensa, ferens aquam calidam, facies lavabat, manus, ungues & ulcera, & rursus administrabat, ipsa pascens singulas." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.15.

Fortunatus' and Baudonivia's accounts tend to overlap in their treatment of Radegund's healing miracles, Baudonivia's account hardly mentions any instances of this type of palliative care. She only recounts a few instances where Radegund cleaned the feet of the sick with her own hands, but does not reference the hospital at Athies or any application of medical treatments.

One of the few subjects of Radegund's life that both her biographers seem to agree upon is the severity of Radegund's abstinence. Both Fortunatus and Baudonivia use the same language to describe Radegund's preference for spiritual nourishment,

Moreover, she relegated herself to such an arduous condition of abstinence, to the point that her infirmity permitted, so that, with her mind intent on God, she did not require earthly food.<sup>84</sup> (Baudonivia)

She despised food of the belly. Christ was all her nourishment and all her hunger was for Christ.<sup>85</sup> (Fortunatus)

Radegund's abstinence was so severe that it raised the concern of Caesaria of Arles. In her letter to Radegund in 550, she expressed her anxiety about Radegund's health, saying, "It has come to me that you abstain too much. Do all in accordance with reason, if you would live for me and always be able to."<sup>86</sup> Caesaria was worried that Radegund would become sick through her excessive self-denial and that she would not be able to govern (*regere*) her flock. She counseled Radegund, offering excerpts on moderation from the Gospels and referring to the guiding principles of the Rule they both vowed to obey.

---

<sup>84</sup> "Se autem in tam ardua abstinentiae districtione reclusit, usquequo infirmitas permisit, ut mens intenta Deo terrenum jam non requireret cibum." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.10.

<sup>85</sup> "Cui, despecto ventris edulio, Christus erat tota refectio, & tota fames erat ei in Christo." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.6.

<sup>86</sup> "Pervenit ad me quod nimis abstineas. Totum rationabiliter fac, si tu mihi vivas et semper possis." Abbess Caesaria of Saint Jean of Arles to Radegund, *MGH 7, Epistolae Aevi Merovingici Collectae*, 450-53, ep.11

Caesaria's admonition of Radegund's abstinence confirms both Fortunatus' and Baudonivia's descriptions. However, the most striking difference in how the two biographers treat Radegund's self-abnegation is in the way that Fortunatus seems to relish in describing her frenetic self-imposed humiliation, sometimes repeating his descriptions of particularly degrading activities. But undoubtedly his description of her excessive self-mortification is the most shocking aspect of his account which clashes most noticeably with Baudonivia's narration of Radegund's ascetic activities. She refers to Fortunatus' "preceding book" which describes the rigor of her abstinence *multa*.<sup>87</sup> But she neither denies nor affirms the severity of Radegund's practices as related by Fortunatus.

As in Baudonivia's account, Fortunatus also relates how Radegund severely limited her intake of food and water. She often wore an uncomfortable hair cloth close to her skin and slept upon a bed of ashes "so that rest itself was fatiguing."<sup>88</sup> But even this was not enough. Fortunatus explains that Radegund truly wanted to become a martyr, even though the age of persecution had passed.<sup>89</sup> To accomplish this martyrdom she assumed the role of a *tortrix* and inflicted terrible wounds on herself using the most painful techniques: she bound her body in chains so tightly that after Lent, when she tried to remove them, she found that her flesh had swelled around the chains and their removal caused dangerous bleeding.<sup>90</sup> She had a brass plate made in the shape of a cross which she would heat up and press against her

---

<sup>87</sup> "De abstinentiæ vero rigore, anterior liber multa docuit." Abbess Caesaria of Saint Jean of Arles to Radegund, *MGH 7, Epistolae Aevi Merovingici Collectae*, 450-53, ep.11.

<sup>88</sup> "... ipsa requies fatigabat." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.18.

<sup>89</sup> "... non essent persecutionis tempora, ut fieret martyr." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.22.

<sup>90</sup> "Quadam vice sibi translatos circulos ferreos diebus Quadragesimæ collo vel brachiis innexuit, & tres catenas inserens circa suum corpus dum alligasset astricte, inclusit durum ferrum caro tenera supercrescens: & transacto jejunio cum voluisset catenas sub cute clausas extrahere, nec valeret, caro per dorsum atque pectus super ferrum catenarum est incisa per circulum; ut sanguis fusus ad extremum exinaniret corpusculum." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.21.

body to melt the flesh.<sup>91</sup> She also carried a basin full of burning coals which left lasting marks.<sup>92</sup>

Fortunatus emphasizes Radegund's isolation during these gruesome episodes. She performed her self-mortification "withdrawn from the rest," and "in her cell."<sup>93</sup> These were private activities conducted away from public view. She silently concealed the physical evidence of these mortifications but "the putrefying blood made evident the pain that her voice did not reveal."<sup>94</sup> In his essay on the comparative hagiography of Fortunatus and Baudonivia, Jean Leclercq questions the veracity of this extreme mortification and wonders if it is rather an exaggeration of Fortunatus.<sup>95</sup>

While the *Vitae Radegundis* of Baudonivia and Fortunatus could hardly diverge more in terms of their subject matter and their individual characterizations of Radegund, both accounts reveal a Radegund who successfully reinvented herself. Even though *vitae* as a genre tend to tell us more about the authors than their subjects, examining Fortunatus and Baudonivia's work alongside Radegund's own writings gives us a glimpse of who Radegund was and the world she lived in. We may not be able to disentangle her character, her personality, her desires, and her "voice" from her biographers' interpretations of her experiences, but this analysis can at least center her reactions to those experiences and allow us to draw – albeit somewhat shaky – conclusions about her motivations. The circumstances of her capture and subsequent marriage to her family's killer were hardly uncommon realities

---

<sup>91</sup> "Inde vice altera jussit fieri laminam de aurichalco in signo Christi, quam accensam in cellulam locis duobus corporis altius sibi impressit, tota carne decocta." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.21.

<sup>92</sup> "jubet portari manile plenum ardentibus carbonibus." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.22.

<sup>93</sup> "discedentibus reliquis;" "in cellulam." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.22.

<sup>94</sup> "... tacens tegit foramina; sed computrescens sanguis manifestabat, quod vox non prodebat in pœna." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.22.

<sup>95</sup> Jean LeClerq, "La sainte Radegonde de Venance Fortunat et celle de Baudovinie: Essai d'hagiographie comparée," *Fructus centesimus: mélanges offerts à Gerard J.M. Bartelink à l'occasion de son soixante-cinquième anniversaire* (Steenbrugis: In abbatia S. Petri, 1989), 211.

for aristocratic women in sixth century Gaul. However, both Fortunatus and Baudonivia relate how Radegund's active and persistent use of her own agency allowed her to construct a new identity for herself at Poitiers. In fact, Radegund herself seemed to promote this image of herself in her own writing. As she writes in her letter to the Bishops,

Once freed of the secular chains, with divine mercy providing and inspiring, I was translated to the rule of voluntary religion, with Christ leading me, thinking with the zeal of a mind disposed to the progress of other women, with the Lord announcing how my desires would be accomplished, and with the most excellent King Clothar building and paying, I established a monastery of girls in the city of Poitiers, and endowed the institution with a donation as great as royal munificence granted me.<sup>96</sup>

Radegund's juxtaposition of her freedom from secular chains with her entrance into voluntary monastic life expresses this liberating self-reinvention. As queen, her charitable aspirations were limited. She interceded for prisoners and donated significant sums to monasteries, hermits, and the poor. But she lacked the independence to devote herself fully to her charitable causes and to the benefit of other women, as she desired. When she established her convent in Poitiers, she created a new power for herself that she would not have had access to either at her father's house in Thuringia, or as Clothar's queen. The influence Radegund acquired was composed of this new fused identity of queen and saint - the *Beata Regina* of Sainte-Croix. Radegund's strategic adoption of the Rule of St. Caesarius of Arles granted her independence from episcopal and secular jurisdiction while her queenly status allowed her to claim protection from both kings and bishops. Baudonivia's account reveals how Sigibert's promotion of Radegund's cult enabled her to obtain and install the prestigious

---

<sup>96</sup> "Et quoniam olim vinclis laicalibus absoluta, divina providente et inspirante clementia, ad religionis normam visa sum voluntarie, duce Christo, translata, haec pronae mentis studio cogitans etiam de aliarum profectibus, ut, annuntiante Domino, mea desideria efficerentur reliquis profutura, instituyente atque remunerante praecellentissimo domno rege Chlothario, monasterium puellarum Pictava urbe constitui, conditumque, quantum mihi munificentia regalis est largita, facta donatione dotavi." Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 9.42.



relic of the True Cross, further increasing the reputation of the royally endowed Sainte-Croix vis-à-vis Bishop Maroveus' cult of St. Hilary. A major factor of her power was derived from the political connections she made within and without her familial factions and her patronage of useful supporters, such as Fortunatus and Gregory of Tours. Her influence extended from the Frankish kings, to the Emperor in Constantinople, to the Patriarchs of Jerusalem.

Although Fortunatus omits many of these instances of Radegund's exercise of power, he does not strip her of all her agency. Most notably, he describes her passion and authority as she forced Bishop Médard of Noyon to consecrate her as a deaconess after her flight from Clothar when he murdered her *frater innocenter*. In donning the monastic habit through her own initiative, Radegund was very literally constructing a new identity for herself. This pivotal moment where Radegund initiates the end of her marriage is an excellent point of departure for Part II, which is concerned with the hagiographical approach to Radegund's sexual status and what this can tell us more broadly about early Christian women's spirituality.

***Part II***  
***From Runaway Wife to Sainted Queen:***  
***The Model of Saintly Queenship and Compensating for Scandal in the Vita Radegundis***

...And she entered the sacristy, put on monastic garb, and proceeded straight to the altar, saying these words to the blessed Médard: "If you shrink from consecrating me, and fear man more than God, Pastor, He will require His sheep's soul from your hand." He was shaken by that declaration and, laying his hand on her, he consecrated her as a deaconess.<sup>97</sup>

Thus spoke Queen Radegund to bishop Médard of Noyon as he stood – hesitating – in his basilica. This is the first and only time we witness such a fearsome display of

---

<sup>97</sup> "... intrans in sacrarium, monachica veste induitur, & procedens ad altare, beatissimum Medardum his verbis alloquitur, dicens: Si me consecrare distuleris, & plus hominem quam Dominum timueris, de manu tua a pastore ovis anima requiratur. Qua ille contestatione concussus, manu superposita consecravit diaconam." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.10.

queenly authority in Venantius Fortunatus' (587) account of Radegund's life. King Clothar's nobles had laid hold of the bishop and were attempting to drag him from his altar. If Clothar's men failed to obstruct the ordination ceremony, the king's wife would be out of his reach forever.

This potentially scandalous abandonment of her noble husband, dramatically highlighted here by the bold threat of the otherwise demure saint, might seem out of place in this hagiographical text. In the effort to construct an image of Radegund that conformed to the traditional model of saintly queenship, Fortunatus omitted many of the more controversial aspects of his subject's life. Only the nun of Sainte-Croix, Baudonivia, was proud to relate her foundress' interactions with kings and emperors, her relic gathering career, her diplomatic role as peacemaker among Clothar's warring sons, and her fiery conflict with the local bishop. So why would Fortunatus draw such attention to Radegund's flight from her husband when he carefully avoided these other equally controversial or un-saintly events of her life?

According to JoAnn McNamara, the performance of sanctity for the medieval queen was directly dependent on her role as the king's wife.<sup>98</sup> Therefore, Radegund's flight from Clothar, which would scandalize any queen, also had the potential to delegitimize Radegund's position as a *holy* queen. I argue that Fortunatus took special care to overcome this obstacle by strategically constructing Radegund's abandonment of Clothar in acceptable terms for his audience. Once he was able to remove the impediment, he was then free to

---

<sup>98</sup> Jo Ann McNamara, "Imitatio Helenae: Sainthood as an Attribute of Queenship in the Early Middle Ages," *Saints: Studies in Hagiography* (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1996), 52.

dedicate the remainder of his *vita* to demonstrating how Radegund conformed to the saintly queen model of humility and domestic service which his audience knew so well.

However, very few scholars have recognized the nuances of the relationship between sainthood and queenship, insisting instead upon the mutual exclusivity of marriage and sanctity. Because of this, most scholarship that deals with Fortunatus' narrative from a gendered or theological perspective considers the question of whether Fortunatus could have been attempting to compensate for Radegund's former life as a sexually active wife by constructing a particularly domestic, penitential, reclusive, and service-oriented image of the Merovingian queen. Did the sixth century theological attitude towards virginity create a context in which Fortunatus felt the need to suppress the active aspects of Radegund's life and emphasize her humility and asceticism to compensate for her non-virginal state? To persuade his audience of her sanctity and to distract his readership from her sexual impurity, would Fortunatus be expected to present the image of an overtly domestic and penitent Radegund?

This is the argument proposed by Dyan Elliot in *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*. She does not acknowledge, as Lynda Coon does in *Sacred Fictions*, that for example, Fortunatus specifically compares Radegund's act of serving the poor at table to the biblical Martha's ministrations to Christ and Lazarus. There is also a widespread emphasis on humility and domestic servitude (in imitation of such biblical models) found in many early hagiographical accounts of noble and royal women – such as Melania the Elder, Paula and Eustochium, the Theodosian empress Flaccilla, Constantine's mother Helena, and even Radegund's saintly mother-in-law Clotild, to name a few. These elite women's entrance into the monastic life was accompanied by intense examples of humility, representing their

*contemptus mundi* and dedication to Christ. (“Humility,” as Jerome states, “is the first of Christian graces.”)<sup>99</sup> The importance of humility and service to women’s spirituality is emphasized further by the service requirement included in the Rule of Saint Caesarius of Arles, which Radegund adopted for the nuns of Sainte-Croix in 570. Coon’s work stresses the ascendancy of these attributes of elite female sanctity during the Merovingian era, stating, “in Frankish Gaul the domestic service motif culminates in the archetypal housekeeping saint who cooks, spins, washes the feet of the poor, and nurses the sick.”<sup>100</sup> However, Radegund’s performance of these tasks assumes a degree of self-debasement unprecedented in earlier *vitae* of holy queens and noblewomen. The severity of her humility goes beyond that of a *nova Martha* to assume the self-sacrificial quality of Christ.

Elliot is correct in her supposition that Fortunatus is compensating for something – it’s just not Radegund’s sexual impurity. Rather, it is the potential scandal caused by the queen’s abandonment of her husband to enter the religious life. Typically, the saintly queen only renounces the palace for the monastery as a pious widow. But in Radegund’s case, Fortunatus must compensate for this irregularity, not only by strategically omitting the active aspects of her life in favor of a more domestic and reclusive portrayal. He also emphasizes the un-widowed queen’s conformity to well-established models of female sainthood by portraying a radical form of asceticism and humility that goes well beyond any traditional expectations. Therefore, although most Patristic writings reveal a preference for – even the

---

<sup>99</sup> Jerome, *Letter 108.15*, trans. by W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis and W.G. Martley, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 6, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893).

<sup>100</sup> Lynda Coon, *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 43.

superiority of – virginity, Radegund’s domestic, penitential, reclusive, and service-oriented behavior should *not* be interpreted as compensation for her lost virginity.

### ***Radegund’s Self-Debasement***

The most shocking part of Fortunatus’ *vita Radegundis* are the instances of Radegund’s radical self-debasement, which are so conspicuously absent from Baudonivia’s narrative. Radegund would “sweep the floors of the convent and clean whatever disgusting things she found in the corners, not shrinking away from what others were too horrified even to look upon. She cleaned the latrines and carried out the stinking waste.”<sup>101</sup> Whether her task was gathering firewood, cooking, cleaning the floors or the dishes, starting a fire in the hearth, or drawing water, Radegund performed her domestic work with “excited fervor.” As if these tasks were not enough, “While all the *monachas* were still asleep, she collected their shoes and returned them cleaned and oiled to each of them.”<sup>102</sup> Not only did she care selflessly for the poor and the sick, but, “washing and kissing their feet, the holy one prostrated herself and begged them all to pardon any negligence she might have committed.”<sup>103</sup> Fortunatus seems to relish the minute details of this humiliating performance, devoting several chapters to such descriptions.

Dyan Elliot attributes Radegund’s domestic service to the poor and to the nuns of Sainte-Croix as an extreme form of penance undertaken as a necessary measure to atone for her non-virginal status – as if she were a “fallen virgin.” Even more troubling is Elliot’s

---

<sup>101</sup> “Ergo suis vicibus scopans monasterii plateas vel angulos, quidquid erat foedum purgans, & sarcinas, quas alii horrebant videre, non abhorrebat evehere. Secretum etiam opus purgare non tardans, sed scopans ferebat foetores stercoris.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.19.

<sup>102</sup> “Adhuc monachus omnibus soporantibus, calceamenta tergens & unguens, retransmittebat per singulas.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.18.

<sup>103</sup> “Sanctissima, pedes lavans & osculans, & adhuc ab omnibus prostrata deprecabatur veniam pro commissa negligentia.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.20.

insistence upon the “profound sense of inferiority” she finds in Radegund’s “exaggerated deference to the other, presumably purer, nuns, and the types of tasks she assumes.”<sup>104</sup> She argues that Fortunatus “attempts to distract the reader from the stigma of a virginity lost,” stating that he emphasized such extreme forms of asceticism and domestic service because he felt the need to compensate specifically for Radegund’s married status.<sup>105</sup> For Fortunatus, Elliot argues, Radegund “belongs to the despised category” of “neither virgin nor mother.”<sup>106</sup> Within a theological context that promoted a spiritual hierarchy of merit based on a woman’s condition of chastity, Elliot asserts that Radegund’s marriage to Clothar precluded her from achieving the hundred-fold heavenly reward bestowed upon virginal *sponsae Christi*. Thus, Radegund needed to perform a radical form of penance – not just asceticism – to atone for her former life as a sexually active wife.

### ***The Theological Conception of the Bride of Christ***

To consider the possibility of Fortunatus’ need to compensate for Radegund’s non-virginal status, it is necessary to first consider the sixth century theological attitude towards virginity, the influence it may have had on Radegund’s behavior, and how it may have affected Fortunatus’ account of her life.

As originally demonstrated by JoAnn McNamara’s early work, the “bride of Christ” terminology was first applied to the consecrated virgins of Carthage by Tertullian as an instrument of control in 220 A.D.<sup>107</sup> Elliot’s study in *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell* continues to trace the development of the *sponsa Christi* and considers how early Christian

---

<sup>104</sup> Dyan Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell: Metaphor and Embodiment in the Lives of Pious Women, 200-1500*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 99.

<sup>105</sup> Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 98.

<sup>106</sup> Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 91.

<sup>107</sup> Jo Ann McNamara, *A New Song: Celibate Women in the First Three Christian Centuries* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1985), 108-109; 123.

attitudes toward virginity might have been applied to non-virginal matrons and widows who sought the religious life. She notes that the submission of the “bride” to her celestial “bridegroom” was implicit in this matrimonial association that strove to curtail the independence of consecrated virgins and impose greater discipline on their communities. However, Elliot argues that the title, *sponsa Christi*, was eventually appropriated by the women themselves in a positive sense as a means of self-identification. “They ultimately came to relish this point of identification,” Elliot writes, “adding many surprising and unprecedented embellishments,” some of which were inspired by a literal reading of the *Song of Songs*.<sup>108</sup>

The main focus of Elliot’s study is on the increasingly “embodied literalism” that characterized the Church’s attitude toward virginity from the third century onward. In these early days of Christianity, church authorities conceptualized the virginity of the bride of Christ less as a condition dependent on physical integrity and more as a state of mind. However, it was Tertullian’s “embodied literalism” that became the dominant view as women’s religious vocation advanced.<sup>109</sup> In this way, the intact body of the virgin became the fundamental quality of the *sponsa Christi*, which contributed, as Elliot argues, to the “progressively embodied nature of female spirituality.” The medieval concept of a hierarchy of merit delineated by degree of chastity reflects this focus on the female body.<sup>110</sup> Based on biblical exegesis of the Parable of the Sower, the virgin reaps a hundred-fold reward in heaven, a chaste widow, a sixty-fold reward, and a married woman, only a thirty-fold reward.<sup>111</sup> In organizing this hierarchy of merit according to marital status, the married

---

<sup>108</sup> Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 4.

<sup>109</sup> Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 3; 25.

<sup>110</sup> Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 63; 66.

<sup>111</sup> Jerome, *Letter 22*; Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 66.

woman is thus presented as inferior in spiritual distinction to the virgin. However, while this “embodied literalism” may have characterized the Church’s definition of virginity, there is scant evidence to suggest that the performance of penance specifically for lost virginity was ever integrated into the model of the saintly queen.

### ***Church Legislation Against Consecrated Widows and Deaconesses***

Most scholars agree that early Church legislation mirrored the disparaging attitude toward non-virginal women delineated in the hierarchy of merit by restricting the ordination of certain female offices.<sup>112</sup> However, this restriction seems to be unrelated to sexual status. Rather, it demonstrates a trend of limiting the opportunities for women in general – not just married or widowed women – to attain positions of authority within the Church.

As Elliot notes, Canon law insisted upon the mutual exclusivity of secular and “mystical” marriage ceremonies, meaning that, “any woman who had participated in the terrestrial ceremony was barred from the celestial,” and vice versa.<sup>113</sup> According to this restriction, matrons and widows who wished to enter a convent were ineligible for consecration as brides of Christ. Elliot suggests that they would have been perceived as “lesser brides” or even “concubines” of Christ, which placed them at a spiritual disadvantage to their virginal counterparts.<sup>114</sup>

However, the offices of deaconess and consecrated widow made it possible for non-virginal women to achieve positions of dignity within the hierarchy of the Church.<sup>115</sup> Much of the source material on early deaconesses and widows comes from the *Constitutiones*

---

<sup>112</sup> Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 173.

<sup>113</sup> Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 66.

<sup>114</sup> Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 64.

<sup>115</sup> Gillian Cloke, *This Female Man of God: Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, AD 350-450* (London: Routledge, 1995), 89.



*Apostolorum*, a fourth century compilation of the third century *Traditio Apostolica* and *Didascalia*.<sup>116</sup> These offices flourished in the early days of Christianity until Church legislation began to take steps to minimize women's opportunities to exert authority. The early popularity of the orders of consecrated widow and deaconess are attested to by Gillian Cloke in her study, *This Female Man of God*. "As compared with the virgins," Cloke writes, "widows represented a numerically superior and historically more ancient tendency in the Church." But the state of widowhood was considerably more ambiguous than that of the virginal bride of Christ and there were several different classes of widows. In general, "they occupied an uneasy middle ground between being church functionaries and prime recipients of church charity."<sup>117</sup> Those who raised their widowhood "to the level of a vowed life-choice approved by the Church" could be endowed with certain duties and possessed definite ecclesiastical status.<sup>118</sup> Susanna Elm discusses the role and function of this group of widows who were "elected" to this special status if they met certain qualifications. "She had to be at least sixty years of age, have married only once, reared children, and performed good deeds," Elm states.<sup>119</sup> According to the *Apostolic Church Order*, widows would be appointed to pray on behalf of certain members of the community, to make reports to priests, and "to succor women who are sick."<sup>120</sup> Some of the more renowned Roman widows, such as Marcella, Melania, Paula, and Blaesilla were from noble families and disposed of their great wealth by making charitable gifts to the Church, hermits, and monastic communities. Marcella, described by Jerome as the first nun, created her own model of the widowed lifestyle based

---

<sup>116</sup> Elm, *Virgins of God*, 171.

<sup>117</sup> Cloke, *This Female Man of God*, 82.

<sup>118</sup> Cloke, *This Female Man of God*, 86; 90.

<sup>119</sup> Elm, *Virgins of God*, 167.

<sup>120</sup> Pope Clement I, *Les constitutions apostoliques (Constitutiones Apostolorum)*, ed. Marcel Metzger (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1985), 21; Cloke, *This Female Man of God*, 90.

on her readings of the Desert Fathers when she founded and headed a monastic establishment for virgins in Rome. Numerous pious widows followed her example and became leaders of communities of virgins.<sup>121</sup> This tradition was continued by Radegund's mother-in-law, Clotild, and by Radegund herself in the Merovingian era.

According to the third century *Traditio Apostolica*, widows were listed in rank below the bishop, presbyter, deacons, and confessor, but above the lector and the virgins. However, the *Constitutiones Apostolorum* of 380 shows a reordering of church functionaries with widows relegated to a place at the bottom of the hierarchy below virgins and deaconesses.<sup>122</sup> Cloke goes on to relate the standard historical narrative of how the order of widows disappeared in the fourth century when it was subsumed by the office of the deaconess.<sup>123</sup> According to this narrative, the rise of virginity as the ideal state further accelerated the demise of the consecrated widow.<sup>124</sup> However, Elm finds this narrative too simplistic because, "such interpretations reflect too precisely the sources themselves, namely the canonico-liturgical literature, which is by definition normative, not descriptive."<sup>125</sup> Rather, Elm recognizes the incredibly complex relationship between the orders of widows, virgins, and deaconesses, and she uses imperial legislation to show that, "in short, widows were not only *not* on the decline as a 'recruiting pool' for deaconesses [over virgins], but it appears rather that the 'office' of the enrolled widow gradually merged with the function of the deaconess."<sup>126</sup> Despite the prestige it accorded to virgins, the Church realized that it could not deny all the married and widowed women who increasingly sought to enter the religious

---

<sup>121</sup> Jerome, *Letter 127.8*.

<sup>122</sup> Elm, *Virgins of God*, 169.

<sup>123</sup> Cloke, *This Female Man of God*, 55.

<sup>124</sup> Elm, *Virgins of God*, 172.

<sup>125</sup> Elm, *Virgins of God*, 173.

<sup>126</sup> Elm, *Virgins of God*, 176.

life. The wealth and influence attached to elite widows - by virtue of their marriages and familial ties - was a valuable resource for the Church.<sup>127</sup> In return, the office of deaconess offered such non-virginal women an honorable title and a place within the church hierarchy, while still enabling the Church to keep this channel for female authority under restraint.<sup>128</sup>

While not all scholars agree on the details surrounding the rise of deaconesses, the *Constitutiones Apostolorum*, *Traditio Apostolica*, and *Didascalia* provide considerable information regarding the deaconess' duties and function. Unlike widows, deaconesses were formally ordained<sup>129</sup> and they were specifically devoted to "the service of women."<sup>130</sup> They guarded the women's entrance to the church,<sup>131</sup> visited the sick, prepared women for catechism, instructed female candidates for baptism and anointed them with oil during the ceremony.<sup>132</sup> Deaconesses also acted as an intermediary between women of the parish and the deacon or bishop of the community.<sup>133</sup> As Elm relates, "the deaconess represents the female aspects of the diaconate with responsibilities unsuitable for men because of matters of decency."<sup>134</sup> The *Constitutiones Apostolorum* and *Traditio Apostolica* stress public service and ministry to women but an increasing number of deaconesses in the fourth and fifth centuries, such as Olympias, combined the office of deaconess with leadership of monastic communities.<sup>135</sup>

But even as these offices endowed non-virginal female religious with a certain level of honor and authority, evidence from early Church synods and councils demonstrates a

---

<sup>127</sup> Elm, *Virgins of God*, 181.

<sup>128</sup> Elm, *Virgins of God*, 182-183.

<sup>129</sup> Elm, *Virgins of God*, 170.

<sup>130</sup> Cloke, *This Female Man of God*, 126.

<sup>131</sup> Elm, *Virgins of God*, 170

<sup>132</sup> Cloke, *This Female Man of God*, 126.

<sup>133</sup> Cloke, *This Female Man of God*, 208.

<sup>134</sup> Elm, *Virgins of God*, 171.

<sup>135</sup> Cloke, *This Female Man of God*, 209.

strong effort on the part of the Church to abolish them. As Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek show in their comprehensive collection of “all known evidence for women deacons and presbyters in the Greek and Latin speaking worlds,” *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History*, even while the office flourished in the East, the earliest evidence of deaconesses in the West comes from Church council decrees attempting to restrict them.<sup>136</sup> The First Council of Orange in 441 ruled that, “Female deacons are by no means to be ordained. If there are any who have already been ordained, let them submit their heads to the benediction that is granted to the laity.”<sup>137</sup> As Madigan explains, this recommendation was intended to ritually demote ordained deaconesses from the level of clergy back to the rank of laity. In 496, the canon of Pope Gelasius forbade bishops to veil widows, stating that the practice was not authorized by divine or canon law. Under the leadership of Bishop Avitus of Vienne in 517, the Synod of Epaon firmly condemned the “consecration of widows, who are called deaconesses” throughout the entire region.<sup>138</sup> Attempts were made yet again in 533 at the Second Council of Orange under Childebert’s presidency to abolish the office of deaconess with the issuance of two canons. Canon 17 excommunicates women for marrying after they, “received the benediction of the diaconate against its interdiction by the canon.” The significance here lies in the council’s acknowledgement that women – and, implicitly, those performing the consecration – are still ignoring the Church’s prohibitions.<sup>139</sup> Canon 18 goes on to restate the prohibition that “no

---

<sup>136</sup> Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 145.

<sup>137</sup> “Diaconae omnimodis non ordinandae: si quae iam sunt, benedictioni quae populo impenditur capita submittant.” Madigan, *Ordained Women in the Early Church*, 148; “Council of Orange Canon 26,” *Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina*, “Concilia Galliae” (Turnholti : Typographi Brepols, 1953), 84.

<sup>138</sup> Madigan, *Ordained Women in the Early Church*, 146; “Council of Epaon Canon 21,” *Concilia Galliae*, 163-65.

<sup>139</sup> Madigan, *Ordained Women in the Early Church*, 147; “Council of Orléans Canon 17,” *Concilia Galliae*, 64-71.

women may be given the diaconal benediction,” but this time it provides the reason for the ban, “on account of the fragility of their sex.”<sup>140</sup> This interdiction was reaffirmed in 567 at the Council of Tours which presented arguments against veiling widows stating that, “her proposition [of chastity] alone ought to suffice for her.” At Tours, Avitus bishop of Vienne made the ban clear with his comment, “the consecration of widows, who are called deaconesses, we totally abrogate from all our religious practices.”<sup>141</sup> As Suzanne Fonay Wemple notes in *Women in Frankish Society*, by the sixth century, the Frankish church had established women as “a threat to the ritual purity of the Church in a variety of nefarious ways.” The synod at Auxerre held between 561 and 605 confirmed women’s natural impurity.<sup>142</sup> Virginity or lack thereof played little part in the justification for abolishing the female diaconate. Rather, it was the inherent nature of women in general that made them unfit for roles of clerical leadership.

Despite over a century of attempts to abolish the ordination of deaconesses in the West, how was it that Radegund was ordained in 558 by bishop Médard of Noyon? Clearly, practice did not always align with rule. The legal decisions and canon statutes which laid strict prohibitions against the ordination of deaconesses were not successful in preventing their ordination. As Wemple suggests, the slew of prohibitions against deaconesses attests to their prevalence in Gaul.<sup>143</sup> In addition to Radegund, there is record of at least five other deaconesses from the sixth century: Helaria, the deaconess and “blessed daughter” of Remigius, the bishop of Reims; Anna, a deaconess from Rome; Theodora, a deaconess from

---

<sup>140</sup> Madigan, *Ordained Women in the Early Church*, 147; “Council of Orléans Canon 18,” *Concilia Galliae*.

<sup>141</sup> Gary Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 68; Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 67.

<sup>142</sup> Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 139.

<sup>143</sup> Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 138.

Ticini Gaul; Ausonia, a deaconess from Dalmatia<sup>144</sup>; and Accepta from Rukuma in Africa Proconsularis.<sup>145</sup>

It is interesting to note that in the particular case of Gaul, even as the Church was attempting to legally restrict women's religious authority, the reverse was actually occurring as the growth of Frankish female monasticism provided women with new avenues for leadership. Monasticism had been flourishing in Gaul beginning in the fourth century and by the fifth and sixth centuries, "distinguished and noble nunneries were established in the great Roman towns of Tours and Poitiers, as well as in or near other Frankish cities." These were often established and presided over by aristocratic women with significant wealth and influence – like Radegund – and, "as a consequence, they often sought or were granted direct protection by the papacy, which left the local ordinary with only limited powers of oversight."<sup>146</sup> Like some of her contemporaries, Radegund declined the position of abbess, preferring to maintain the role of spiritual mother (and queen). During the Merovingian, Carolingian, and even into the Ottonian era, the assumption of authority over monastic institutions gave aristocratic and influential women like Radegund the opportunity of rising to new heights of leadership, and even at times superseding that of the traditional male overseers. Ultimately, this survey of Church legislation reveals a conscious effort on the part of the clergy to restrict the ordination of deaconesses and the consecration of widows. However, it is also clear that these restrictions had less to do with the woman's sexual status than it did with issues of female authority and jurisdiction.

---

<sup>144</sup> Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination*, 69.

<sup>145</sup> Madigan, *Ordained Women in the Early Church*, 145.

<sup>146</sup> Madigan, *Ordained Women in the Early Church*, 141.

But does any of this evidence indicate that Radegund's biographer, Fortunatus, might have felt pressured by this theological climate to portray the non-virginal Saint Radegund as overtly penitential and ascetic? While the restrictions on female ordination seem to have been somewhat ineffective, Elliot notes a general "liturgical stigmatization" of non-virginal women entering the religious life. As she goes on to explain, the introduction of penitential elements into their consecration ceremonies stemmed from the tendency in the earliest liturgies to withhold the nuptial blessing from second marriages and to issue the couple penance for remarrying. Theologically speaking, the ordination of a non-virginal deaconess was essentially her second marriage ceremony. Therefore, during the deaconess's consecration ceremony, the *ordo* asks that God lead her "to pardon, that she should merit to be cleansed from all the filth of trespasses and reconciled to you." Again, there is an emphasis on penance in the supplication on behalf of the consecrated widow that God "concede to her the fruit of chastity, that she not be mindful of past desires. May she be ignorant of the inflamed desires of the vices."<sup>147</sup> Both the deaconess and the consecrated widow are compared to the prophetess Anna who was married for only 7 years and spent the rest of her life as a penitential widow, praying and fasting in the temple day and night.<sup>148</sup>

Elliot also points towards certain differences in the veiling ceremony of deaconesses and virgins which she believes, more than any other aspect, signaled "their inferior standing in both this life and the next."<sup>149</sup> Firstly, deaconesses were veiled during Lent, a time of fasting and penance, while virgins were typically veiled on more joyous occasions like Easter, the Epiphany, the feast day of an apostle, or at the very least, on a Sunday. However,

---

<sup>147</sup> *Constitutiones Apostolorum*, VIII, 19-20, 221.

<sup>148</sup> Luke 2:36-37; Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 66.

<sup>149</sup> Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 66.

as Elliot reluctantly admits, Radegund entered the convent of Sainte-Croix on Easter, “the day most associated with virginal consecration.”<sup>150</sup> Secondly, the veiling of virgins was performed before the gospel reading during mass, which corresponded to the ordination of the clergy, while the veiling of deaconesses typically occurred after the gospel. Additionally, some sources note distinctions between the virgin’s and the non-virgin’s *flammeum*. But the most significant difference between the veiling ceremonies of virgins and deaconesses was the interdiction against the episcopal veiling of non-virgins. While bishops could bestow the veil upon virgins with their own hands, non-virgins were required to veil themselves.<sup>151</sup> According to Fortunatus, when Radegund was ordained, she veiled herself. However, as I will later demonstrate, the portrayal of her self-veiling lacks any penitential tone. On the contrary, it is the only time in the entire *vita* where Fortunatus illustrates Radegund’s queenly authority and power over the clergy.

### ***Early Christian Attitudes Toward Virginit***

Jerome’s account of Blaesilla, the daughter of Paula, seems to be the only clear instance of an elite noble widow performing penance for the loss of her virginity.<sup>152</sup> She was widowed after only seven months of marriage and devoted the rest of her short life to severe penance. In a consolatory letter to her mother, Jerome describes how Blaesilla mourned “the loss of her virginity more than the death of her husband.”<sup>153</sup> She became famous throughout Rome for the severity of her austerities which may have been responsible for her untimely death at the age of twenty. However, Jerome defends and praises her many feats of asceticism and humility, writing that, “her self-abasement was so perfect that she dressed no

---

<sup>150</sup> Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 97.

<sup>151</sup> Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 67.

<sup>152</sup> Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 94.

<sup>153</sup> Jerome, *Letter 39*.



better than her maids.” Making a vow of widowhood, she devoted herself to prayer and study, “and for the rest of her days spurned the world, and thought only of the religious life.” As she lay on her deathbed, Blaesilla’s last words were, “Pray to the Lord Jesus, that He may pardon me, because what I would have done I have not been able to do.” Blaesilla’s final moments were full of concern for failing in the preservation of her virginity. But as Elliot notes, “zealous penance of those who were at one time married often outstrips virginal merit.”<sup>154</sup> In other words, if a widow performed the necessary degree of penance, she might be able to attain a higher reward in Heaven. Therefore, after associating Blaesilla with the biblical penitential widow, Anna, Jerome commends her on the efficacy of her penance saying, “Be at peace, dear Blaesilla, in full assurance that your garments are always white.”

While this evidence does seem to indicate that there was some association of penance with non-virginal deaconesses and widows, the Church Fathers’ attitude toward virginity, marriage, and the general conduct of Christian women was by no means settled by the fifth century. As Gillian Cloke reveals in her exhaustive study on women’s spirituality in the Patristic Age, *This Female Man of God*, the theological situation was considerably more complex than Elliot allows. Cloke writes, “There existed a genuine confusion about the relative merit of chastity as set against the married state, and when some clerics maintained the equity of these conditions, their works were gratefully received by many.”<sup>155</sup>

For example, Jovinian took a rather extreme view, stating that virgins, widows, and married women were all equal once baptized – an idea which Jerome strongly opposed in his treatise *Against Jovinian*. John Chrysostom, on the other hand, came down somewhere in between Jerome and Jovinian, arguing that “the widow starts off inferior only to the virgin,

---

<sup>154</sup> Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 77.

<sup>155</sup> Cloke, *This Female Man of God*, 45.

but at the last she equals her and joins her.”<sup>156</sup> Ambrose notes the beneficial influence widows exert over virgins in his *On Widows*, “I ought not to leave them without honor, nor to separate them from the commendation belonging to virgins... For in a certain manner the inculcation of virginity is strengthened by the example of widows.”<sup>157</sup> Even Jerome, admits this value in widows stating that, “It was in Marcella’s cell that Eustochium, that paragon of virgins, was gradually trained.”<sup>158</sup> In Gregory of Nazianzus’ funeral oration for Gorgonia, he declares that the unmarried state is “more exalted and closer to the divine but more difficult and dangerous,” while the married state is “more humble but safer.” Nonetheless, he commends Gorgonia, who “was able to avoid the disadvantages of each, and to choose and combine the best of both conditions.” He goes on to praise her behavior as a married woman,

For though she was in a carnal union, she was not cut off from the spirit because of it, nor because she had a husband as her head, did she forget the foremost Head: but while she fulfilled those duties due to the world and nature, according to the will of the law of the flesh...she still dedicated herself entirely to God.<sup>159</sup>

It is easy to see a parallel in the language Fortunatus uses to describe Radegund’s marriage to Clothar,

Therefore, though married to a terrestrial king, she was not separated from the celestial one. And, while more secular dignity was bestowed upon her, the more she inclined her will than her dignity permitted, always submissive to God, following the advice of the priests. She was more united to God than joined to her husband.<sup>160</sup>

---

<sup>156</sup> John Chrysostom, *Against Remarriage*, trans. Sally Rieger Shore, *Studies in Women and Religion*, vol. 9, (Leriston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983); Cloke, *This Female Man of God*, 99.

<sup>157</sup> Ambrose, *Concerning Widows*, trans. by H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 10, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896), 391, 1.1.

<sup>158</sup> Jerome, *Letter 127.5*.

<sup>159</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations*, PG 35.395-1252, trans. C.G. Browne and J.E. Swallow, *A Secret Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 7, Oxford, 1894.

<sup>160</sup> “Nupsit ergo terreno principi, non tamen separata a caelesti. Ac dum sibi accessisset secularis dignitas, plus se inclinavit voluntas, quam permittebat dignitas, subdita semper Deo, sectans monita sacerdotum, plus participata Deo, quam sociata conjugio.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.3.

While many Patristic writers did believe in the superiority of virginity over the married state, it is also clear that it was entirely possible for a married woman to still dedicate herself to God in a complete and meaningful way. However, almost every theologian active during the Patristic Age weighed in on the subject, making it difficult to discuss the Patristic attitude towards virginity in terms of any unanimous sentiment.

On the surface, Elliot's use of theological and canonical evidence seems to justify her conclusion that a non-virginal deaconess (such as Radegund) might have been subject to "liturgical stigmatization." However, in light of the complexity of the issue and the varied spectrum of opinions, her strong assertion that non-virginal female religious would have been seen as inferior "concubines of Christ" seems to oversimplify a concept full of contradictions and ambiguities. It is true that according to the hierarchy of merit popularized by Jerome, virginal brides of Christ were allotted the hundred-fold reward, but martyrdom was at the top of Gregory of Tours' hierarchy with virgins meriting only a sixty-fold reward. Augustine believed likewise and titled chapter 46 of *The Confessions*, "Martyrdom Should be Ranked above Virginity." He goes on to write that, "no one, it seems to me, would dare to consider virginity superior to martyrdom."<sup>161</sup> A millennium after the death of Radegund when the Jesuit priest, Etienne Moquot, attempts to make sense of "the strange way in which Saint Radegund mortified herself with iron and fire," he cites Augustine to justify the compatibility of Radegund's marriage and sainthood.<sup>162</sup> Additionally, it has already been demonstrated that the multiple legal decisions and canon statutes which laid strict prohibitions against the ordination of previously married deaconesses clearly did not reflect the reality.

---

<sup>161</sup> *The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. Ray Kearney, ed. David G. Hunter and John E. Rotelle (New York: New City Press and Augustinian Heritage Institute, 1999) page 99; 1.46-47.

<sup>162</sup> Père Etienne Moquot, *La vie de Sainte Radegonde jadis royne de France et fondatrice du royal monastere de Sainte-Croix de Poitiers* (Poitiers : A. Mesnier Imprimeur du Roy, 1621), 339.

### *Domestic Service in the Rule of Caesarius of Arles*

According to earlier hagiographic models, assuming an attitude of extreme humility and deference to others (most commonly the poor, but also fellow members of a religious community) was a necessary step on the way to holiness for a woman of noble or royal birth. Ultimately, it is Radegund's social status and not her lack of virginity which poses the problem for Fortunatus. Only through the inversion of her earthly rank by following saintly models of humility is Radegund able to remove this obstacle to holiness. Elliot's assertion that Radegund's self-punishing behavior serves to mark her as "inferior" to the virginal nuns of Sainte-Croix reflects a misinterpretation of the text and its historical context. On the one hand, her focus on the tensions between virgins and non-virgins entering monastic life contributes greatly to an understanding of women's roles and expectations. However, by concentrating so exclusively on abstract notions of virginity, she neglects the wealth of historical and biblical paradigms which Fortunatus references both implicitly and explicitly.

Radegund's humility and deference is neither an indication of her inferiority to the other virgins, nor indeed, even exceptional behavior in a sixth century monastic institution. Though she does not discuss it at length, McNamara is the only scholar to point to the very important fact that domestic service like kitchen work was required by the Rule of Caesarius of Arles.<sup>163</sup> The significance of this service obligation should not be underestimated because it demonstrates the importance of domestic service to sixth century ideas of holiness. Chapter 14 states, "As in the kitchen, so in every ministration to bodily needs, in whatever the daily need requires, they shall take turns with one another, except the mother and the prioress."<sup>164</sup> In fact, Fortunatus references this obligation no less than four times in his *vita Radegundis*.

---

<sup>163</sup> McNamara, *Sainted Women*, 80, fn.69.

<sup>164</sup> McCarthy, *The Rule for Nuns of St. Caesarius of Arles*, 174.

He notes, “When it was her turn to sweep the floors and corners of the monastery, she cleaned and bundled away whatever disgusting things were there, never too horrified to carry off what others shuddered even to look upon.”<sup>165</sup> In between his descriptions of her humbling domestic service and her most radical self-mortification he writes, “How can anyone describe with what excited fervor she would run into the kitchen, doing her seven days [of chores]?”<sup>166</sup> As McNamara suggests, Radegund may even have introduced the Rule’s service requirement for the infirmary, as Fortunatus states, “She would serve the infirm beyond her assigned week, cooking their food, washing their faces, and bringing them warm water herself.”<sup>167</sup> And he also refers to the Rule more directly, saying, “Further, she never grew lukewarm in her support of the sick and even before she began following Rule of Arles, performing her seven days [of chores] sufficiently, she did great kindnesses for them all.”<sup>168</sup>

It is important to note that, while clearly an important aspect of female sanctity, the concept of service was not necessarily as gendered as Coon implies in her discussion of the “housekeeping saint.” The Benedictine Rule also required monks to perform kitchen chores, specifying that they serve the other brothers at mealtime and clean up afterward.

Furthermore, they were also required to wash the feet of all present and, “On Sunday immediately after Laude, those beginning as well as those completing their week of service

---

<sup>165</sup> “Ergo suis vicibus scopans monasterii plateas vel angulos, quidquid erat fœdum purgans, & sarcinas, quas alii horrebant videre, non abhorrebat evehere.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.19.

<sup>166</sup> “Illud quoque quis explicet, quanto fervore excita ad coquinam concursitabat, suam faciens septimanam?” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.19.

<sup>167</sup> “... extra suam hebdomadam infirmantibus serviens. Ipsa cibos decoquens, ægrotis facies abluens, ipsa calidam porrigens...” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.19.

<sup>168</sup> “Inde per ægrotantes ferens necessaria ibat non tepida: & priusquam exciperet Arelatensem regulam b, hebdomade transacta sufficienter ad omnes faciebat humanitatem.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.20.

should make a profound bow in the oratory before all and ask for their prayers.”<sup>169</sup> This act of humility performed before the even more humbling task of serving their fellow-monks and washing their feet serves to reinforce the monastic rejection of earthly rank and pride. It is their social status that the Benedictine monks, as well as the Saint Croix nuns, were striving to invert.

### ***The Domestic Service Motif in Biblical and Hagiographical Models***

Radegund’s servile and self-abnegating behavior should also be understood within the context of popular biblical and hagiographical models. In *Sacred fictions*, Coon provides a detailed discussion of some of the more important models used in hagiography and how they would have been interpreted by medieval audiences. In imitation of biblical models of female domestic servitude, the aristocratic holy women in Jerome’s circle would cultivate humility through humble dress and care of the poor and sick. As Coon demonstrates, Merovingian hagiography was influenced by these biblical and historical models so that “in Frankish Gaul the domestic service motif culminates in the archetypal housekeeping saint who cooks, spins, washes the feet of the poor, and nurses the sick.”<sup>170</sup>

Therefore, it is not possible to conduct a meaningful analysis of the *vita Radegundis* without a clear understanding of how these models functioned. Coon approaches Fortunatus’ *Life of Radegund* from a linguistic perspective, recognizing the “reciprocal relationship between hagiographer and audience” which determined the presentation style of Merovingian saints’ lives. The prominence of the Bible in Merovingian education - and culture in general -

---

<sup>169</sup> “Intrantes et exeuntes hebdomadarii in oratio mox matutinis finitis dominica omnibus genibus provolvantur postulantes pro se orari.” Timothy Fry, *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes*, trans. and ed. by Timothy Fry, Imogene Baker, Timothy Horner et al. (The Liturgical Press: Minnesota, 1981), 235.

<sup>170</sup> Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 44.

contributed to a rhetorical framework in which biblical references were incorporated into texts through a process linguistics refer to as metonymy, "a mode of signification wherein the part stands for the whole."<sup>171</sup> As Coon explains, "medieval hagiographers could evoke an unspoken, extra-textual dimension that would be understood by medieval audiences who were culturally versed both in scripture and in the lives of the saints."

In his article, "The Two Lives of Saint Radegund," Jason Glenn succinctly expresses the function of medieval saints' lives, "Unlike modern biographies, they were not intended to show what made a saint unique, but rather in what ways they conformed to accepted ideals of holiness."<sup>172</sup> This creates layers upon layers of meaning through implicit or explicit references to biblically or historically established models of sanctity. For example, Fortunatus' account of Radegund's childhood "sacred play" would convey several layers of meaning to the medieval audience. He writes, "With the little cleric, Samuel, following, the holy one would carry a wooden cross she had made and the children would process into the oratory singing psalms as somber as adults."<sup>173</sup> On the surface, this anecdote establishes Radegund's holiness at an early age: even as a child, she displayed saintly qualities. Readers would also recognize this detail as the common hagiographical topos of the *puella (puer) senex*, a child who displays the saintliness and wisdom of an aged person. Conformity to literary *topoi* would help the audience identify Radegund with other saints who share the same established qualities of saintliness, which the audience has come to expect in hagiographical accounts. Radegund's childhood procession with the wooden cross would

---

<sup>171</sup> Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 6.

<sup>172</sup> Jason Glenn, "Two Lives of Saint Radegund," *The Middle Ages in Texts and Texture: reflections on Medieval sources* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 58.

<sup>173</sup> "Hoc etiam sanctissima cum Samuele parvulo clerico gerebat, facta cruce lignea præcedente, dum subsequendo psallentes ad oratorium gravitate matura simul parvuli properabant." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.3.

also anticipate the more glorious procession she conducts many years later from Tours to Poitiers celebrating her acquisition of the True Cross relic. On a deeper level, the anecdote would evoke certain biblical imagery, such as the story of the twelve-year-old Christ who, after the Passover festival in Jerusalem, was found by a distraught Mary and Joseph teaching in the Temple, or the young prophet Samuel who was raised in the Temple and ministered as a boy. Coon notes that while many of these deeper levels of meaning might be overlooked by the modern audience, “biblical culture enabled medieval Christians to decode these symbolic narratives.”<sup>174</sup>

Just as there are multiple layers of meaning in this single anecdote, other features of Radegund’s behavior should be considered in terms of their extra-textual references. Coon notes that Radegund’s servile behavior, which Elliot evaluates as a marker of her inferiority to the spiritually purer virgins of Sainte-Croix, is actually a common feature of hagiographical discourse originating in biblical models. Coon writes, “In holy scripture women express their piety through domestic service to godly men and the impoverished,” and so, “early medieval hagiographers reproduce the biblical image of the faithful serving woman to underscore the conventional piety of female saints, such as Radegund of Holy Cross.”<sup>175</sup> Indeed, Fortunatus makes his most important biblical reference quite explicit as he describes Radegund’s feast for the poor,

Standing before the diners bearing three dishes filled with delicacies, she herself cut up the bread and meat and served all the guests present while fasting herself. Moreover, she never ceased to offer food to the blind and weak with a spoon. In this endeavor, two women aided her but she alone

---

<sup>174</sup> Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 7.

<sup>175</sup> Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 120.



served them, bustling about like a *new Martha* until the brothers were drunk and happy with their feast.<sup>176</sup>

Styling Radegund as a *nova Martha*, Fortunatus makes a metonymic connection between Radegund's servitude and that of the biblical Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus, who dutifully served Christ at table. In his article, "St. Radegund and the Early Development of Her Cult at Poitiers," Brian Brennan also recognizes the "surprisingly domestic character" of Fortunatus' *vita Radegundis*. Radegund is "presented neither as an imperious queen nor as a stern monastic foundress," but as a humble *nova Martha* who engages in the least desirable household tasks as a means of self-purification.<sup>177</sup>

### ***Domestic Service and the Saintly Queen Model***

Medieval readers would also be familiar with this domestic service motif in the accounts of earlier holy women who imitated such biblical models of female servitude. Helena, the mother of Constantine, dressed herself as a servant and humbly waited upon the nuns of her convent. In Palestine, Melania the Elder dressed as a slave, ministering to 12 bishops and priests as they travelled on pilgrimage through the desert. When she was questioned by the consular of Palestine, she declared, "For my part, I am So-and-So's daughter and So-and-So's wife, but I am a slave of Christ. Do not despise the cheapness of my clothing."<sup>178</sup> In a letter to Pammachius, Jerome describes how Paula and Eustochium, "shabbily and somberly clad, positive heroines in comparison with their former selves, trim lamps, light fires, sweep floors, clean vegetables, put cabbages into the boiling pot, lay

---

<sup>176</sup> "Hinc tribus ferculis illatis, fartis deliciis, stans ante prandentes jejuna, praesens convivis ipsa incidebat panem, carnem, vel quidquid apponeret. Languidis autem & caecis non cessabat ipsa cibos cum cochleari porrigere hoc non praesentibus duabus, sed se sola serviente, ut nova Martha satageret, donec potulenti y fratres laeti fierent conviviis." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.13.

<sup>177</sup> Brian Brennan, "St. Radegund and the Early Development of Her Cult at Poitiers," *Journal of Religious History* 13, no. 4 (1985): 347.

<sup>178</sup> Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca*, trans. Robert T. Meyer, *Palladius: the Lausiaca History* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1965), 46:4; Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 43.

tables, hand round cups, serve food, and run to and fro to wait on others.”<sup>179</sup> In his letter to Marcella, he praises her friend Lea, a pious widow who led a community of virgins, whose “humility was so great that she, once the mistress of many, was now the servant of all.”<sup>180</sup> Clotilde, Radegund’s own mother-in-law, undertook a campaign of almsgiving and church building after the death of her husband, King Clovis. Her humility is praised by her biographer who described her as “formerly a queen and then the maid servant of the paupers and servants of God.”<sup>181</sup> Accounts also describe Theodosian empresses, like Flaccilla, serving the poor and sick in the hospitals of Constantinople, she “brought the pot, fed them soup, gave them their medicine, broke their bread, served them morsels, and washed the bowl, performing with her own hands all the tasks normally given to servants and handmaids.”<sup>182</sup>

Domestic servitude in combination with strict ascetic practices was an important marker of saintliness for aristocratic women. As Coon explains, “late Roman patrician holy women and northern European noble saints of the early middle ages disavow aristocratic origins through servile demeanor, modest dress, domestic deeds.”<sup>183</sup> Recognizing that “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of Heaven,” abstaining from worldly comfort and nourishment while serving others, especially the poor, represented a necessary inversion of their social status.<sup>184</sup> Jerome confirms this important rejection of worldly position in his account of Marcella’s life, “I will

---

<sup>179</sup> Jerome, *Letter 66.13*.

<sup>180</sup> Jerome, *Letter 23.2*.

<sup>181</sup> “His et aliis sanctis operibus referta sancta Chrothildis olim regina, tunc pauperum et servorum Dei famula...” *Vita sanctae chrothildis, MGH, Scriptores Rerum Merovingica*, pp. 341–48: 14.20.

<sup>182</sup> Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Blomfield Jackson, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 3, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892): 5.18.

<sup>183</sup> Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 43.

<sup>184</sup> Matthew 19:24.

praise her for nothing but the virtue which is her own and which is the more noble, forsaking both wealth and rank she has sought the true nobility of poverty and lowliness.”<sup>185</sup> For aristocratic women seeking to follow the saintly model, the only way to achieve true nobility in the eyes of God was through the rejection of their earthly nobility and the embrace of its opposite.

A rich man or woman giving away their wealth to pursue a life of holiness is a familiar trope. Radegund does this in the form of a pilgrimage around Gaul to dispense her money, jewelry, and fine clothing at various Frankish monasteries and the dwellings of hermits. However, the significance here lies in the added adoption of domestic service as a significant attribute of female saintliness. Originating in biblical models of holy serving women, it is possible to trace its continued relevance through historical examples which continue to inspire the behavior of aristocratic holy women beyond the *vita Radegundis*. Nowhere can we better see the culmination of this influence than in the Life of Saint Sadalberga (605-670), Abbess of Laon. Her anonymous biographer associates her humility and domestic service with that of other notable saintly women:

She was distinguished in the practice of her rule, clearly imitating the lives of the holy women Melania and Paula. As the blessed Jerome said, Melania was the noblest of Roman women, daughter of the former consul Marcellinus. She journeyed to Jerusalem where she lived in such humility and with such notable charity that she received the name of Thecla. And truly he said of Paula that she, descended from the Gracchan line, left behind her urban patrimony, and went to rural Bethlehem to live a life of goodness and humility, giving up her holy spirit to the Lord. And, as I said above, Blessed Sadalberga imitated the Augusta Helena, mother of the Augustus Constantine, who, as the Ecclesiastical History tells, set aside worldly pomp to mortify her fleshly limbs, daily serving God as a handmaid. She did whatever was useful in the convent and assigned herself the task of cleaning. She served in her

---

<sup>185</sup> Jerome, *Letter 127.1*.

weekly turn, doing the cooking and other duties customary to the monastic life.<sup>186</sup>

This tradition of wealthy noblewomen disavowing their worldly position through the performance of humbling service implies that their social, rather than sexual, status is more of a concern. Indeed, Chapter 5 of the Rule of Caesarius of Arles explicitly indicates the importance of poverty and the rejection of social status over virginity for incoming nuns.

Those who come to the monastery as widows, or those who have left their husbands, or those who have changed their garb, cannot be received unless beforehand they deed over their possessions... This therefore I say to you, venerable daughters, because nuns who have possessions cannot have perfection. As to this matter, if they will not fulfill it, even those who have adopted religious life as virgins shall not be received, and certainly shall not be allowed to take the religious habit, until they rid themselves of all impediments of this world.<sup>187</sup>

As the rule indicates, the convent welcomed widows, married women, and consecrated virgins equally as long as the prospective members embraced the life of poverty required by the Rule. There was no precedence given to virgins under Caesarius' *Regula ad Virgines*. In fact, even currently married women who left their husbands to pursue the religious life, as Radegund did, were admitted over virgins who had not relinquished their possessions. Modeling their lives after saintly aristocratic exemplars such as Helena, Melania the Elder, Paula, Eustochium, and Clotild, the nuns of Sainte-Croix sought true nobility in the eyes of God through the rejection of their earthly nobility and the embrace of its opposite. Humility

---

<sup>186</sup> "In regulari norma discreta, imitans sanctarum feminarum Melaniæ videlicet & Paulæ vitam; quarum Melania, ut ait beatus Hieronymus, nobilissima Romanarum feminarum & Marcellini quondam consulis filia, Hierosolymam navigavit: ubi tantum humilitate, & caritate insignis exstitit, ut Theclæ nomen acceperit: Paula vero relicto patrimonio urbano, Grecorum orta prosapia Bethleëmitica rura expetens, summa bonitate & humilitate vitam degens, sacrum spiritum Domino reddidit. Et ut altiora repetam, beata Salaberga imitata Helenam augustam, Constantini augusti matrem, ut historia narrat Ecclesiastica, mortificatis carnis membris mundique pompis postpositis, quotidianis Deo famulabatur obsequiis. Quicquid enim in cœnobio utilitatis, & quæ munditiæ essent exercendæ, sibimet deputabat. Coquinam autem, vel reliquas causas, quæ monasticis rebus peragi solent, vicissim suis hebdomadibus ministrabat." Auctore anonymo, *Vita Salabergae abbatissae*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.25.

<sup>187</sup> McCarthy, *The Rule for Nuns of St. Caesarius of Arles*, 172.

was cultivated through sameness of dress, communal living spaces, prohibition of personal servants, and required weekly chores.

While all of these above-mentioned women were previously married, it is not likely that their choice to assume a persona of extreme humility and asceticism was intended as penitential compensation for their loss of virginity. By acknowledging Radegund's place in this long tradition of royal and aristocratic female saints, we must also acknowledge, as did their contemporaries, that it was by virtue of their marriages – and therefore, their sexual relationships – to their noble husbands that they were able to fit the well-established paradigm of elite female sanctity. As JoAnn McNamara writes, “they practiced sainthood as a logical and self-conscious division of royal labor with their warrior husbands.”<sup>188</sup> While they do often exhibit the miracle-working powers of conventional non-royal saints, the most emphasized attributes in their *vitae* are the deeds only a married or widowed queen could perform: the conversion of the ruling class, the use of their husbands' gifts to bestow charity on poor, their capacity to act as intermediaries between the king's temporal power and the clergy's spiritual power, their peacemaking role between the king and his conquered subjects, their ability to plead for mercy on behalf of the king's enemies, building churches, collecting relics, and the foundation of monastic communities.<sup>189</sup> It would not be possible to accomplish any of these acts, which together formed the basis of the saintly queen model, without occupying the role of the king's wife. This idea of how a royal woman achieved acclamation as a saint was well-established “by the third generation of Frankish Christianity when Gregory of Tours was chronicling the public careers of Clotild and Radegund.”<sup>190</sup>

---

<sup>188</sup> McNamara, “Imitatio Helenae,” 52.

<sup>189</sup> McNamara, “Imitatio Helenae,” 51-52.

<sup>190</sup> McNamara, “Imitatio Helenae,” 65.

### *Compensating for Scandal*

If the performance of sanctity for the Frankish queen depended on her role as the king's wife, Radegund's flight from Clothar, which would scandalize any queen, had the potential to delegitimize Radegund's position as a *holy* queen. Most of the elite holy women whose behavior corresponded to the saintly queen model did not enter the monastic life until the deaths of their husbands. As pious widows, they entered and occasionally led monastic communities of women. Commended for their chastity and charity, they donated their royal wealth and exercised humility through domestic service so that they could achieve a spiritual nobility to outshine the worldly rank they renounced. But what could a hagiographer do when his pious widow wasn't really a widow? Fortunatus composes the first 10 chapters of his *vita* as a gradual buildup of Clothar's brutality and Radegund's attention to her queenly responsibilities despite her strong opposition to her marriage. This buildup finally culminates in Chapter 11 with Radegund's final escape when Bishop Médard consecrates her as deaconess. Wemple interprets Radegund's ordination as an indication "that her status was identified with that of a professed widow who had dedicated herself to a life of abstinence, charity, and prayer."<sup>191</sup> Fortunatus, therefore, strategically constructed Radegund's pre-monastic persona in such a way so as to make her flight from Clothar not only acceptable to his audience, but commendable, as well.

As Fortunatus describes it, everything about Radegund's relationship with Clothar, both before and during their marriage, is marked by her extreme unwillingness. In the first chapter after his prologue, Fortunatus recounts how "like a barbarian tempest, the victorious Franks devastated the region [of Thuringia] and, she [Radegund], like the Israelites, departed

---

<sup>191</sup> Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 140.

and migrated from her homeland.”<sup>192</sup> Even though Fortunatus does not explicitly refer to Clothar himself as a barbarian, he certainly does so indirectly, while also equating Radegund’s capture with the Babylonian captivity. To make matters worse, Fortunatus recounts how Clothar won her by lot from his brothers,

The royal maiden became part of these conquerors’ plunder and a quarrel broke out over their captive. If the contest had not been settled with an agreement for her disposition, the kings would have taken up arms against one another. Being disposed of by lot to King Clothar, she was taken to the royal villa at Athies in Vermandois and her upbringing was entrusted to guardians.

<sup>193</sup>

The image of Clothar and the other Frankish kings drawing lots for Radegund is surely intended to allude to the account of the soldiers casting lots for Christ’s clothing after his crucifixion.<sup>194</sup> Fortunatus then goes on to narrate how she finally became Clothar’s wife, making it as clear as possible that not only was she married to the king against her will, but that she actually attempted escape from her royal villa at Athies when she learned of the proposed marriage. However, when the escape failed, she was brought back to Soissons where she finally became Clothar’s wife and queen, however reluctantly.

The issue of consent in sixth century Merovingian Gaul was rather complex. In many ways, Germanic law was in constant contention with Canon law, but especially when it came to marriage. Parental consent to a marriage was demanded by Germanic law, even if it was not codified until the seventh century with the Lombard Code. While the consent of a woman to her marriage was stipulated in Roman Law, the so-called “barbarian codes” allowed that

---

<sup>192</sup> “...tempestate barbarica, Francorum victoria regione vastata, vice Israëlitica exit, & migrat de patria.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.2.

<sup>193</sup> “Tunc inter ipsos victores, cujus esset in præda regalis puella, fit contentio de captiva; & nisi reddita fuisset transacto certamine, in se reges arma movissent; quæ veniens in sortem regis Clotarii in Veromandensem ducta Ateias d villam regiam nutriendi causa custodibus est deputata.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.2.

<sup>194</sup> Matthew 27:35.

abduction was an acceptable way to circumnavigate the consent of both the bride and her parents. However, there is some evidence that Canon law placed considerably greater weight on female consent, which the Church inherited from Roman law. At least the fifth century Canons of Saint Patrick and the later seventh century Penitential of Theodore indicate the necessity of a woman's consent to marriages contracted by her parents.<sup>195</sup> And so, while Fortunatus' strategy of showcasing Radegund's captivity and unwillingness may not have been as compelling in consideration of secular law, it would have gained more sympathy from those with a knowledge of ecclesiastical law.

Gregory of Tours describes the devastation of Thuringia at length in his *History of the Franks*, but it is the poem, *The Thuringian War*, now considered a joint effort of Radegund and Fortunatus, that conveys the monumental personal losses suffered by Radegund at the hands of Clothar. This poem, written from Radegund's perspective, laments her captivity and the death of nearly her entire family,

The captive maid given to a hostile lord, her power fell  
From the heights of glory to the lowest depths...  
Alas, the corpses lie shamefully unburied on the field,  
An entire people, strewn in a common grave...  
Fate was kind to those whom the enemy struck down.  
I, the sole survivor, must weep for them all.<sup>196</sup>

Even though this poem was likely not composed until about 20 years after her capture and it was probably not intended for a public audience, it nonetheless reveals in hindsight how

---

<sup>195</sup> Frances and Joseph Gies, *Marriage and the Family in the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987), 54.

<sup>196</sup> "missa sub hostili domino captiva potestas, decidit in humili gloria celsa loco... heu male texerunt inhumata cadavera campum, totaque sic uno gens iacet in tumulo... quisque suos habuit fletus, ego sola sed omnes: est mihi privatus publicus ille dolor, consuluit fortuna viris quos perculit hostis." *Venanti Fortunati Opera Poetica*, ed. Fridericus Leo (Berlin: Weidmann, 1881), Appendix Carminum, 271-75.



Radegund viewed herself at the time as an unwilling captive at the mercy of her family's murderer.

Fortunatus introduces a very explicit image of Radegund sharing the marital bed to further illustrate her complete unwillingness to assume the position and duties of a wife. He explains how, "At night when she laid with the prince," she would physically distance herself from Clothar and the marital bed by leaving their chamber under the pretense of "human necessity."<sup>197</sup> She would then lie on the floor in a hair shirt to pray, subjecting herself to the piercing cold, which, "neither the warmth from the hearth nor from her bed could revive. Because of this, people said that the king had yoked himself to a *monacha* rather than a queen."<sup>198</sup> As Elliot suggests, this passage could be interpreted as an attempt by Fortunatus to make some kind of compromise between Radegund's non-virginal status and her subsequent life of chastity at Sainte-Croix. He identifies her as a "would-be bride of Christ" who can never hope to attain the position of consecrated virgin.<sup>199</sup> This interpretation, however, seems to miss the larger point. Firstly, Fortunatus' inclusion of this anecdote clearly establishes Radegund's unwillingness to share her husband's bed. Whether the marriage was ever consummated is less important than the fact that she was opposed to it. Secondly, it implies the public knowledge of her behavior while at the same time alluding to her intention of entering the religious life. Because of her avoidance of the marital bed, Radegund was publicly perceived as living more of a monastic life than fulfilling the expectations of her position as a wife.

---

<sup>197</sup> "Item nocturno tempore cum reclinaret cum principe rogans se pro humana necessitate consurgere, & levans, egressa cubiculo, tamdiu ante secretum orationi incumbibat jactato cilicio..." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.5.

<sup>198</sup> "Inde regressa [in] cubiculum, vix tepefieri poterat vel foco vel lectulo. De qua regi dicebatur habere se magis jugalem monacham, quam reginam." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.5.

<sup>199</sup> Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 95.

Fortunatus further qualifies Radegund and Clothar's marital attachment with the following lines:

Therefore, though married to a terrestrial king, she was not separated from the celestial one. And, while more secular dignity was bestowed upon her, the more she inclined her will than her dignity permitted, always submissive to God, following the advice of the priests. She was more united to God than joined to her husband.<sup>200</sup>

From the very beginning of his *vita* Fortunatus is preparing his audience for Radegund's eventual union with God when she enters the religious life. The devastation of Thuringia, the slaughter of her family, her captivity, her status as war booty, her attempted escape before the marriage, together with her public reputation for living the chaste life of a nun set the stage for her final escape into the religious life and created a persuasive argument to justify that escape to Fortunatus' audience.

In her article, "Radegundis: Sancta, Regina, Ancilla," Sabine Gäbe also recognizes these anecdotes as a deliberate illustration of Radegund's unwillingness to enter married life. However, like Elliot, Gäbe also interprets Radegund's marriage as the real obstacle for Fortunatus and insists upon the incompatibility of marriage and sainthood, stating, "As a rule marriage and sainthood exclude each other in hagiography. Thus, the marriages of saints are portrayed either as forced marriages, as in this [Radegund's] case, or as chaste-marriages."<sup>201</sup> However, this conclusion does not account for the long tradition of queenly saints whose sainthood functioned as a counterpart to their husband's kingship. The marriages of Clotild

---

<sup>200</sup> "Nupsit ergo terreno principi, non tamen separata a caelesti. Ac dum sibi accessisset secularis dignitas, plus se inclinavit voluntas, quam permittebat dignitas, subdita semper Deo, sectans monita sacerdotum, plus participata Deo, quam sociata conjugio." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.3.

<sup>201</sup> Sabine Gäbe, "Radegundis: Sancta, Regina, Ancilla," *Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte* 16, no.1 (1989): 23.

and Helena are presented as neither forced nor particularly chaste, but these two figures were nonetheless both recognized as incredibly influential models of female sainthood.

While Radegund may not have performed her wifely duties, she certainly took an active role in her queenly responsibilities according to the model her saintly mother-in law and other holy queens established before her. Making full use of her position as queen, Radegund dispensed alms and clothing to the poor and made donations to monasteries and hermits. It is also at this time that she established her hospital at Athies, practiced rigorous asceticism, interceded for criminals, and met with clergymen and listened to their teachings.

However, this performance of holy queenship was interrupted by Clothar's murder of Radegund's *frater innocenter*, her last remaining relative. Fortunatus carefully constructs this anecdote to illicit sympathy from his audience for Radegund's plight and to convey the necessity of her subsequent actions. As Fortunatus writes,

“As frequently happens in these occasions, with the Divine intervening, misfortune leads to salvation. Thus her innocent brother was killed so that she might come to live in religion. Therefore she left the king directly and, going to the holy Médard at Noyon, she urgently begged that she might change her garments and be consecrated to God.”<sup>202</sup>

Thus, Fortunatus constructs the king's brutal act as the impetus for Radegund's flight. It is the last straw which drove the unwilling queen, who had nonetheless been performing her role according to the saintly queen model, to abandon her husband to enter into the religious life. Furthermore, the Divine intervention that inspired her flight provided Radegund with crucial religious justification for her actions. Fortunatus presents monastic life not only as an acceptable alternative to her current situation, but as the *only* alternative open to a professed

---

<sup>202</sup> “Et quoniam frequenter aliqua occasione, divinitate prosperante, casus cedit ad salutem, ut hæc religiosius viveret, frater interficitur innocenter a. Directa igitur a rege, veniens ad beatum Medardum Noviomi, supplicat instanter, ut ipsam mutata veste Domino consecraret.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.10.

holy woman. In his *History of the Franks*, Gregory of Tours portrays Radegund's desertion in a similarly positive light,

When the time came to return home Clothar took with him as his share of the booty, Radegund, the daughter of King Berthar. Later he married her. This did not stop him afterwards from arranging for her brother to be murdered by assassins. Radegund turned to God, took the habit of a religious, and built a nunnery for herself in Poitiers. She was famous for her prayers, her vigils, and her charity, and she became so well known that the common people looked upon her as a saint.<sup>203</sup>

While Gregory does not plainly state that Radegund's flight from her husband was commendable, he certainly does not disparage her for it, and even relates how her behavior earned her the title of saint among the common people.

On the other hand, Gregory does relate how he threatened another woman, Berthegund, with excommunication for leaving her husband to enter a convent. Berthegund's mother, Ingtrude, had founded a convent for young women inside the forecourt of Saint Martin's church and asked her daughter to leave her husband to assume the role of abbess there. Berthegund's justification to her husband was that "No one who is married will ever see the Kingdom of Heaven." Gregory derides Ingtrude's suggestion that Berthegund leave her husband to enter the monastic life as "stupid" and relates how he was obliged to intervene. He visited her at her mother's convent and read aloud to her a passage from the Nicene Creed, "If any woman abandons her husband and scorns the married state in which she has lived honorably, saying that no one who is married will ever see the Kingdom of God, let her be accursed." While Gregory's threat convinced Berthegund to return to her husband, she soon went to her brother Bertram, Bishop of Bordeaux, for assistance. Bishop Bertram approached Berthegund's husband with the argument, "You married her without her

---

<sup>203</sup> Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, 3.7.

parents' consent, and therefore she is no longer your wife." While this argument did not ultimately succeed in releasing Berthegund from her marriage, it does indicate that Bishop Bertram considered the consent of the bride's parents as an essential component of a lawful marriage. Furthermore, it shows that he thought it would be an effective claim to release his sister from her marriage. Once Berthegund's husband involved King Guntram in the dispute, Berthegund attempted to seek refuge in the church. When her husband's men arrived, "She was wearing the habit of a nun and refused to go with her husband, for she said that she had taken a vow of penitence." As Gregory relates, later Berthegund appears to have had a change of heart and regretted her decision to leave her husband, but ultimately her assumption of monastic attire and vow of penitence seems to have been an effective weapon against her husband.<sup>204</sup>

This juxtaposition of Radegund and Berthegund's flight from their husbands highlights several compelling points about Merovingian attitudes towards marriage. Firstly, Gregory threatens to excommunicate Berthegund for leaving her husband to enter the religious life but, rather than condemning Radegund for the same crime, he notes that she was recognized as a saint for her virtue. Some of this preference could be the result of Gregory's personal relationship with Radegund. He presided over her funeral when Bishop Maroveus of Poitiers was "delayed." In his *Glory of the Confessors* he describes a miracle he witnessed at Radegund's funeral and he recounts her great triumph of securing the relic of the True Cross. But since both Gregory and Fortunatus mention the Frankish devastation of Radegund's homeland, her captivity, and Clothar's murder of her brother, it seems clear that both authors felt that Radegund was justified in leaving her husband. Secondly, Radegund

---

<sup>204</sup> Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, 9.33

ultimately succeeds in gaining Clothar's consent, which Berthegund is never able to achieve. Even though Fortunatus omits the foundation of Sainte-Croix, we know from Gregory's *History of the Franks*, Baudonivia's *Vita Radegundis*, and Radegund's own letter addressed to the bishops, that she ultimately gained the permission of both Clothar and the local bishops when she established Sainte-Croix.

There is also the example of Saint Monegund (d.570) who was a contemporary of Radegund. She was not a member of the royal family, though Gregory does compare her with "the prudent Queen who came to listen to Solomon's wisdom."<sup>205</sup> After the deaths of her two young daughters, Monegund "turned with contempt from the world and spurned the company of her husband" to become an anchorite at Chartres and later at Saint Martin's Basilica in Tours where she performed many miracles of healing.<sup>206</sup> As Gregory of Tours relates in his *Life of the Fathers*,

While this was going on, the blessed woman's husband heard of her fame. Calling together his friends and neighbors, he went after her, brought her back home to the cell where she had lived before...and she remained there untroubled, for her husband asked nothing further from her. She gathered together a few *monachas* and lived with unbroken faith and prayer.<sup>207</sup>

Like Berthegund, Monegund left her husband to pursue the religious life. However, the crucial difference is that Monegund ultimately obtained her husband's permission and therefore deserved to be acknowledged as a saint.

---

<sup>205</sup> "...tamquam regina prudens, quæ audire sapientiam Salomonis adivit." Gregory of Tours, *Vita Monegundis vidua sanctimonialis, Turonibus in Gallia*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.

<sup>206</sup> "...contempto mundi ambitu, spreto viri consortio..." Gregory of Tours, *Vita Monegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.

<sup>207</sup> "Dum autem hæc agerentur, audita vir illius fama Beatæ, convocans amicos vicinosque suos, perrexit post eam, ac reduxit ad propria, & eam in cellulam, in qua prius habitaverat, intromisit. in eaque perstitit inconcussa: nec enim est amplius a viro suo quæsita. Ibi vero y paucas colligens monachas, cum fide integra & oratione degebat." Gregory of Tours, *Vita Monegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 6.

After Fortunatus introduces the murder of Radegund's brother as her impetus for leaving Clothar, he proceeds with an account of her very unusual ordination ceremony which finalizes his strategic disassociation of Radegund from her marriage. As Fortunatus relates, Radegund flees her husband and seeks out Bishop Médard of Noyon to persuade him to ordain her as a deaconess. Médard's reluctance to veil her inspires Radegund to enter the sacristy and garb herself in monastic attire, which, as Elliot has suggested, was a strategy to force the bishop to consecrate her. However, it is surprising that Elliot does not suggest any connections between Radegund's act of self-veiling and the negative connotations she associates with the ecclesiastical mandate that non-virgins veil themselves. As Elliot has argued, the self-veiling of non-virginal women was intended as a form of "liturgical stigmatization" to reinforce their inferiority to virginal brides of Christ. However, there is no penitential tone or pejorative sense in what Fortunatus describes as a powerful – even awe inspiring – moment of queenly authority. With Clothar's nobles brutally attempting to drag the bishop from the altar to prevent the ordination, Radegund "entered the sacristy, put on monastic garb, and proceeded straight to the altar, saying to the blessed Médard, 'If you shrink from consecrating me, and fear man more than God, Pastor, He will require His sheep's soul from your hand.' He was thunderstruck by that declaration and, laying his hand on her, he consecrated her as a deaconess."<sup>208</sup> This is the only time Fortunatus presents Radegund as exerting any kind of regal authority, especially over a member of the clergy. Radegund assumes a deferential humility throughout the rest of Fortunatus' account, making

---

<sup>208</sup> "Si me consecrare distuleris, & plus hominem quam Dominum timueris, de manu tua a pastore ovis anima requiratur. Qua ille contestatione concussus, manu superposita consecravit diaconam." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.10.

this passage stand out as particularly uncharacteristic and thus deserving of additional attention.

While Elliot is certainly correct in noting that Radegund's self-veiling was intended to force Bishop Médard into ordaining her, Fortunatus' particular account of the scene seems to suggest a deeper significance. As Médard stands in his basilica hesitating to perform the ordination, he considers Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, "If anyone has been bound to a spouse, let him not seek to dissolve it."<sup>209</sup> In this passage, Paul treats the subject of marriage and virginity somewhat ambiguously, stating that, "I am telling you this as a concession, not an order. I should still like everyone to be as I am myself; but everyone has his own gift from God, one this kind and the next something different."<sup>210</sup> The overall tone of the passage leans toward virginity as a preferable alternative to married life, but Paul ultimately avoids any disparaging remarks against marriage, stating,

About people remaining virgin, I have no directions from the Lord, but I give my own opinion as a person who has been granted the Lord's mercy to be faithful. Well then, because of the stress which is weighing upon us, the right thing seems to be this: it is good for people to stay as they are. If you are joined to a wife, do not seek to be released; if you are freed of a wife, do not look for a wife. However, if you do get married, that is not a sin, and it is not sinful for a virgin to enter upon marriage. But such people will have the hardships consequent on human nature, and I would like you to be without that.<sup>211</sup>

Firstly, this passage reflects the general ambivalence that characterized early theological attitudes toward virginity. It also implies that, through her ordination, Radegund is seeking to release herself from her marriage. Even though Fortunatus' reference to the above passage would highlight Paul's disapproval of Radegund "seeking to dissolve" her marriage, it

---

<sup>209</sup> "Si qua ligata sit conjugii, non quaerat dissolvi." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.10.

<sup>210</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:7.

<sup>211</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:25-28.



nonetheless makes it clear to the audience that Radegund is doing just that. Just as Berthe Gund attempted to use her monastic garb and penitential vow as a legitimate way to escape her husband, so too does Radegund seek to distance herself from her marriage through ordination as a deaconess.

But more importantly, we see Radegund (as portrayed by Fortunatus) engaging in a quasi-theological dispute with Bishop Médard when she counters his use of First Corinthians with her own argument. Radegund's threat that God would demand the Pastor's soul at the Last Judgment could be a reference to Chapter 35 of the Rule of Caesarius of Arles which stipulates that the mother and the prioress will have to render an account to God for those under their charge.<sup>212</sup> Similarly, the Benedictine Rule states in Chapter 2 that the abbot must "always remember that at the fearful judgment of God, not only his teaching but also his disciples' obedience will come under scrutiny. The abbot must, therefore, be aware that the shepherd will bear the blame wherever the father of the household finds that the sheep have yielded no profit." Radegund seems to be reminding Bishop Médard of his responsibilities as spiritual father by using the theological concept that the shepherd (whether abbot, mother, prioress, priest, or bishop) was accountable to God for the souls of his sheep. The only way for Radegund to acceptably distance herself from her marriage in the eyes of the Church was through ordination and entrance into the monastic life. If Médard allowed his fear of Clothar's reprisal to surpass his fear of God, he would be held accountable for his failure to perform his pastoral duty at the Last Judgment. Radegund's sophisticated understanding of this notion made it possible for her to upset the stable legal tradition of the Church which

---

<sup>212</sup> McCarthy, *Rule of Caesarius of Arles*, 182.

held that marriage was indissoluble. Her argument was certainly convincing since Médard was so thunderstruck by her speech that he immediately ordained her.

With the obstacle of Radegund's marriage removed, Fortunatus is free to devote the remainder of his *vita* to addressing the holy queen's humility, asceticism, and other saintly qualities according to the established model of female sanctity. However, it is immediately apparent that the severity of Radegund's behavior goes well beyond Coon's paradigm of domestic servitude through cooking, cleaning, spinning, washing the feet of the poor, and nursing the sick.<sup>213</sup> The intensity of Radegund's self-debasement surpasses that of a *nova Martha*. Rather, Fortunatus takes great pains to demonstrate that Radegund is not just a servant, but a *greater* servant than any of her predecessors. Where Paula wore shabby clothes and Blaesilla "dressed no better than her maids," Radegund wore a hair shirt and slept on a bed of ashes. Where Queen Clotild became a "handmaid of the paupers," Radegund bowed down before them and begged for their forgiveness. Where the Empress Flaccilla cooked and cleaned the dishes, performing the duties of her servants and handmaids, Radegund cleaned the latrines and carried away "what others were too horrified even to look upon." Taking this extreme behavior a step farther, Fortunatus also describes three instances of radical self-mutilation which he claims Radegund carries out in secret during Lent. As he recounts,

Once, throughout Quadragesima, she bound her neck and arms with three iron circlets. She inserted three chains around her body until she was fettered tightly and her delicate flesh, swelling up, was imprisoned by the hard iron. When the fast was ended and she wished to remove the confining chains against her skin, she could not because the flesh through her back and breast over the iron of the chains was cut by the circlet, so that the flowing blood drained her little body to the last drop.<sup>214</sup>

---

<sup>213</sup> Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 44.

<sup>214</sup> "Quadam vice sibi translatos circulos ferreos diebus Quadragesimæ collo vel brachiis innexuit, & tres catenas inserens circa suum corpus dum alligasset astricte, inclusit durum ferrum caro tenera supercrescens: & transacto jejunio cum voluisset catenas sub cute clausas extrahere, nec valeret, caro per dorsum atque pectus

On another occasion, “the tortrix contrived a still more terrible agony for herself beyond the austere fasting and tormenting thirst she was already suffering.”<sup>215</sup> She had a special brass plate made in the shape of a cross, and after heating it in the fire, she branded her body with the red-hot metal. She also carried a basin of burning coals, “so that she might be a martyr though it was not an age of persecution.”<sup>216</sup> As Fortunatus relates, she attempted to keep these tortures secret, but they soon became public knowledge when “the putrefying blood betrayed the pain that her voice did not reveal.”<sup>217</sup>

By constructing Radegund as a paragon of self-sacrifice, both in terms of her servitude and her self-imposed martyrdom, Fortunatus is simultaneously compensating for her flight from Clothar and associating her with the greatest servant of all, Christ. In fact, he compares her sufferings to Christ on several occasions throughout his text. As mentioned earlier, Fortunatus begins the *Life of Radegund* by relating how Clothar won her by lot from his brothers which implicitly references the soldiers dicing for Christ’s garments after his crucifixion in Matthew 27:35. Fortunatus also describes a scene in which Radegund hastens out to welcome and wash the feet of a visiting cleric, described only as “servant of God.”<sup>218</sup> At this point, Fortunatus’ sixth-century audience would make an immediate connection to several biblical passages. While both Luke and John describe women (one unnamed, the other, Mary the sister of Martha) washing Christ’s feet and drying them with her hair, Christ

---

super ferrum catenarum est incisa per circulum; ut sanguis fusus ad extremum exinaniret corpusculum.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.21.

<sup>215</sup> “Adhuc aliquid gravius in se ipsa tortrix excogitans, una Quadragesimarum super austerum jejunium & sitis torridum cruciatum.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.22.

<sup>216</sup> “... quia non essent persecutionis tempora, ut fieret martyr.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.22.

<sup>217</sup> “... computrescens sanguis manifestabat, quod vox non prodebat in pœna.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.22.

<sup>218</sup> “servorum Dei.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.7.

himself is also shown washing the feet of his disciples.<sup>219</sup> The night of the Last Supper, Christ performs this service for his disciples saying,

Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you. In truth I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, and no messenger is greater than the one who sent him.<sup>220</sup>

Mark similarly stresses the service of Christ, "For the Son of man himself came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."<sup>221</sup> The letter of Paul and Timothy to the Philippians echoes this message, counseling, "out of humility of mind everyone should give preference to others, everyone pursuing not selfish interests but those of others. Make your own the mind of Christ Jesus...he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave..."<sup>222</sup>

There are considerably more references to Christ as a servant throughout the Bible, such as Matthew 20:27 in which Christ addresses his disciples saying, "anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant."<sup>223</sup> It is highly likely that Fortunatus also had in mind the phrase, *Servus servorum Dei*, which was derived from this particular passage. While *Servus servorum Dei* has been used as a papal title since the eleventh century, it was first employed by Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) as a lesson in humility in a letter to John the Faster around 590.<sup>224</sup> Even though Fortunatus' *vita Radegundis* is dated to her death at 587, there is no reason not to suppose that the Christ-like ideal of "the servant of the

---

<sup>219</sup> Luke 7:36, John 12:3

<sup>220</sup> John 13:13-16

<sup>221</sup> Mark 10:45

<sup>222</sup> Philippians 2:1-7

<sup>223</sup> Matthew 20:27, Mark 10:43.

<sup>224</sup> Karl Schmitz, "Ursprung und Geschichte der Devotionsformeln bis zu ihrer Aufnahme in die fränkische Königsurkunde," (PhD diss., Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Bonn, 1913.), ch 5, 'Servus Servorum Dei,' 120-139.

servants of God” was in circulation when Fortunatus was writing. By emphasizing the extremity of her servitude and self-sacrifice, Fortunatus constructs Radegund as more than just a servant. Fortunatus positions her well above her predecessors in his portrayal of her as more self-debasing and humbler than any of her noble models. Indeed, the Christ-like quality of her behavior after the establishment of Sainte-Croix acts as necessary compensation for the otherwise reprehensible act of abandoning her marriage. Fortunatus successfully smooths over Radegund’s transition into monastic life and amplifies her self-sacrifice so that the runaway queen can become the saint.

### ***Conclusion***

According to Fortunatus, after Radegund’s ordination, she entered the convent amidst crowds of people so great that they were forced to climb onto the roofs when the street could no longer contain them. They proclaimed her confessor and martyr for her great austerities, humility, charity, service, sufferings, and torments. King Clothar, whose only brief appearances in Fortunatus’ work were as captor and murderer, is absent from the rest of the account.

Let us then momentarily consider Baudonivia’s version of Radegund’s departure, which features Clothar prominently. Radegund, “moved by divine power, departed from the earthly king, which her vows required.”<sup>225</sup> Unwilling to give her up, Clothar set out with the intention of reclaiming her. But Radegund was determined to end her life if she was forced to return. She sent the king a letter through Bishop Germanus of Paris who intercepted him at

---

<sup>225</sup> “Postquam operante divina potentia a rege terreno discessit, quod sua vota posebant, dum Suedas in villa, quam ei rex dederat, resideret.” Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.5.

Tours on her behalf. Upon reading Radegund's plea that he not enter the city of Poitiers, the king was full of sorrow, and:

Judging himself unworthy because he did not deserve to have such a queen any longer, he prostrated himself before Saint Martin's threshold at the feet of the apostolic Germanus asking him to beg blessed Radegund's forgiveness for indulging his evil counsellors and sinning against her. As a result, the same divine retribution soon punished those who acted against the blessed queen as punished Arius, who, for going against the Catholic faith, let all his bowels drop out in the privy. Then the king feared the judgment of God because the queen had followed the will of God above that of the king while she lived with him.<sup>226</sup>

Baudonivia's provocative account of the unworthy Clothar begging for Radegund's forgiveness on his knees is charged with emotion. Baudonivia revels in her mockery of the king, treating him as a sinner and a heretic. These events naturally must be treated with some skepticism as it is almost unthinkable that Clothar would have debased himself in this fashion. It is more likely that this is how Baudonivia *wished* events had taken place. Nonetheless, her account serves the same purpose as that of Fortunatus. Baudonivia also seeks to legitimize Radegund's abandonment of her marriage, but she does it in her own entirely different and surprising way.

Baudonivia's Radegund breaks the mold, resisting the conventional models of humility and servitude which Fortunatus depends upon. Baudonivia compensates for nothing and takes every opportunity to empower her foundress. After Radegund's death, Saint Croix erupted in chaos, facing both internal and external threats to its independence. When Baudonivia was commissioned by the Abbess Dedimia to compose this *vita*, Sainte-Croix

---

<sup>226</sup> "Seque indignum iudicans, quod talem habere Reginam diutius non meruisset, prosternit se & ille ante limina S. Martini pedibus apostolici viri Germani, rogans, ut sic pro ipso veniam peteret beatæ Radegundi, ut ei indulgeret, quod in ea per malos consiliarios peccaverat. Unde ultio divina de præsentibus in eos vindicavit: sicut enim Arius, qui contra fidem Catholicam certans, omnia intestina sua in secessum deposuit, ita & istis evenit, qui contra beatam Reginam egerunt. Tunc rex timens Dei iudicium, quia ejus Regina magis Dei voluntatem fecerat, quam suam, dum commorata cum eo fuerat." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 8.9.

needed to bolster its reputation with a strong, active, and authoritative foundress – an image that stands in conflict with the well-established model of elite female sainthood that hinged on humility and service.

Whatever Fortunatus' ulterior motives might have been in promoting Radegund's cult (such an endeavor demands a separate study) it is clear that his needs required a Radegund who fit the traditional mold of the saintly queen. Identifying Radegund with this well-established model, Fortunatus recognized that the performance of the archetypal elite woman's sanctity was dependent upon her social and marital status. From the patronage of the poor and monastic communities to acting as an intermediary between the king and the clergy, the sainthood practiced by the long tradition of holy queens was a "logical and self-conscious division of royal labor."<sup>227</sup> After the death of her husband, the saintly queen becomes the pious widow and seeks spiritual nobility in the exercise of status-inverting humility and the performance of domestic service. This is where Fortunatus recognized an obstacle in the life of Radegund. He could not successfully construct her persona according to his desired model without first removing the potentially scandalous obstacle of her abandoned marriage.

With his classical education, Fortunatus used his arts of persuasion to make his case for Radegund's sainthood. Just as he strategically *omits* aspects of her life that diverged from his perfect model, so too does he strategically *place* anecdotes of her life in such a way so as to frame her flight not only as acceptable to his audience, but as a necessary move. To accomplish this, Fortunatus elicits the sympathy of his audience for Radegund's plight. He not only emphasizes Radegund's total lack of consent to her wedding. Again and again

---

<sup>227</sup> McNamara, "Imitatio Henenae," 52

throughout his text he also makes her unwillingness to remain Clothar's wife evident until he reveals the culmination of Clothar's brutality in the murder of Radegund's brother. Her ordination as deaconess functions as the only acceptable way of honorably distancing herself from her marriage, leaving her free to establish Sainte-Croix and assume her new role as a reclusive "pious widow." He then highlights the extremity of her behavior at the convent of Sainte-Croix to simultaneously compensate for the otherwise scandalous flight from her husband and to raise her above her saintly predecessors who did not have such a scandal to overcome.

Therefore, Radegund's strict self-abnegation and domestic service should not be interpreted as compensation for the queen's lost virginity because the very nature of the queenly saint is founded upon her marital status. Furthermore, the ambiguous theological attitude toward virginity would not have engendered any expectation in Fortunatus' audience that he compensate for her non-virginal state. The apparent discrimination against the consecration of widows and the ordination of deaconesses was a product of the desire to restrict opportunities for women to exert authority within the Church. This "liturgical stigmatization" was not directed against non-virgins, but against women in general. To some extent, all monastic activity is penitential. But Radegund's humiliating behavior and rigorous asceticism serve to illustrate that it is the queen's earthly rank, not her lost virginity, that she must overcome to achieve sainthood. Following the models of her predecessors, Radegund needed to transcend her worldly social class. Thus, the literary construction of Radegund's behavior demonstrates that humility and poverty, rather than virginity, were the paramount virtues that characterized the performance of holiness for early medieval elite women.



## Introduction to Chapters 2, 3, and 4

### Radegund's Medieval Cult

One thousand and two times six years after the incarnation of God,  
no one knew where Saint Radegund was buried.  
Concealed in a trench, her tomb was covered by earth.  
The church was dedicated to her holy name.  
While searching in the sacred caves, the abbess Beliarde,  
the day before the calends of March,  
discovered a crypt, and had it illuminated with lamps.  
Beliarde made this discovery while Robert  
was king, while duke William was the fifth prince,  
and while Giselbertus was governing the Church.<sup>1</sup>

On February 28, 1012, Abbess Beliarde of Sainte-Croix commemorated her rediscovery of Radegund's tomb with these words, and in doing so, ushered in the greatest period of resurgence for Radegund's cult since her death in 587. The *inventio* of Radegund's relics was marked by a new feast day added to the abbey's liturgical calendar. There is a hiatus in documented accounts of Radegund's cult after the turn of the seventh century until this moment, likely due to the persistent threat of attack and general instability in Poitiers. The

---

<sup>1</sup> Transcribed in Robert Favreau, Jean Michaud, Edmond-René Labande, *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale : Poitou-Charentes, Ville de Poitiers* (Paris : CNRS Editions, 1974), 95-96.

Première pierre:

1. ANNIS MILLE DEI CARNIS BISSEXQVE PERACTIS
2. OMNIBVS IGNOTA RADEGVNDIS SANCTA MANEBAT
3. SCROBIS IN ABSCONSO TVMVLVS TEGBATVR IN VMO
4. AVLA SVO VENERABATVR DE NOMINE SANCTO
5. ABBATISSA SACRIS SCRVTANS BELIARDIS [IN ANTRIS]

Deuxième pierre:

6. [PRIDIE] KALENDARVM MARCII PATEFE-
7. [CIT] CRIPTAMQVE LVCERNIS HONESTE FECIT
8. [ILLVSTRARI MVNDV]LE BELIARDIS TVM SER[VAVIT]
9. [DVM ESSET R0]BERTVS REX DVXQVE PI[C]TAVIS WIL[LEL] 10. [MVS QVINTVS] APEX  
GISLEBERTO RE[GEN]TE E[CCLESIAM]

church Radegund had built in the sixth century was destroyed by Viking invaders in 863 and the replacement buildings were subsequently burned in 955 by Hugh, count of Paris.<sup>2</sup>

The *inventio* of Radegund's relics and the renewal of her cult drew pilgrims to the church of Sainte-Radegonde in such numbers that Beliarde began a new construction program on the crypt and church to accommodate them. Halted by a destructive earthquake in 1018 and a fire in 1083,<sup>3</sup> the new choir, crypt, and bell tower porch for the church of Sainte-Radegonde in Poitiers were finally completed in 1099.<sup>4</sup> If they were lucky, those pilgrims visiting Radegund's tomb at the turn of the twelfth century would have seen the newly fabricated reliquary containing pieces of the True Cross that replaced the original Byzantine reliquary sent to Radegund as a gift by the Emperor Justin II.<sup>5</sup> They may also have been shown the new *libellus* (BMP 250) displayed on the altar, which contains 31 illustrated scenes from Radegund's life that accompany texts from the original sixth-century Latin *vitae* composed by Fortunatus. The portrait of Baudonivia at her writing desk suggests her *vita*, together with accompanying illustrations, was also once a part of BMP 250.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, 104.

<sup>3</sup> Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronique*, 56.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Favreau, *Poitiers : Sainte-Radegonde* (Poitiers: Association Les Amis de sainte Radegonde, 1999), 10 ; Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, 105.

<sup>5</sup> See Cynthia Hahn, "Collector and saint: Queen Radegund and devotion to the relic of the True Cross," *Word & Image* 22, no. 3 (2006): 268-274

<sup>6</sup> There is no consensus among scholars on the institutional origins of this manuscript, so we cannot definitely say whether it was commissioned by the nuns of Sainte-Croix or the chapter of canons at the church of Sainte-Radegonde. Ginot Émile first proposed in 1920 that the manuscript originated from the canonical chapter of Sainte-Radegonde in « Le Manuscrit De Sainte Radegonde De Poitiers Et Ses Peintures De Xie Siècle » (Paris: SFRMP, 1920.) Magdalena Carrasco provides an in-depth analysis of this manuscript from an art-historical perspective in "Sanctity and Experience in Pictorial Hagiography. See "Two Illustrated Lives of Saints from Romanesque France" in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, ed. R. Blumenfeld-Kosinski and T. Szell (Ithaca, NY and London, 1991), 416. She notes that there is "clear evidence that BMP 250 was in the possession of Ste.-Radegonde by the seventeenth century, but this is hardly a sufficient basis for determining the work's place of origin." Most recently, Jennifer Edwards returns to this debate and proposes that BMP 250 was commissioned by the nuns of Sainte-Croix, but does not offer any concrete evidence for her assertion. See *Superior Women: Medieval Female Authority in Poitiers' Abbey of Sainte-Croix* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 174.

When Abbess Beliarde discovered Radegund's "lost" tomb and restored her cult, she (literally) laid the foundations for the two communities of canons and nuns to construct a legacy for themselves based on their own interpretations of their holy foundress. Radegund's spiritual descendants crafted their own identities around her memory, and in turn, shaped Radegund's identity to align with their institutional interests. The restored cult was a success and Radegund's fame spread throughout France. Beginning in the twelfth century, her cult expanded rapidly, both in terms of geographical reach and hagiographical expression.

The following three chapters tell the story of Radegund's proliferation across Europe. In tracing the development of her medieval cult up until the production of her first vernacular printed *vitae* at the turn of the sixteenth century, I explore the diverse ways that Radegund's afterlife was shaped by, and in turn shaped, the identities of those who venerated her. Radegund's incredible versatility enabled her devotees to craft different meanings for her according to their specific needs and circumstances. Crafting these meanings was never immediate and not always deliberate.

The monastic version of Radegund promoted by her spiritual descendants in Poitiers was shifted to meet other institutional concerns when Hildebert of Lavardin, archbishop of Tours and well-known ecclesiastical reformer, composed the first new adaptation of Radegund's *vita* in five centuries. By merging tradition with innovation, Hildebert reshaped this Merovingian queen-saint into a vehicle for his commitment to the program of ecclesiastic reform, which highlighted the authority of the priesthood and the lay leadership's subordination to it. Hildebert's Radegund practiced a type of saintly queenship that protected the Church's interests and modeled the perfect feminine qualities he hoped to cultivate in female lay and ecclesiastic leaders. In this capacity, she became a hagiographical

manifestation of Hildebert's efforts at shaping the behavior of the real-life Anglo-Norman elite women with whom he corresponded.

Radegund of Poitiers' institutional identity gave way to a more agrarian character in the Loire Valley as individual communities developed their own customs, conceptually merging hagiographical tradition with local environmental features. Caves, stones, and springs where Radegund was remembered to have visited became *loci* for pilgrimages and chapels were erected near these sacred landmarks by communities seeking Radegund's intercession without traveling to her tomb at Poitiers. Other natural features of the landscape, such as oat fields, were imbued with sacred meaning when they were associated with the apocryphal Miracle of the Oats. "Radegund of the Oats" became so popular by the fifteenth century that a feast day celebrating the Miracle of the Oats supplanted Beliarde's February 28 feast day of the *inventio* of Radegund's relics. The agrarian and monastic interpretations of Radegund were thus united when this new feast day bridged Radegund's official and less-than-official cult. This image of Radegund of the Oats would go on to become one of her most recognizable traits in artistic productions over the coming centuries.

As her cult spread beyond Poitou, Aquitaine, Normandy, Brittany, Maine, Anjou, and Touraine to Sicily and England, Radegund took on yet further meanings for devotees. While the cult's origins in Poitiers and the activities of Radegund's Poitiers institutions have been the subject of other academic studies, none of this scholarship has offered any comprehensive analysis of her extensive cult outside this civic center. Radegund's international afterlife is populated by a rich repository of unique sources and, by putting them in dialogue with one another for the first time, the following chapters illuminate the process of reshaping her hagiographical tradition into distinct but parallel forms.

In contrast with both Hildebert's image of a "reformed" Radegund and the institutional monastic image constructed by the members of her foundations in Poitiers, Radegund's royalty ascended as the most important attribute of her sainthood outside the French kingdom. While her Poitevin foundations did not exactly reject Radegund's royal origins, they certainly minimized it as part of her pre-monastic life. Elite Normans seeking legitimacy abroad in England and Sicily supported her cult with chapels, churches, monastic institutions, and devotional art. Allying their families with this Merovingian queen saint promoted their dynastic connections to the first Frankish kings and became one of the many strategies they relied on to legitimize their power. As a holy ancestor and artifact of Frankish culture, Radegund was gradually shaped into a decidedly "French" saint. These first steps towards Radegund's "Frankification" accelerated in the fifteenth century when Charles VII of the house of Valois saw an alliance with Saint Radegund as useful in supporting his claim to the Crown. Once she became established as a patron of the kings of France, Radegund's identity as a Merovingian dynastic queen-saint became her most important and lasting attribute.

The twelfth century can therefore be seen as an important crossroads for the development of Radegund's cult as it began to fork into multiple paths of meaning across the Western world. As the following three chapters navigate the branching paths of Radegund's identity from monastic foundress, to reformer, rural healer, pilgrim, protectress of grain, model wife, Frankish cultural artifact, and dynastic saint, we will see how Radegund's popularity was fueled by her versatility - her unique ability to become what devotees needed her to be.

## Chapter 2

### **Nun and Reformer: Poitiers, Hildebert, and New Institutional Identities for Women in Authority in the Twelfth Century**

After Radegund's death on August 13 in 587, the integral roles played by Gregory of Tours, the abbot and canons of Sainte-Radegonde, the abbess and nuns of Sainte-Croix, Baudonivia, and Fortunatus all ensured that Radegund's cult was firmly established in Poitiers and that the members of Radegund's two monastic institutions would be its caretakers. Over the subsequent centuries, Radegund's spiritual descendants continued their work of shaping her image as a saint. The canonical church of Sainte-Radegonde was the site of Radegund's tomb and the locus of her relics' miracle-working power. The abbey of Sainte-Croix, whose nuns were heirs to Radegund's religious foundation and way of life, boasted its own Radegund relics: a piece of the True Cross from the Eastern Roman Emperor, Radegund's miracle-working hairshirt sent from Jean the Recluse of Chinon, her writing desk, carved stool, prayer mat, book, spindles, the laurel tree she miraculously revived, and her monastic cell imprinted with the footprints Christ left in the flagstone floor when he appeared to her in a vision. Both of these institutions crafted their identities around their shared legacy as Radegund's monastic foundations, and in turn, they shaped Radegund's identity to align with their institutional interests within their monastic milieu.

When Hildebert of Lavardin (1056-1133) composed his *Vita Radegundis* around the year 1100, he did not share the same interest in promoting Radegund as a strictly monastic saint. As bishop of Le Mans, his dedication to the ideals of the Gregorian Reform shaped his reinterpretation of Fortunatus and Baudonivia's *Lives*. While at times he chose to paraphrase or even copy directly from their texts, he ultimately produced an original piece that clearly

reflects his own distinct agenda. And in doing so, Hildebert set a precedent for at least a dozen rewritings of the *Life of Radegund* over the subsequent millennium. Fortunatus and Baudonivia's *Lives* were typically copied together as *Book 1* and *Book 2*, sometimes with the addition of Gregory of Tour's account of Radegund's funeral appended as a conclusion. About twenty manuscripts containing various combinations of these texts survive from before the twelfth century. This suggests that by the time Hildebert decided to compose his own version, the popularity of the sixth-century texts was already fairly established. Yet, at the turn of the twelfth century, Hildebert felt the need to add his own distinct portrait of Radegund to the already disparate accounts of Fortunatus and Baudonivia.

What drove Hildebert to produce yet another *Life of Radegund* when the sixth-century *Lives* were still so popular? Seemingly without any personal connections to Poitiers, why did Hildebert choose Radegund's *Life* to rewrite when so many other saints' lives might have been more compatible with his vision of a "modern" reformed Church? Even more perplexing, why would Hildebert choose a married Frankish queen, who abandoned her still-living husband, to raise up as a paragon of virtuous womanhood, while simultaneously composing a misogynistic invective against Woman as one of "the three evils" of his time?<sup>1</sup>

The versatile identity Radegund's sixth-century hagiographers created for her made Radegund the perfect instrument for Hildebert's purposes. Better than a *tabula rasa*, the story of the Thuringian captive who ascended to queen, monastic foundress, and miracle-working saint was already an established tradition. By strategically choosing the most efficacious elements from each early *vita* and embellishing where necessary, Hildebert produced a text

---

<sup>1</sup> Hildebert, "De tribus inimicis," PL 171, col. 1128-1129.

that was simultaneously traditional and innovative. This chapter considers how Hildebert reimagines this early medieval saint for a twelfth-century audience in two specific ways.

Firstly, Hildebert strategically rewrote the *Life of Radegund* according to the conventions of “Reform Hagiography,” that is, a saint’s life strategically rewritten to showcase Gregorian Reform ideals which minimizes or omits original details of the *Vita* that might be considered incompatible with those ideals. Recently, a handful of scholars have analyzed this hagiographic sub-genre by examining eleventh- and twelfth-century *Lives* of male saints for evidence of reform ideology.<sup>2</sup> As their work demonstrates, “Reform Hagiography” typically highlights episcopal independence and superiority while minimizing or even demonizing lay intervention in ecclesiastical affairs. It also promotes images of the active life of reformers as they encourage the moral revival of the Church and fight against clerical marriage. “Reforming Saints” teach, preach, perform acts of charity, conserve or restore Church resources, and engage in peace-making activities. However, this recent scholarship is limited exclusively to the analysis of male *vitae*, which is understandable, considering that the architects of twelfth- and thirteenth-century institutional reform were, in Kathleen Cushing’s words, “men of action.”<sup>3</sup> Fiona Griffiths has recently called for a reassessment of how we study this movement, noting that scholars tend to construct reform as having either opposed women or ignored them. As she writes, “I argue for a synthesis that

---

<sup>2</sup> Cushing, “Events That Led to Sainthood: Sanctity and the Reformers in the Eleventh Century” (2001); Anne-Marie

Helvétius, “Réécriture hagiographique et réforme monastique: les premières Vitae de saint Humbert de Maroilles” (2003); Patrick Henriot, “Les Trois Voies de la Réforme dans l’Hagiographie Erémétique du XII e Siècle: Enquête sur la Vita Bernardi Tironensis (BHL 1251)” (2012); Maureen Miller, “Masculinity, Reform, and Clerical Culture: Narratives of Episcopal Holiness in the Gregorian Era” (2003); Pierre Toubert, “Essai sur les Modèles Hagiographiques de la Réforme Grégorienne” (1976); Koen Vanheule, “Reformist hagiography: the Life of St Roding of Beaulieu and the struggle for power in early eleventh-century Lotharingia” (2016).

<sup>3</sup> Kathleen Cushing, “Events That Led to Sainthood: Sanctity and the Reformers in the Eleventh Century,” *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting*, eds. Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 186.



joins considerations of women's experience of reform to men's perception of women and sexuality.”<sup>4</sup> This chapter therefore responds to Griffiths’ exhortation and covers new ground in the field of Medieval gender by investigating the ways that these characteristically male reform ideals were refashioned for use in a female saint’s *vita*.

Secondly, I argue that Hildebert appropriated the conventions of “Reform Hagiography” to adapt Radegund’s behavior to twelfth-century standards, thereby producing a new model of female sanctity within a reform context. Maureen Miller explores the intersection of “Reform Hagiography” and a new model of clerical masculinity in her article, “Masculinity, Reform, and Clerical Culture: Narratives of Episcopal Holiness in the Gregorian Era.” She uses several examples of “Reform Hagiography,” together with Church legislation and theological writings, to argue that clerical reformers redefined a new extreme version of masculinity that became a significant factor in the rise of misogynist discourse during the twelfth century. But like all the other recent studies of “Reform Hagiography,” Miller’s focus is also limited to male *vitae*. In this chapter, I take her theory a step further by applying it to the *vita* of a female saint. If the *vitae* of male saints rewritten in the eleventh and twelfth centuries by reform-minded hagiographers promoted a new type of “reform sanctity” characterized by a new form of radical clerical masculinity, could the *vitae* of female saints composed by reformers likewise indicate a new model of “reform sanctity” for women characterized by a distinct form of femininity?

### ***Laying the Groundwork for Radegund’s Cult in Poitiers***

Now we come to Radegund’s most glorious passing, which we cannot speak of without a profusion of tears. The tears flow, groans break forth from our innermost selves, but nothing can console us while we make our lament... The

---

<sup>4</sup> Fiona Griffiths, “Women and Reform in the Central Middle Ages,” *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. Judith Bennett and Ruth Karras (Oxford University Press, 2013), 448.

whole congregation of the blessed woman, weeping and wailing around her bed, struck their breasts with hard fists and stones and raised their voices to Heaven clamoring... one voice, one plaint, one clamor penetrated the very heavens...<sup>5</sup>

The story of Radegund's death marks the beginning of her popular cult in Poitiers. The unrestrained grief of the nun's lament when Radegund died on August 13 in 587 was so loud that it was even heard by the angels in Heaven. The angels' joyful exclamations that Radegund was received in Paradise reached the ears of masons working on top of a nearby mountain – the first witnesses of Radegund's sainthood.

Without the complex canonization process that would not be established for another six centuries, candidates in the early Middle Ages were declared to be saints by popular consent.<sup>6</sup> Miracles performed during life and after death were crucial for garnering popular support. The *Lives* of saints perform a vital role in making a case for their subject's sanctity because they could be distributed far afield among the literate and read aloud to the illiterate. Local advocates, such as bishops, other clerics, elite and royal laymen, and the religious institution the saint was associated with often promoted the establishment of the cult as well. Radegund's cult was bolstered on all sides in the period immediately following her death.

Baudonivia and Gregory of Tours' account of Radegund's death, burial, and its immediate aftermath played an important role in the foundation of Radegund's cult in Poitiers by creating a convincing narrative that established Radegund's sainthood. In addition to the angelic voices heard by the masons at Radegund's death, three additional miracles

---

<sup>5</sup> “Jam ad gloriosum ejus transitum venimus, quem sine profusione lacrymarum dicere non possumus. Fluunt lacrymæ, de imis medullis gemitus prorumpunt; sed in nullo consolationis locum inveniunt, dum plangimus... beati omnes congregati, luctuose circa ejus thorum flentes, & ejulantes, pectora duris pugnis ferientes, voces ad cælum dabant, clamantes...ubi una vox, ubi unus planctus, unus clamor cælos penetrabat...” Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 20.34 - 21.36.

<sup>6</sup> Émile Briand, *Histoire de sainte Radegonde, reine de France, et des sanctuaires et pèlerinages en son honneur* (Paris, Poitiers: Librairie Religieuse H. Oudin, 1898), 317.

occurred before her burial. Gregory describes Radegund's miraculous incorruptibility in his *Glory of the Confessors*, stating that when he encountered Radegund's body, "her holy face was so bright that it surpassed the beauty of lilies and roses."<sup>7</sup> Baudonivia points her readers towards Gregory's *Book of Miracles* and adds that when he looked upon her unblemished face he was "stricken with fear and he trembled as though he stood in the presence of the Lord's holy mother herself."<sup>8</sup> The nuns of Sainte-Croix, prevented by their vows from leaving the convent, performed the role of Radegund's first adherents by lining the abbey's fortified walls as Radegund's body was carried to her nearby basilica. Their lamentations were so loud that "their grief drowned out the psalms, rendering tears for psalms, groans for canticles, sighs for alleluias."<sup>9</sup> The voices of the clerics in charge of chanting the antiphon were choked with sobbing and weeping as a general effusion of emotion overcame everyone present.<sup>10</sup> The third miracle occurred when a blind man regained his sight when the nuns convinced the procession to halt under their tower. The fourth miracle stands out from the others because it definitively served to quell a disagreement that broke out over the use of candles to mark Radegund's tomb as a saint's sanctuary. When a procession of candle-bearing female serfs encircled the tomb, an argument arose amongst those present whether the candles should be placed in the tomb. The dispute was resolved when one candle escaped, flew over the heads of the crowd, and landed at Radegund's feet, "thus deciding what had been uncertain."<sup>11</sup> As René Aigrain observes in his 1918 study of Radegund's life,

---

<sup>7</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, ed. Raymond Van Dam (Liverpool University Press, 1988), 104.

<sup>8</sup> "Cum autem venit ad locum, ubi sanctum corpus jacebat (ut ipse postea cum sacramento dicebat, quod in specie hominis vultum angelicum viderat) facies illius velut rosa & lilium fulgebat; ita tremefactus est, ac metu concussus, tamquam si ante praesentiam Dei Genitricis adstaret, devotus vir, Deo plenus." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 23.37.

<sup>9</sup> "...ita ut planctus earum superaret ipsum psallentium, pro psalmo lacrymas, pro cantico mugitum, & gemitum pro Alleluya, reddebant." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 24.38.

<sup>10</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, 104.

<sup>11</sup> "... & quod haesitabatur, declaravit." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 25.39.

the offering of an object of worship, such as a candle, was a public recognition of the deceased's sanctity.<sup>12</sup> This divine intervention confirmed Radegund's sainthood and became the first tomb-side offering.

Fortunatus and Baudonivia both recount a litany of standard miracles that occurred after Radegund's burial, but one important miracle that concludes Baudonivia's *Vita* stands out for the conspicuous power exercised by the abbot of the church of Sainte-Radegonde and his brethren at the expense of the clerics at a competing church. On the feast of Saint Hilary, all the monasteries in the area gathered according to custom at the Church of Saint Hilary in the Poitevin suburbs to celebrate the vigil. Hilary was the Bishop of Poitiers in the fourth century and was venerated as the city's patron saint for his campaign against the Arian heresy and his role as Saint Martin of Tours' mentor.<sup>13</sup> While the monks were praying, Hilary's feast day vigil was disturbed by a crowd of demoniacs whose raving shook the entire basilica. They followed Abbot Arnegiselus and his monks back to their church of Sainte-Radegonde where Matins was being sung. Upon entering Radegund's church, the demons were expelled and never troubled their hosts again. Despite Baudonivia's insistence that both Hilary and Radegund's basilicas "were equal in grace" and "equal in virtue," the message that Radegund's powers outperformed Hilary's is clear. Raymond Van Dam argues in *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* that the popularity of Radegund's cult and the cult of the True Cross that she established at her abbey were perceived as a challenge to Hilary's longstanding cult.<sup>14</sup> During her life, the relationship between Radegund and the Bishop of Poitiers, Maroveus, was openly hostile to the degree that he appears to have

---

<sup>12</sup> Aigrain, *Sainte Radegonde*, 170.

<sup>13</sup> Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles*, 18.

<sup>14</sup> Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles*, 30.

intentionally declined to officiate at her funeral. While the Abbey of Sainte-Croix didn't welcome interference from kings, lay lords, or bishops, it nonetheless relied on royal protection and outside allies, like King Sigibert, Gregory of Tours, and Bishop Germanus of Paris, that challenged Maroveus' authority in Poitiers. The adoption of the Rule of Caesaria of Arles furthered this divide by restricting episcopal power over the convent. This final miracle of Baudonivia's *Vita* established Radegund's equality (if not supremacy) to Poitiers' episcopal patron saint and signaled the power of Radegund's monastic institution - not Poitiers' bishop - as caretakers of her miracle-working relics.

### ***Shaping Radegund's Monastic Identity***

“And once freed from secular chains, with divine mercy providing and inspiring, I turned to the rule of voluntary religion, with Christ leading me, thinking with the zeal of a mind disposed to the progress of other women. The Lord announced how my desires would be accomplished. I established a monastery for girls in the city of Poitiers, which the most excellent King Clothar built and paid for, and endowed the institution with a donation as great as royal munificence granted me.”<sup>15</sup>

This letter from Radegund to the bishops of Gaul, preserved by Gregory of Tours in his *History of the Franks*, gives us some insight into how Radegund herself interpreted her foundation of the abbey of Sainte-Croix and its funerary church in 552/557.<sup>16</sup> Radegund's choice to dedicate her institution to the Virgin Mary corresponded with her self-stated desire to further “the progress of other women,” in particular, virginal or unmarried women (*puellae*). However, the fame and prestige Radegund brought to Poitiers with her relic of the

---

<sup>15</sup> “Et quoniam olim vinclis laicalibus absoluta, divina providente et inspirante clementia, ad religionis normam visa sum voluntarie, duce Christo, translata, haec pronae mentis studio cogitans etiam de aliarum profectibus, ut, annuntiante Domino, mea desideria efficerentur reliquis profutura, instituyente atque remunerante praecellentissimo domno rege Chlothario, monasterium puellarum Pictava urbe constitui, conditumque, quantum mihi munificentia regalis est largita, facta donatione dotavi.” Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 9.42.

<sup>16</sup> Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de l'abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, 35.

True Cross and finally with her own miracle-working body, which itself became a highly prized relic, laid the groundwork for her own cult. The original dedication to Sainte-Marie-hors-les-murs was transferred to Radegund herself after her death in 587 when the abbey was renamed Sainte-Croix in honor of the relic of the True Cross and the church was renamed Sainte-Radegonde.

This reinvention bound the institutions of Sainte-Radegonde and Sainte-Croix in Poitiers to Radegund's memory by name as well as tradition. For the next millennium and a half, these descendants of Radegund's legacy would engage in a process of reciprocal identity formation. The canons and nuns would craft their own identities around her memory, and in doing so, would also shape Radegund's identity to align with their institutional interests within their monastic milieu. The work of Peter Brown and Raymond Van Dam has shown the psychological connection that can develop "between beliefs in saints and personal identities."<sup>17</sup> As Brown argues, patron saints can have "the ancient quality almost of an unconscious layer of the self."<sup>18</sup> When necessary, the canons and nuns would use that connection to their advantage by building off of the network of allies and the tradition of independence that Radegund had secured for them during her life.<sup>19</sup> At times, these efforts turned inwards when the canonical chapter of Sainte-Radegonde and the convent of Sainte-Croix competed with each other. In a conflict that spanned centuries, both produced and

---

<sup>17</sup> Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles*, 4

<sup>18</sup> Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 56.

<sup>19</sup> Jennifer Edwards, *Superior Women: Medieval Female Authority in Poitiers' Abbey of Sainte-Croix* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 60.

emphasized particular textual and visual images of Radegund to highlight the independence and spiritual authority of their own institutions.<sup>20</sup>

One likely result of this competition was the production of the luxury illustrated copy of the *Vita Radegundis* around the year 1100, (BMP) ms 250.<sup>21</sup> No consensus has been reached by scholars definitively linking the production of (BMP) ms 250 with either the church of Sainte-Radegonde or the abbey of Sainte-Croix, though forceful arguments have been made in favor of both institutions. In addition to the sixth-century *Lives* of Fortunatus and Baudonivia (now missing), and a description of Radegund's funeral by Gregory of Tours, the manuscript contains an extensive assortment of other administrative and liturgical documents which were added subsequently and collated together. Gospel readings for the annual feast days from the fifteenth century make up the first 20 folios. These are followed by the twelfth-century Latin text of Fortunatus' *Life of Radegund* accompanied by 31 painted scenes of Radegund's life and miracles. Folio 43v contains a full-page illustration of Baudonivia seated at her writing desk which compliments the full-page portrait of Fortunatus on folio 21v. Most scholars agree that Baudonivia's text would have originally followed her portrait just as Fortunatus' does. Gregory of Tours' account of Radegund's funeral appears next, accompanied by his short *Life of Disciola*, which also appends 6 other *Vita Radegundis* manuscripts.<sup>22</sup> Saint Disciola was a young nun at Sainte-Croix whom Radegund authorized to live as a recluse. After her death, she was buried near Radegund in the crypt of Sainte-

---

<sup>20</sup> Poitiers was the site of centuries of discord between the abbesses of Sainte-Croix and the canons of Sainte-Radegonde. The chapter of canons was established as a dependent of Sainte-Croix through a capitulary of Louis the Pious in 824 to serve the spiritual needs of the nuns. The abbess maintained certain rights over the canons which they contested and even openly rebelled against in a series of disputes during the 11-thirteenth centuries which later resurfaced again in the fifteenth century with redoubled vehemence. See Favreau, *Sainte-Radegonde* (Poitiers : Association les amis de Sainte Radegonde, 1999), 30 and Edwards, *Superior Women*.

<sup>21</sup> *Vie de Sainte-Radegonde*, Poitiers, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS. 250 (136), Twelfth century.

<sup>22</sup> München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 3810 ; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS. lat. 5275, MS. nal. 2261, MS. lat. 16734, MS. lat. 17005, MS. lat. 11758.

Radegonde where her tomb can still be found today. Folios 47-73 contain homilies on the gospels by Gregory the Great and the Venerable Bede and their corresponding feast days. The next 6 folios are mostly late twelfth-century documents related to administration, including a copy of Radegund's letter to the Bishops at the synod of Tours preserved in Gregory of Tours *History of the Franks*. Two false diplomas attributed to Clothar regarding institutional privileges and possessions were added here later in the twelfth century. A charter issued by Louis the Pious for the monastery of Sainte-Croix appears next, though its final section has likewise been determined a twelfth-century forgery.<sup>23</sup> The careful assemblage of all of these documents together in one codex reflects the complex process whereby the Radegund tradition was used to shape her institutions' identity.

Regardless of its provenance, the major themes of the manuscript's twelfth-century images are an overwhelming emphasis on monastic claustration and a deliberate disassociation of Radegund from her royal status. Depictions of Radegund wearing a crown are strictly limited to scenes *before* her ordination as deaconess by Bishop Médard. Additionally, ten out of thirty-one painted images portray Radegund performing miracles from *within* her cell. Her head and torso are visible through the small window and she stretches her hand outside towards the suffering figures who approach her for a miracle. In one scene, two women actually lift the body of a man in through her window to be cured. There is even a scene depicting her self-mortification, where Radegund appears through the window of her cell bound in chains.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Emile Ginot, *Le Manuscrit de Sainte-Radegonde de Poitiers et Ses Peintures du XIe Siècle* (Paris: SFRMP, 1920), 6.

<sup>24</sup> See the color manuscript facsimile in *La Vie de Sainte Radegonde Par Fortunat*, ed. Robert Favreau (Bibliothèque Municipale de Poitiers: Editions du Seuil, 1995). (BMP) ms 250 is also digitized on the BMP website : <http://www.bm-poitiers.fr/PATRIMOINENUM/doc/SYRACUSE/1117076/vie-de-sainte-radegonde-fortunat-venance-530-601>



In *Superior Women* Edwards notes the prominence of images devoted to Radegund's monastic identity, stating,

Every miracle mentioned in the *vita* receives a half or whole-page miniature. Indeed, this focus on the miracles is a shift away from the martyrdom narrative that Fortunatus had so carefully constructed in his original *vita*, and which the libellus reduces to only a single image. The manuscript illuminations give new prominence and importance to a different aspect of Radegund's life from the original *vita*: the saint in the libellus images is a nun above all else. From within her enclosed monastic walls and cell, Radegund devotes herself to prayer and charity, from which she gains the power to heal. Her mortifications and much of her asceticism, so prominent and evocative in Fortunatus, appear only in the background of this monastic image.<sup>25</sup>

Edwards' analysis suggests that the articulation of a specifically monastic identity for Radegund in these images was instrumental in the nuns' claims for female monastic power, thus proving that the manuscript must have been commissioned by the abbess of Sainte-Croix. As she goes on to argue, "Given the libellus's emphasis on Radegund's monasticism, it is possible to read the libellus illuminations as a competing narrative, drawing attention to the nuns and away from the tomb."<sup>26</sup> While the evidence simply does not exist to make this claim definitive, there is no doubt that the Radegund of the Poitevin (BMP) ms 250 projects a decidedly monastic non-royal persona.

In Poitiers, Radegund was a fundamental aspect of the institutional identities of Sainte-Radegonde and Sainte-Croix which actively promoted a monastic image of their holy foundress. They continued to use the strategies Radegund developed to promote their independence and cultivate patronage as needed. Their power was derived from access to Radegund's relics and the memory of her presence and deeds there. Radegund's physical body was entombed at her funerary church while the convent possessed personal items that

---

<sup>25</sup> Edwards, *Superior Women*, 108.

<sup>26</sup> Edwards, *Superior Women*, 108; 122; 126; 134.

Radegund had interacted with as a member of their monastic community which functioned as tertiary relics.<sup>27</sup> Hildebert of Lavardin's *Vita Radegundis* presents a version of Radegund from a reforming bishop's perspective, whose interests did not necessarily align with the monastic image of Radegund so painstakingly cultivated by her Poitiers institutions.

### ***Hildebert, His Work, and His Milieu***

Hildebert of Lavardin, bishop of Le Mans and later archbishop of Tours, is well-known among medievalists as an influential reformer, theologian, letter writer, and poet. However, he has received only minimal attention from English-speaking scholars. The stage is dominated by French and German historians and Latinists whose work focuses mainly on Hildebert's letters and poetry. Most scholarship that addresses Hildebert's *Vita Radegundis* does so only in passing. The original sixth century *Lives* receive considerably more attention. Only two book length studies on Hildebert have been published in the last fifty years. Daniel Nuss's recent serious academic study, *Die Hagiographischen Werke Hildeberts Von Lavardin, Baudris Von Bourgueil Und Marbods Von Rennes: Heiligkeit Im Zeichen Der Kirchenreform Und Der Reecriture*, cites only a handful of articles on Hildebert's poems and two on his hagiography. Three books from 1876, 1898, and 1965 by A. Dieudonné, Le Comte de Déservillers, and Peter Von Moos remain the definitive scholarly sources for Hildebert's life and works. More recently, a number of scholars have explored Hildebert's epistolary relationship with some of the leading royal and noblewomen of England and France. Lois Huneycutt's biography of Matilda of Scotland, queen to King Henry I, and Kimberly LoPrete's biography of Adela of Blois discuss Hildebert's role as a spiritual guide

---

<sup>27</sup> Radegund's relic of the True Cross, her miracle-working hairshirt, her writing desk, the laurel tree she revived, and her monastic cell containing the footprints Christ left in the flagstone floor when he appeared to Radegund in a vision.

to these women.<sup>28</sup> Fiona Griffiths' work on women's donations of liturgical items elaborates on Matilda's spiritual relationship with Hildebert. Griffiths' analysis of their correspondence reveals Hildebert's acknowledgement that women's altar gifts granted them vicarious participation in the sacraments.<sup>29</sup>

Most of what we know about Hildebert comes from letters written to and by him, as well as the *Acts of the Bishops of Le Mans (Actus pontificum Cenomsanis)* composed a few decades after his death by an anonymous cathedral cleric. Hildebert was born at Lavardin in the diocese of Le Mans between 1053 and 1056 to Hildebert senior and Hersende, described by the *Actus pontificum Cenomsanis* as people of middling but honorable stock.<sup>30</sup> His father, who served as *l'homme de confiance* to Lord Salomon of the Château de Lavardin, donated a parcel of land to the monks of Marmoutier in Tours in return for accepting Hildebert's brother, Geoffroy, as an oblate.<sup>31</sup> Hildebert was sent to the cathedral school of Le Mans where he studied under Robert the Grammarian.<sup>32</sup> In 1085, he was chosen by Bishop Hoël as *magister* of the school and in 1091 he was promoted to archdeacon.<sup>33</sup>

After Bishop Hoël's death in 1096, Hildebert found himself at the center of an intense political controversy in Le Mans that likely solidified his position against lay investiture. William Rufus, the king of England and son of William the Conqueror, sought to unite his

---

<sup>28</sup> Lois L. Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland: A Study in Medieval Queenship* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2003); Kimberly A. LoPrete, *Adela of Blois: Countess and Lord (C.1067-1137)* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007).

<sup>29</sup> Fiona Griffiths: "'Like the Sister of Aaron' Medieval Religious Women as Makers and Donors of Liturgical Textiles," *Female 'Vita Religiosa' between Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages: Structures, Developments and Spatial Contexts*, ed. Gert Melville (Berlin: Lit, 2011), 1-3, 12.

<sup>30</sup> "...ex Lavarzinensi castro, mediocribus quidem sed honestis exortus parentibus." *Actus pontificum Cennomannis in urbe degentium*, ed. Ambroise Ledru (Au siège de la Société, 1902), 398.

<sup>31</sup> A. Dieudonné, *Hildebert De Lavardin, Évêque Du Mans, Archevêque De Tours (1056-1133): Sa Vie. Ses Lettres* (Paris: A. Picard et fils., 1898), 35 ; LoPrete, *Adela of Blois*, 183.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Von Moos, *Hildebert Von Lavardin, 1056-1133*, (Pariser Historische Studien, Bd. 3. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1965), 6.

<sup>33</sup> Von Moos, *Hildebert Von Lavardin*, 40.

French and English lands. Fighting against his brother, Robert Curthose, in 1091 he reconquered territory in Normandy, and in 1099 he regained Le Mans after defeating the Count of Maine, Elias de la Flèche. To further ensure his control of the city, William planned to grant the episcopate to Geoffrey the Briton, who was already dean of the cathedral. However, with the Investiture Controversy in full swing, William's involvement in Le Mans' episcopal elections was looked on as an unwelcome intrusion. Hildebert, favored by the defeated Count Elias, was acclaimed bishop by the clergy and the people in defiance of William's interference in the election.<sup>34</sup> However, a faction of the canons were loyal to William. They prevailed upon Hildebert to decline the promotion and may have been the authors of a dangerous rumor that he had fathered an illegitimate son.<sup>35</sup> For his part, William was suspicious of Elias and did everything he could to annul the election, but without success. Raoul archbishop of Tours anointed Hildebert as bishop of Le Mans on Christmas day in 1097.<sup>36</sup> In response, William ravaged town and country. He was particularly suspicious of Hildebert and accused him of using the fortified towers of the Cathedral Saint-Julien to aid Elias against him. When Hildebert refused to acquiesce to William's order to tear down his cathedral towers, William removed Hildebert to England as a captive in 1099. Hildebert spent his time in England composing poetry and making connections among the English prelates and nobles. It is believed that he composed his *Vita Radegundis* at this time.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Le Compte P. de Déservillers, *Hildebert Et Son Temps: Un Évêque Au Douzième Siècle* (Paris: Bourguet, Calas et Cie. 1876), 47.

<sup>35</sup> de Déservillers, *Hildebert Et Son Temps*, 50.

<sup>36</sup> de Déservillers, *Hildebert Et Son Temps*, 56.

<sup>37</sup> Dieudonné, *Hildebert De Lavardin*, 56-57.

In 1100, William Rufus was killed in a hunting accident and Hildebert found himself free to travel to Rome to ask Pope Pascal II for permission to resume his episcopate in Le Mans.<sup>38</sup> This permission was refused, but Hildebert nonetheless had a successful journey. He was received by the Sicilian Normans in 1101. They paid him “honor and reverence...as though he was an angel of God,” according to the *Actus pontificum Cenomannis*.<sup>39</sup> Roger, Duke of Apullia, and his uncle, Roger, Count of Sicily, honored Hildebert with gifts of gold, silver, rich vestments, and 300 pounds of frankincense made by Duke Roger’s own hands.<sup>40</sup> Upon returning to Le Mans, Hildebert distributed these gifts among the cathedral canons and other churches in the city. He also used it to reconstruct the Cathedral of Saint-Julien which had been damaged in the conflict between William and Elias.<sup>41</sup> Having reestablished his position, Hildebert then worked to return all the rural churches of the diocese to ecclesiastical control that had been usurped by lay rulers. He also attended numerous provincial and ecumenical councils and devoted time to his writing.<sup>42</sup> The newfound peace of Le Mans was again shaken in 1116 when Hildebert granted Henry of Lausanne permission to preach just before he departed once again to Rome. Henry’s charismatic performances and fervent denunciations of the immorality of the clergy riled the populace.<sup>43</sup> Hildebert rushed back to

---

<sup>38</sup> Dieudonné, *Hildebert De Lavardin*, 59.

<sup>39</sup> “Deinde, illo Apulliam Siciliamque progresso, sibi universi, quasi angelo Dei, honorem exhibebant et reverentiam.” *Actus pontificum Cennomannis*, 404.

<sup>40</sup> “Inde vero Rotgerius dux CCC libras thuris preciosi propriis confecit manibus, et per ipsum, beato Juliano, cum magna balsami quantitate, et cum quinque palliis preciosis, et vinagiis argenteis et deauratis, et acerra argentea, cujus materiam artifitium superabat, destinavit. Rogerius etiam, comes Sicilie, ad faciendum opus beati Juliani centum uncias auri, et ad victum canonicorum, decem libras Cenomannensis monete delegavit.” *Actus pontificum Cennomannis*, 405.

<sup>41</sup> Dieudonné, *Hildebert De Lavardin*, 61.

<sup>42</sup> Dieudonné, *Hildebert De Lavardin*, 63.

<sup>43</sup> Dieudonné, *Hildebert De Lavardin*, 75.

Le Mans and expelled Henry as a dangerous heretic. In 1123 he took part in the First Lateran Council where he opened with a speech on marriage as a sacrament.<sup>44</sup>

In 1125 Hildebert unwillingly became the archbishop of Tours,<sup>45</sup> in which capacity he came into conflict with the French King Louis VI about the rights of investiture and church revenues. As a strong proponent of ecclesiastical reform, Hildebert pushed back against Louis' attempts to fill episcopal vacancies in the See of Tours with his own candidates. Hildebert then presided over the Synod of Nantes in 1127 which passed rulings on clerical marriage, incestuous marriage, and the status of priests' sons, among other things.<sup>46</sup> After a long and successful career, Hildebert died in 1133 at the age of 77.

### ***Production of the Vita Radegundis***

The fact that the production of Hildebert's *Life of Radegund* coincided with the expansion of Radegund's cult is no accident. While the exact circumstances surrounding the text's composition are unknown, it seems clear that the surge in Radegund's popularity is directly related to Hildebert's decision to rewrite her *vita* for a twelfth-century audience.

The only clue Hildebert himself offers regarding his impetus for writing appears in his Prologue where he addresses "dearest Seimanus," by whose "exhortations" he "dared to describe the life of blessed Radegund with eagerness."<sup>47</sup> The Bollandist, Antonius Beaugendre, who edited Hildebert's *Vita Radegundis* for the *Acta Sanctorum* in 1708, was completely baffled as to the identity of Seimanus. He explains that Mabillion had given him

---

<sup>44</sup> Dieudonné, *Hildebert De Lavardin*, 85.

<sup>45</sup> Dieudonné, *Hildebert De Lavardin*, 88.

<sup>46</sup> Dieudonné, *Hildebert De Lavardin*, 100.

<sup>47</sup> "Hanc mihi providentiam dilectio tua, carissime Seimane a, excussit, qui malui ridiculus scriptor, quam tibi inobediens inveniri. Tuis nimirum exhortationibus Vitam beatissimæ Radegundis ausus sum describere, cum dare operam studio non magis tarditas ingenii quam pontificalis administrationis occupatio prohiberent." Hildebert, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, Prologus.

the epithet "Pictavensem," meaning of *Poitiers*. But he doesn't know whether Mabillion attributed that surname to him because he was born there or simply resided there. He also notes that he couldn't find that name among the contemporary bishops of Poitiers or local prelates. Beaugendre suggests that Seimanus must have been "a man of great authority," however, because of the deferential language Hildebert uses towards him.<sup>48</sup>

In her recent book, *Superior women: medieval female authority in Poitiers' Abbey of Sainte-Croix*, Jennifer Edwards suggests that Hildebert was likely commissioned to write his *Life of Radegund* by the bishop of Poitiers or the canons of the church of Sainte-Radegonde because "the text aligns well with their interests."<sup>49</sup> Her analysis concludes that Hildebert's *Vita* "seems designed to draw pilgrims to the church of Sainte-Radegonde" because it minimizes the importance of Sainte-Croix in Radegund's life, omits any mention of Radegund's relic of the True Cross, and emphasizes her royalty and experience as Clothar's wife. However, this theory seems rather questionable because Edwards uses it to bolster her similarly tenuous hypothesis that the illustrated *libellus*, (BMP) ms 250, was commissioned by the nuns of Sainte-Croix. It is important to note here that Edwards' study focuses on the centuries of conflict between the canons of Sainte-Radegonde and nuns of Sainte-Croix. Thus, the notion that they were engaged in a sort of arms race of Radegund texts seems too convenient, considering the lack of any definitive historical evidence. Though it is true that the text does not emphasize Sainte-Croix's importance as much as Baudonivia, it doesn't mention the church of Sainte-Radegonde at all. It is also true that Hildebert avoids the topic

---

<sup>48</sup> "Mabillonius tomo 1 veterum Analectorum pag. 296 hunc eundem pro Seimano appellat Seimarum, & in indice ejusdem tomi illum cognominat Pictavensem. Ignoramus, an Mabillonius ei istud cognomen tribuat a loco natali, utrum ab aliqua dignitate, quam in urbe Pictaviensi habebat. Saltem inter episcopos Pictavienses nullum hujus nominis aut temporis præsulem reperimus. Sed ex hoc prologo patet, fuisse virum magnæ auctoritatis, cum huic Hildebertus præsul tam prompte obtemperaverit, eique opusculum suum corrigendum aut suppressendum commiserit." Hildebert, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, Notes.

<sup>49</sup> Edwards, *Superior Women*, 174.

of the relic of the True Cross and that he expands Fortunatus and Baudonivia's account of Radegund's married life before her ordination as deaconess. However, I believe that he does this so that he can address themes that are important to him as a reformer, namely, Radegund's exemplary behavior as a wife, her deferential attitude towards the clergy, and her role as a generous yet non-interfering lay ruler.

If Dieudonné's theory that Hildebert produced the *Vita Radegundis* during his captivity in England is correct, the scope of potential patrons and reasons for writing must be expanded. We know almost nothing about Hildebert's brief visit across the channel, but it was there that Hildebert would have come into contact with Anglo-Norman nobles, officials, and clerics. If Seimanus was a new English acquaintance, it explains why neither Beaugendre nor Mabillon could find him among the registers of Poitiers.

### ***The Theological Context: Femininity and Female Sanctity in the Twelfth Century***

The theological discourse of the twelfth century was dominated by denunciations of simony, lay investiture, and clerical marriage. The moral and intellectual revival of the clergy was likewise a central concern. Hildebert and other prolific authors like Peter Damian, Geoffrey of Vendôme, Marbode of Rennes, and Bernard of Clairvaux also sought to propose models of behavior for all Christian people, not just the clergy. Reformers vigorously sought to impose ecclesiastical notions of marriage on the laity. As James Brundage argues in *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, "The sexual agenda of the reformers also included a strong commitment, not only to deny marriage to the clergy, but to reorganize marriage among the laity as well. The reformers were anxious, for one thing, to bring marriage under the exclusive control of Church courts and in so doing to replace customary



marriage law with ecclesiastical law.”<sup>50</sup> This reorganization of lay marriage was an uphill battle for reformers as lay nobles in particular resisted efforts to restrict their behavior.

When it came to models of behavior for women, many theologians demonstrated a growing interest in using the scriptural figures of the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, and Eve to develop theories on female nature. The majority of modern scholars writing about women during the Reform era point out the prevalence of misogynistic discourse produced in reform circles as evidence of an increase in misogyny in the twelfth century. Recent scholarship has begun to challenge the traditional notion that this discourse was universally misogynistic, suggesting that the situation was far more complex than those scholars imply. Like many of his colleagues, Hildebert composed scathing invectives against Woman as the author of all evil, while simultaneously maintaining close political and spiritual relationships with women. This apparent contradiction calls for a more nuanced interpretation of twelfth century attitudes toward women.

The letters and poems Hildebert composed during his long and productive career give us some insight into his attitudes towards women and allow us to situate his personal philosophy within the twelfth-century intellectual milieu. We possess seventeen extant letters to Adela of Blois, Mathilda of Scotland (wife of Henry I), Agnes of Poitou (wife of Elias, Count of Maine), Adela de Louvain (second wife of Henry I), Empress Matilde (married first to Henry V and then to Geoffrey V Plantagenet), Matilde (wife of William, son of Henry I, later abbess of Fontevrault), an unnamed nun, and Athalisa the recluse. As Jacques Dalarun suggests in his article titled, "The Clerical Gaze," in Georges Duby's *A History of Women in the West: Silences of the Middle Ages*, "Hildebert held [Radegund] up as a model to the high-

---

<sup>50</sup> James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 183.

ranking aristocratic matrons with whom he was in correspondence."<sup>51</sup> While none of these letters actually mention Radegund and there does not seem to be any indication that Hildebert sent his *Life of Radegund* to any of these women, Dalarun's theory nonetheless seems reasonable.

In the majority of his letters to powerful women, Hildebert plays the role of spiritual adviser and fatherly supporter. He praises his correspondents' wise leadership, moral strength, and especially their commitments to supporting the Church's interests. For example, in his letter to Adela of Blois, Hildebert shows a surprisingly high degree of confidence in Adela's ability to rule the county of Blois as regent for her husband, Stephan of Blois, while he was on Crusade in the Holy Land from 1096-1000 and during the minority of her son, Thibaud, from 1102-1120. He writes, "You administer it as a woman and one who does not need the help of a man nor of unsolicited counsels; you have whatever is necessary to govern a realm." However, he mitigates this praise by noting, "Such a combination of good things in a woman is surely the result of grace, not nature. The grace of God heaped up titles to be praised in you for the glory of your sex and to temper your power."<sup>52</sup> Here, Hildebert recognizes that women are not naturally suited to the task of governing a realm, but God's gift of grace makes Adela the exception. Hildebert ends his letter by quoting passages from Seneca on the qualities of a *bonus princeps*. As Kimberly LoPrete argues in her recent biography of Adela of Blois, Hildebert's letter suggests that he acknowledged her status as a good prince who was "worthy of emulation by lords of both genders because she ruled both

---

<sup>51</sup> Jacques Dalarun, "The Clerical Gaze," in *A History of Women in the West v. 2. Silences of the Middle Ages*, ed. Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 27.

<sup>52</sup> "Absentia mariti laboriosior tibi cura consulatus incubuit. Eam tamen et femina sic adminiatras, et una, ut nee viro, nec precaris consiliis necesse sit adjuvari. Apud te est quidquid ad regni gubernacula postulatur. Sane tantus bonorum conventus in femina, gratiae est, non naturae. Gratia Dei praedicandos tibi titulos cumulavit, quibus et sexui esses ad gloriam, et potestatem temperares." Hildebert, Letter to Adela of Blois (1101).

self and others through the exercise of reason.”<sup>53</sup> In particular, it is Adela’s chastity (*castitatem*) and clemency (*clementiam*) that make her such a reasonable and effective ruler.

In his capacity as spiritual advisor to these women, Hildebert hoped to guide them in becoming the kind of lay female rulers that would use their positions – as wives, regents, and rulers in their own right – to support the Church’s interests. This agenda seems clear in his letter to Queen Matilda of England where he praises her devotion to upholding Church laws,

“Nothing is more fitting to make a Christian soul rejoice than [news of] the health of those by whom the integrity of the laws and the status of the church is preserved unimpaired. I rejoice therefore and I shall rejoice as long as the breeze announces to my ears that you are safe, as long as I hear that you live and thrive as queen, on whom the power to judge crime and the behavior to be an exemplar of honesty is conferred.”<sup>54</sup>

For Hildebert, Matilda’s devotion to the protection of the Church’s laws and status makes her “an exemplar of honesty” – a ruler whose admirable behavior ought to be imitated.

We can see this acknowledgement and encouragement of protecting church resources again in a second letter to Adela of Blois. Here, Hildebert has heard that she provided safe-conduct to the bishop of Chartres on his voyage to a church council. He requests the same privilege from Adela for himself, saying, “I entreat you to impart benefice of the same grace to me. Symmachus says ‘Experience makes those who desire help go to known providers.’ So I have flown to your protection who are such an example and instrument of virtue over all women.”<sup>55</sup> Adela’s role in offering this protection for the clergy – arguably one of the

---

<sup>53</sup> LoPrete, *Adela of Blois*, 433.

<sup>54</sup> “Nihil enim est unde magis oporteat laetari animam Christianam, quam super eorum incolumitate, quibus et legum integritas, et Ecclesiae status incolumis perseverat. Gaudeo igitur, sed et gaudebo, quoties meas aures aura, quae te sospitem nuntiet, afflaverit, quoties audiam vivere reginam et valere, cui et potestas collata est ad iudicium sceleris, et mores ad exemplar honestatis.” Hildebert, Letter to Matilda (1100-1118).

<sup>55</sup> “Episcopo Carnotensi conductum, sicut fertur, providisti ad concilium profecturo. Quod si ita est, praefatae gratiae beneficium mihi communices exoro. Symmachus dicit: Ex usu venit ut opem desiderantes ad suffragia probata confugiant. Eapropter ad tuum patrocinium transvolavi, quae tota super feminam et exemplum virtutis es et instrumentum.” Hildebert, Letter to Adela of Blois (1104).

Church's most precious resources – makes her a model ruler that other women in similar positions ought to aspire to.

Hildebert also singles out gift-giving and the fiscal support of the church by powerful women as an important marker of their piety. When Matilda sent him a sumptuous golden candelabra, he responded with an elaborate letter of thanks. However, Hildebert's words go far beyond simple gratitude to suggest that women could achieve a symbolic participatory role in the Eucharistic sacrament through their gifts,

It is manifest from this how devoted you are to the Lord's sacraments for which you provide the instruments, since as a woman you cannot administer them, imitating as far as possible the holy women who first came to the cross with tears and then to the tomb with spices...you are also present when Christ is sacrificed, when he is buried; neither is celebrated without your service...There the candelabra and the pontiff perform the services through you, venerable queen, and your memorial.<sup>56</sup>

In her study on medieval women's liturgical gifts, Fiona Griffiths discusses Matilda's gifts to Hildebert and Ivo of Chartres as part of a trend among elite women who consciously understood their donations of altar clothes, vestments, and liturgical ornaments as proxies for their own involvement in the mass.<sup>57</sup> Hildebert clearly takes this connection between women and their gifts to clergy very seriously, writing in another letter to Matilda, "To the altar of the Lord, indeed, your memory accompanies me, fearing lest it bring down judgment on me

---

<sup>56</sup> "Porro ex hoc etiam manifestum est quam devota Dominicis interes sacramentis, quibus quia non potes ministrare femina, provides instrumenta. Imitaris, quantum licet, sanctas mulieres illas quae prius ad crucem cum lacrymis, dehinc ad monumentum cum aromatibus accesserunt. Illae nimirum pio succensae desiderio, quibus potuere studiis et crucifixo compassae sunt et obsecratae tumulato. Tu quoque praesens es cum Christus immolatur, cum traditur sepulturae, neutrumque sine tuo celebratur obsequio, cum ibi luminaria praeparas, luminis ubi adesse auctorem et corde credimus et ore confitemur. Nec refert utrum dissimile sit obsequium, quod simili frequentatur affectu... Ibi pro te, regina venerabilis, ibi pro tuis, et candelabra agent obsequio, et pontifex monumento." Hildebert, Letter to Matilda (1100-1118).

<sup>57</sup> Griffiths: "'Like the Sister of Aaron' Medieval Religious Women as Makers and Donors of Liturgical Textiles," 1-3, 12.

if I defraud you of that intervention which you, Oh queen, bought with your gifts.”<sup>58</sup> As these letters show, Hildebert believed that a woman’s proper place in the hierarchy of the church could be as far as the altar itself – but only symbolically.

Like many powerful women before her, Adela retired to a convent in the later part of her life. She left the administration of the family properties to her son, Thibaud, when he achieved his majority, and joined the community of Marcigny, the sister house of Cluny. On this occasion, Hildebert sent her a letter commending her choice and offering her spiritual guidance. The exercise of humility is Hildebert’s theme here as he praises Adela’s new role of servitude, saying,

I also hear that from rich [you have become] poor in spirit, from a most brilliant countess surrounded by troops of followers, a humble nun, and like the most abject handmaid you provide what is necessary to the other daughters of Christ who serve the Lord with you and serve most obligingly...remember to embrace humility, knowing that there is nothing by which to triumph more gloriously over Satan.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to humility, virtues like temperance, wisdom, fortitude (the four cardinal virtues); and charity, chastity, modesty, clemency, piety, honesty, and beauty seem to be the prerequisites of good queenship for Hildebert since his letters are full of praise and encouragement of these qualities. As we will see, Hildebert imbues Radegund with all of these aspects of the ideal queen. But he also incorporates feminized versions of *topoi* found in the *vitae* of male reforming saints.

### ***Rewriting Radegund for a Reform Context***

---

<sup>58</sup> “Ad altare quippe Domini tua me comitatur memoria, timentem, ne mihi cedat ad iudicium, si eo interventu te defraudo, quem beneficiis, regina, comparasti.” Hildebert, Letter to Matilda (1100-1118).

<sup>59</sup> “Audio enim te deduci in semitam mandatorum Dei, et ad terram viventium inoffenso currere vestigio. Audio etiam de locuplete pauperem spiritu, de splendidissima et constipata cuneis obsequentium comitissa, humilem monacham, atque ad instar abjectioris ancillulae, caeteris filiabus Christi, quae tecum Domino serviunt, et providere quod necessarium est, et officiosissime famulari... Tu igitur humilitatem amplecti memineris, sciens nihil esse quo gloriosius de Satana triumphetur.” Hildebert, Letter to Adela of Blois (1104).

A close reading of Hildebert's twelfth-century *Life of Radegund* against the sixth-century versions composed by Fortunatus and Baudonivia reveals several ways that his writing was shaped by and responds to reform ideals. We cannot expect a reformer to depict a holy woman preaching against simony or acting independently to reform corrupt clerics. Rather, it is necessary to use the existing paradigms established for the "Reform Hagiography" of male saints to develop a set of complementary criteria for female "Reform Hagiography."

Firstly, Hildebert makes strategic changes to the sixth-century *Lives* to highlight episcopal authority. Like many of the authors of male "Reform Hagiography," Hildebert similarly exaggerates the weakness of lay rulers and the power of bishops to emphasize the superiority of episcopal power to royal authority.

Secondly, Hildebert includes details from Baudonivia's *vita* about Radegund's peacemaking activities despite his insistence that he followed Fortunatus' text in composing his own. The "Reform Hagiography" of male saints typically highlights their ability to single-handedly bring peace and prosperity to their cities. Even though Hildebert significantly shortens Baudonivia's account of Radegund's diplomatic activities, his decision to include this detail omitted by Fortunatus seems significant. As Hildebert's correspondence with his circle of Anglo-Norman aristocratic ladies demonstrates, he had great confidence in the governing abilities of certain women, despite comments to the contrary in his poetry. These apparent contradictions necessitate a more nuanced interpretation of our current understanding of theological attitudes towards women's diplomatic roles and female sanctity within the context of ecclesiastical reform.

Thirdly, Hildebert's "Reformed Radegund" demonstrates the proper behavior and place a woman should assume within the hierarchy of the reformed church. His version highlights her unquestioning deference to clerical knowledge and minimizes her agency as a teacher. Furthermore, Hildebert's descriptions of Radegund's character seem to respond directly to specific accusations that he and other reformers bring against Woman in their misogynistic invectives. In addition, Hildebert goes considerably farther than Fortunatus to explain *how* and *why* Radegund performed her marital duties. These attempts to rationalize Radegund's behavior as a wife allow Hildebert to reinterpret problematic aspects of her historical identity as a married saint and adapt them to twelfth-century theological notions of marriage and female sanctity.

#### *Representations of Episcopal Authority and Superiority*

In his prologue, Hildebert explains that he read both Fortunatus' and Baudonivia's *Lives*, but that he chose to follow the version composed by Fortunatus, "to whom is acceded the most authority, no less from his life, than from pontifical dignity."<sup>60</sup> Thus within the first few sentences, Hildebert has already framed his entire work around the concept of episcopal authority. He also follows Fortunatus' lead in omitting Radegund's conflict with Bishop Maroveus of Poitiers. As Baudonivia tells us, when Maroveus refuses to install Radegund's relic of the True Cross, she writes to King Sigibert who intervenes by ordering the bishop of Tours to perform the ceremony, thus bypassing local episcopal jurisdiction. Despite the

---

<sup>60</sup> "De ejus tamen gratia præsumentis, qui linguas infantium facit disertas, ad Fortunati simul & Baudoniviæ sanctimonialis scripta recurri, quorum uterque præfatam persecutus Vitam, de pretioso apparatu pretiosa parum, sicut tibi videtur, fercula confecerunt. Eorum scriptis diligenter evolutis, Fortunatum sequi disposui, cui non minus ex vita, quam ex dignitate Pontificis e plurimum auctoritatis accedit." Hildebert, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, Prologus.

importance of this relic whose acquisition resulted in re-naming the convent Holy Cross, lay intervention of this sort is precisely what eleventh- and twelfth-century reformers opposed.

The most significant instance where Hildebert strategically adapts the *Vita Radegundis* to showcase reform ideals of episcopal authority is his rewriting of Clothar's interaction with Bishop Germanus of Paris. Despite Hildebert's decision to follow Fortunatus, he nonetheless includes this scene from Baudonivia's *Vita* because of the opportunity it affords him to promote his interests. Here, Radegund has departed the palace to pursue a religious life in Poitiers. But Clothar, regretting his decision to let her go, has followed her as far as Tours with the intention of reclaiming her by force. The couple uses Bishop Germanus of Paris as their go-between and he struggles to mediate their conflict. The following quote from Hildebert's text describes Clothar and Germanus' interaction after the bishop has just read a letter from Radegund begging him to turn Clothar away from his designs,

Having read the letter, the bishop [Germanus] fell on his knees at the feet of the king. He [Bishop Germanus] begged that he [Clothar] desist from his proposition, that he restrain his hand from she who is consecrated to Christ, and that he devote reverence to the holy spirit who had made his dwelling in a fragile vase. **He [Clothar] heard the bishop's intercession and because he feared his power, he did not blush to confess his sin.** He begged for forgiveness and he prayed to be helped by the prayers of her whose husband he did not deserve to be.<sup>61</sup>

Compare with Baudonivia's version,

And when the God-filled man [Bishop Germanus] read what was confided to him in her letter, he prostrated himself weeping at the king's feet before the tomb of Saint Martin and solemnly entreated him in God's name not to go to the city of Poitiers. Understanding that the petition came from his blessed

---

<sup>61</sup> "Decursis episcopus litteris, pedibus regis advolvitur. Implorat, ut a suo desistat proposito manus a consecrata Christo absteineat; impendat Spiritui sancto reverentiam, qui in vase fragili propriam fecerat mansionem. Exauditur pontifex interpellans, & quia vim paverat, non erubuit delictum confiteri. Supplicat ad veniam potestas & cujus conjugium non meruit, ejus precibus adjuvari deprecatur." Hildebert, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 23.



queen, the king was full of sorrow. Led to repentance, he repudiated his evil counsellors. Judging himself unworthy to have such a queen any longer, he prostrated himself before Saint Martin's threshold at the feet of the apostolic Germanus asking him to beg blessed Radegund's forgiveness for indulging his evil counsellors and sinning against her.<sup>62</sup>

These two accounts seem similar. In both versions, Germanus intercedes in the dispute, begs Clothar on his knees not to go to Poitiers, and Clothar acknowledges his unworthiness to be Radegund's husband. However, there is a crucial difference. Hildebert adds the important detail that it was fear of Bishop Germanus' power that motivated Clothar to confess his sins and desist from his plan of reclaiming Radegund. In Baudonivia's version, Clothar seems more motivated by the discovery that his actions are wicked and that the petition came from his "blessed" queen, implying that it was Radegund's power and authority that was the impetus for his obedience. Hildebert's choice to reimagine the king of the Frankish Kingdom cringing in fear before the powerful bishop clearly reflects Hildebert's interest as a reformer in constructing lay authority as impotent in the face of episcopal power. Considering Hildebert's own experiences with William Rufus' violent interference in his episcopal election, he likely relished the idea of portraying Clothar in a state of submission before the fearsome bishop. Clothar is necessarily the villain of this story in every rewriting, but Hildebert deliberately exaggerates the weakness of the lay ruler and the power of the bishop to make a claim about the superiority of episcopal power to royal authority.

### Peacemaking

---

<sup>62</sup> "At ubi eas relegit vir Domino plenus, lacrymans prosternit se pedibus regis ante sepulchrum sancti Martini, cum contestatione divina, sicut ei literis fuerat intimatum, ut Pictavis non accederet. Sic rex amaritudine plenus, intelligens, hoc petitionem esse beatæ Reginæ, [ut rex propositum suum mutaverit.] pœnitentia ductus, malis consiliariis istud reputans, seque indignum judicans, quod talem habere Reginam diutius non meruisset, prosternit se & ille ante limina S. Martini pedibus apostolici viri Germani, rogans, ut sic pro ipso veniam peteret beatæ Radegundi, ut ei indulgeret, quod in ea per malos consiliarios peccaverat." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 7.8-8.9.

Pierre Toubert's article, "Essai sur les Modèles Hagiographiques de la Réforme Grégorienne," compares three twelfth-century lives of reforming bishops specifically within the context of Gregorian reform. He systematically draws out seven special shared characteristics that constitute the collective profile of an ideal reforming saint-bishop, one of which is the active promotion of peace.<sup>63</sup> Once again, Hildebert is obliged to pass over Fortunatus and rely on Baudonivia's account to address this important reform concern,

[Thanks to] her most holy prayers and letters aimed at concord between quarrelling princes, the churches acquired a respite and peace was restored to the fatherland.<sup>64</sup>

Compare with Baudonivia's version,

Always solicitous for peace, always working diligently for the welfare of the fatherland (and for peace among the kingdoms), if she saw that war was being stirred up between them, she prayed for the lives of all the kings, because she loved them all. And she taught us to pray incessantly for their stability. Truly, whenever she heard that bitterness was arising between with, trembling all over, she directed such letters to one and the other, entreating them not to make war amongst themselves, nor to take up arms, but to establish peace, lest the land perish. Likewise she directed letters to their nobles, asking them to give the high kings good counsel so that their reign would restore the welfare of the people and the land. She imposed assiduous vigils on her congregation, tearfully teaching them to pray incessantly for the kings. What words can say how much suffering she inflicted upon herself? By her intercession, there was peace among the kings, and the mitigation of warfare brought prosperity to the land. Learning of her mediation, the people rejoiced, blessing name of the Lord!<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Toubert, "Essai sur les Modèles Hagiographiques de la Réforme Grégorienne," 806-840.

<sup>64</sup> "Ejus sanctissimis precibus & litteris, inter discordantes principes pro concordia destinatis, parta est ecclesiis requies, pax patriæ restituta." Hildebert, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 40.

<sup>65</sup> "Semper de pace sollicita, semper de salute patriæ curiosa, [& pro pace regni] quandoquidem inter se regna movebantur, quia totos diligebat reges, pro omnium vita orabat, & nos sine intermissione pro eorum stabilitate orare docebat: ubi vero inter se ad amaritudinem eos moveri audisset, tota tremebat, & quales litteras uni, tales dirigebat alteri, ut inter se non bella, nec arma tractarent, sed pacem firmarent, patriæ ne perirent. Similiter & ad eorum proceres dirigebat, ut præcelsis regibus consilia ministrarent, ut eis regnantibus, populi & patria salubrior redderetur. Congregationi suæ assiduas vigilias imponebat, & ut sine intermissione pro eis orarent, cum lacrymis docebat. Se vero in quanto cruciatu affligebat, quis his verbis explere valeat? Et intercedente ea, pax regum, mitigatio belli, salus patriæ aderat, ut ejus obtentum intelligentes, nomen Domini benedictum collaudarent plebes." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 10.16.

As we can see, Baudonivia's description of Radegund's efforts to establish peace is considerably longer than Hildebert's abbreviated version – one might even say that Baudonivia makes Radegund's active political role central to her practice of sanctity as a holy queen. Hildebert, on the other hand, adds his description of Radegund's peacemaking efforts almost as an afterthought. Instead of incorporating this detail into the narrative of Radegund's life as Baudonivia does, this line appears as the final sentence of his *Vita* before a chapter devoted exclusively to miracles. Despite its abridgment, Hildebert nonetheless found Radegund's peacemaking activities significant enough to bypass Fortunatus' "episcopal dignity" to include it.

Even more significant is Hildebert's choice to reframe Radegund's peacemaking efforts as resulting in peace *for the churches*, whereas Baudonivia's Radegund works for peace among kingdoms. Hildebert likely did not want to over-emphasize that his ideal "good queen" played too active a diplomatic role. Rather, as we can see from his letter to Queen Matilda of England as discussed above, Hildebert believes that a good queen should protect the laws and status of the Church. His adjustment to Baudonivia's diplomatic portrait of Radegund demonstrates his aim of re-purposing a typical characteristic of a male reforming saint for a female saint and aligning that with his notion of Christian queenship.

#### *Women's Proper Behavior and Place Within Church Hierarchy*

A comparison between the ways that Fortunatus, Baudonivia, and Hildebert describe Radegund's interactions with the clergy shows that Hildebert makes a concerted effort to present Radegund as unquestioningly obedient and deferential to a clerical elite. Hildebert's Radegund trusts the clergy's speech, exempts them from taxation, and follows their spiritual example without question.

While both Hildebert and Fortunatus recount the same scene where Radegund welcomes and listens to visiting clergy, Hildebert adds a line to promote the authority of ordained priests *over* Radegund's saintly authority.

And since she had read, the lips of the priest preserves knowledge because he is the angel (messenger) of the Lord of hosts,<sup>66</sup> she adhered to the teaching of the priests and considered their prayers seriously. None of them was burdened with taxes, none [were burdened] with the license of royal power, none [were] poor, except those whose poverty the merciful queen was ignorant of. Without doubt she believed she would pass to judgment if the angels of the lord begged for alms from a rich queen. Nor was it visible to discern, whether she presented (herself) more as Martha, or as Mary.<sup>67</sup>

When priests of Christ arrived at the palace, just as if she were driven out by an imminent cause, she implored royal aid, and she exulted with such great joy, as if it were evident that Christ was present. They were received with the honor that was seemly, and she listened devotedly to those speaking, and ministered humbly to them at table.<sup>68</sup>

Hildebert cites scripture (and Radegund's knowledge of scripture) to explain that the priests' unique role as God's messengers invests them with guardianship over doctrine. Hildebert also elevates the priests' status by likening them to Christ, noting that Radegund was just as joyful at their presence as she would have been if Christ himself were there.

Hildebert adapted this passage from Fortunatus' text, which also shows Radegund behaving deferentially to the visiting clergy and portrays her as fully attentive to the priest's words. However, Fortunatus frames her deference more in terms of hospitality and respect

---

<sup>66</sup> "Labia enim sacerdotis custodient scientiam, et legem requirent ex ore ejus, quia angelus Domini exercituum est." For the lips of the priests shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth: because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts. Malachaei 2:7.

<sup>67</sup> "Et quoniam legerat, Labia sacerdotis custodiunt scientiam, quia angelus Domini exercituum est, sacerdotum doctrinis adesse, sacerdotum se orationibus commendare satagebat. Eorum nullus exactione gravabatur, nullus regiae licentia potestatis, nullus inops, nisi cujus inopiam Regina misericors ignorasse." Hildebert, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 8.

<sup>68</sup> "Adventantibus autem ad palatium Christi sacerdotibus, & prout exigebat imminens causa, regium implorantibus auxilium, tanto exultabat gaudio, ac si ipsam Christi constaret adesse praesentiam. Hos honore quo decuit susceptos, & loquentes audivit devotius, & discumbentibus humiliter ministravit. Nec erat promptum discerni, utrum Martham potius exhiberet, quam Mariam." Hildebert, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 14.

than a behavior necessitated by their superior authority. Fortunatus' Radegund, herself Christ-like, washes the feet of the priests just as she washes paupers and lepers. Hildebert flips this characterization by removing Radegund's feet-washing from his text and shifting the Christ-like quality onto the clergy.

Furthermore, Hildebert uses this opportunity to promote his personal theological views on the harmony of the active and contemplative life by noting that Radegund behaved equally like Martha and Mary as she attended to the clergy. As Kathleen Cushing observes in her article, "Events That Led to Sainthood: Sanctity and the Reformers in the Eleventh Century," reformers were "men of action" and reform hagiography often presented male reformer saints actively engaged in the outside world preaching and "fighting" for reform.<sup>69</sup> In a letter to the new abbot of St. Vincent at Le Mans, Hildebert praises the ideal of alternation between contemplating heavenly things and helping others. As Giles Constable writes, Hildebert's reform efforts involved him deeply in worldly affairs, so he used these literary opportunities to "defend his own life and those of the men he admired, like Hugh of Cluny and Bernard of Clairvaux."<sup>70</sup>

Lastly, as the ideal lay ruler, Radegund does not burden the clergy by intervening in their affairs, rather, she uses her royal power to their benefit by financially supporting them and exempting them from taxation. It is important to note that the material restoration of the *episcopium* is another one of Toubert's seven characteristics of the ideal reforming saint-bishop and, as mentioned above, Hildebert himself went on his own personal quest of redeeming ecclesiastical funds and properties after lay interference led to physical and

---

<sup>69</sup> Cushing, "Events That Led to Sainthood," 187-196.

<sup>70</sup> Giles Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought: The interpretation of Mary and Martha, The ideal of the imitation of Christ, The orders of society* (Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 65.

financial destruction in Le Mans. Jacques Dalarun suggests that Hildebert intended his *Life of Radegund* as a model for the network of noblewomen with whom he corresponded.<sup>71</sup> If so, the detail about Radegund absolving clerics from taxation may have been intended as a reference to or inspired by Adela of Blois, to whom Hildebert sent at least five letters. While ruling the county of Blois as regent for her husband, Adela levied a tallage against the monks of Bonneval. She later renounced her decision, explaining in an 1109 letter that she had taxed them “as if in revenge” when their sergeant killed one of her men. When they came to her with “testimonies of ancient writings that did not permit tallage to be imposed by [Adela] or anyone else,” Adela eventually repented, made satisfaction to the monks, and pledged before the altar of the holy martyrs Marcellinus, Peter, Florentin, and Hilary that neither she nor her successors would ever tax them again.<sup>72</sup> Since neither Fortunatus nor Baudonivia make any mention of taxation in their *Lives*, it seems clear that Hildebert’s addition of this detail was an intentional effort to portray Radegund as the kind of model lay ruler reformers envisioned in the twelfth century.

In addition to supporting the clergy and exempting them from taxation, Hildebert’s “reformed Radegund” unquestioningly follows the spiritual example of visiting clerics. She also does not presume to teach her congregation as Baudonivia’s Radegund does. Hildebert rewrites Baudonivia’s description of how Radegund learned new religious practices from visiting clergy at Sainte-Croix,

If it happened that the person she had received was a religious, she inquired more privately about the customs of the man, about his devotion, and about his life. If she learned that he lived under a stricter discipline, she placed herself under his same principles, and she made use of his example to the increase of her virtue. She believed that she did not reach perfection, unless her actions shined [beyond] the actions of all of those who were perfect. She

---

<sup>71</sup> Dalarun, “The Clerical Gaze,” 29.

<sup>72</sup> Adela of Blois, Letter to the monks of Bonneval, (1109).

spoke of their deeds, she commended them to the virgins of Christ, she proclaimed they should be imitated. **Yet nothing suggested to others that she did not teach more by example than by words.**<sup>73</sup>

Compare with Baudonivia's version,

She never imposed a task on anyone that she had not done first herself. Whenever a servant of God visited, she would question him closely about his manner of serving the Lord. If she learned anything new from him which she was not used to doing, she would immediately impose it first upon herself and then **she would teach her congregation with words what she had already shown them by her example.**

...Just as a bee collects from various kinds of flowers to make honey, so also did she strive to gather little spiritual flowers from those whom she invited, whence she brought forth the fruit of good works as much in herself as in those who followed her.<sup>74</sup>

Baudonivia emphasizes that Radegund taught the new practices to her congregation "with words what she had already shown them by her example," while Hildebert changes it to "Yet nothing suggested to others that she did not teach more by example than by words." The key distinction is that Baudonivia's Radegund teaches with words, while Hildebert's Radegund teaches by example.

The notion of women actively teaching Christian doctrine had always been a controversial subject, but Hildebert's modification reflects the eleventh- and twelfth-century opposition to women assuming the leadership roles appropriate only to the intellectually and morally superior male clergy. Baudonivia's text is full of instances where Radegund actively

---

<sup>73</sup> "Quod si contigisset religiosam suscipi personam, de moribus hominis, de studio, de vita secretius inquirebat. Si eum sub arctioribus disciplinis vivere didicisset, ejusdem se subdebat institutis, ejus exemplis ad virtutum utebatur incrementum. Infra perfectum se credebat profecisse, nisi in actibus suis actus omnium refulgerent perfectorum. Hos ejus opera loquebantur, hos ipsa Christi Virginibus commendabat, hos prædicabat imitandos. Nihil tamen suggerebat aliis, quod non magis exemplo doceret, quam verbo." Hildebert, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 38.

<sup>74</sup> "Numquam imposuit alicui, quod ipsa prius non fecit. Undecumque servus Dei venisset, sollicitè perquirebat, qualiter Domino serviret. Si quid vero novi ab eo agnovisset, quod ipsa non faceret, continuo cum omni alacritate sibi prius imposuit, & post congregationi tam verbo quam exemplo ostendit. . . Sicut enim apis diversa genera florum congregat, unde mella conficiat, sic illa ab his, quos invitabat, spiritales studebat carpere flosculos, unde boni operis fructum tam sibi quam suis sequacibus exhiberet." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 9.13,

teaches, preaches, and reads to her congregation. In fact, Baudonivia specifically refers to Radegund preaching using some variant of *prædicare* or *prædicatione* a total of seven times. She mentions her teaching twice, using the word *doctrina*, and offers several other anecdotes about Radegund's methods and motivations for the instruction of her flock.<sup>75</sup> Hildebert, on the other hand, seems to perceive a danger in women assuming this kind of active educational role, stating that nothing she did would give the impression that she was actively teaching. Leading by example would have been considered the more acceptable method for women.

Baudonivia's comparison of Radegund to a bee also suggests that Radegund consciously chose and assembled knowledge from both texts and clerics which she then preached to the nuns of Sainte-Croix.<sup>76</sup> While Hildebert's Radegund accepts new practices as long as they're stricter, Baudonivia's Radegund is more discerning about the practices she accepts.

The eleventh and twelfth centuries was a complex time for women in the social hierarchy of the Church. Many reformers had envisioned a Church free of women and by the twelfth century, some theologians were capitalizing on existing ideas about gender to reestablish the theoretical intellectual and moral inferiority of women.<sup>77</sup> The first series of reform legislation in 1059 was directed against canonesses and beginning in 1120, many of their chapters were dissolved amidst a growing emphasis on the strict claustration of female religious. The Radegund of Baudonivia's text would have contrasted sharply with the

---

<sup>75</sup> See for example: Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.9.11-14; 4.17.30-34.

<sup>76</sup> On the metaphor of bees, see chapter four of Anna Taylor, *Epic Lives and Monasticism in the Middle Ages, 800–1050* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>77</sup> JoAnn McNamara, "The Herrenfrage: The Restructuring of the Gender System 1050-1150," *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 5.



reformers' ideal and certainly would have ruffled feathers. By adapting Radegund's behavior to twelfth-century standards, Hildebert is able to reconstruct Radegund as a model for the proper place a woman should assume within the hierarchy of the reformed church.

Furthermore, he depicts Radegund as eager to imitate stricter practices of visiting clergy without question. This would also make her a good model for those who might be opposed to the waves of reform that sought to impose change on religious houses like Sainte-Croix which had been operating independently for centuries.

Many reformers, including Hildebert himself, participated in the misogynistic discourse today's scholars often represent as characteristic of the Reform era. This discourse portrays women as descendants of Eve: naturally deceitful, vain and prideful, likely to seduce men to ruin, insatiable (in terms of lust and greed), and consumed by negative emotions like anger and jealousy. While these scholars have considerably exaggerated the prevalence of misogyny in the twelfth century, it is nonetheless important to discuss it here because it appears to have influenced Hildebert's reinterpretation of Radegund's disposition. A comparison between Hildebert's poem, *De tribus inimicis*, alongside his descriptions of Radegund's character in the *Vita Radegundis* suggests that Hildebert constructed his "Reformed Radegund" as a direct response to contemporary invectives against women.

If many things are in the habit of destroying sacred morals,  
Nothing destroys them more than woman, money, honor.  
Woman: a fragile thing, **never constant except in crime**, never willingly stops being harmful.  
Woman: **voracious** flame, extreme madness, intimate enemy,  
**Learns and teaches everything that can harm.**  
Woman: vile forum, public thing, **born to deceive**,  
When she has behaved **criminally** she thinks she has succeeded.  
Woman: sad yoke, lamentation of right and equity,  
Finds it shameful to do nothing shameful.  
Woman: an enemy all the more serious because she is more **intimate**,  
**Invites crime** by money, voice, hand.

**Consuming everything in vice**, she is consumed by all  
And, predator of men, she becomes herself the prey of men.  
She excites, upsets, torments the body, the strength, the soul.  
She attracts, equips, feeds the features, arms, hatred.

**She overthrows, upsets, ignites cities, kingdoms, houses**

And she alone brings down the hope, the head, the armies of so many kings.  
Woman deprived Paris of the spirit and Uriah [husband of Bathsheba] of life,  
David of piety and Solomon of faith.

Woman took it upon herself to condemn John [the Baptist] to his bloody end,  
Hippolyte [son of Theseus in Greek mythology] to death and Joseph [son of Jacob  
and Rachel] to chains.

Woman, directing by the spirit, persuading by the tongue and executing by acts  
Drives the law, the people and trains herself to ruin.<sup>78</sup>

As another example, note the following verses inscribed by the canons of Sainte-Radegonde on the prayer role of Mathilde, daughter of William the Conqueror and first abbess of la Trinite de Caen. (c. 1113)

Oh! Sorrow! Eve, mother of the human condition,  
Was the source and origin of a terrifying perdition,  
From a rib taken from man, she was created woman,  
And by her sin her descendants were condemned.  
By tricking man, she became the **symbol of trickery**:  
Thus, to trust in them [women] is the way to **ruin** oneself.  
Every woman is **evil**, a **deadly** thing, very **miserable, vile**,  
Those who have confidence in them [women] are excessively naïve/childish.  
While I wanted to write in detail about what woman really is,  
The porter of this roll is struggling to take the parchment away from us.  
Pray for us: Winmarus the prior, Gosbertus the cantor, Peter the cantor, John the  
succentor, Stephen, Fulk, and for all the others.<sup>79</sup>

In the additions Hildebert makes to his *Vita Radegundis* regarding Radegund's character, it seems clear that he is responding to these kinds of specific accusations by noting what Radegund is NOT and by describing her positive traits *against* negative ones.

---

<sup>78</sup> Hildebert, "De tribus inimicis," PL 171, col. 1128-1129.

<sup>79</sup> "Titulus sanctae Radegundis reginae Pictavis. Proh dolor! Eva, parens humanae conditionis, Fons et origo fuit horrendae perditionis. Costa viro sumpta fuit, inde creata virago, Fraude sua cujus dampnatur tota propago. Decipiendo virum fit signum decipiendi: Sic qui credit eas, habet exemplum pereundi. Femina tota malum, res atra, miserrima, vilis: Qui se credit eis, est ille nimis puerilis. Dum quid sit mulier per singula scribere vellem, Rolliger a nobis conatur tollere pellem. Orate pro nostris, Winemaro priore, Gosberto cantore. Petro cantore. Johanne succentore. Stephano, Fulcone, et pro aliis." Léopold Delisle, *Rouleau des morts du 9e au 15e siècle* (Recueillis et publiés pour la Société de l'Histoire de France : Paris, 1866), no. 125, p. 230-231.

- The *inconstancy* of the *mercurial* woman and the *affected charm* was far from her. There was *no art* in her expression, *no vanity* in her speech. *Her bearing was not born of industry but of nature.*
- In truth, among these [virtues] *she obtained leadership [which] humility preserved until the end.*
- In every action and word, she placed a measure of *discretion*, she paid close attention to the occasion/time, *she observed the limits of things.*
- Offended, she was *quicker to offer forgiveness* than the one who had committed the offense was to ask for it. She feared that Christ would be angry if she saw the sun go down on her anger.
- But when the miracle was made public, the daughter of Christ *was not excited for that glory*, but, on the contrary/she retorted, *with a blush covering her face*, she declared herself unworthy, that on her account the Lord would have expended the before-mentioned favor on his servant.<sup>80</sup>

Early Christian women's saints' lives almost always stated that their subject overcame natural feminine weakness or fragility. This is precisely how Fortunatus begins his prologue, noting that despite women's physical weakness, God bestows strength of mind on women so that they can reject all things worldly. Throughout the rest of the *Vita*, Fortunatus uses anecdotes to demonstrate that Radegund possessed all the usual saintly virtues (humility, chastity, charity, asceticism, piety, etc.). Hildebert, on the other hand, constructs many of the positive aspects of Radegund's character *in opposition* to the negative characteristics which are presumably typical in most women. Comparing Hildebert's poem side-by-side with his descriptions of Radegund, we can see how Hildebert distances Radegund from problematic female qualities: women are inconstant (except in crime) while Radegund is constant; women are deceitful but Radegund employs no art in her expression; women are voracious but

---

<sup>80</sup> "Procul ab ea mutabilis mulieris inconstantia, procul decor mutuatus. Nihil artis in vultu, nihil in sermone vanitatis. Incessus non industriæ fuit, sed naturæ; Inter hæc vero principatum quemdam obtinuit servata usque in finem humilitas; In omni actione & verbo modum discretionis posuit, attendit tempora, rerum terminos observavit; Læsa, promptior fuit offerre veniam, quam qui læsisset, postularet. Irasci Christum timuit, si irata solem videret occidentem; Divulgato autem miraculo, Filia Christi non illa erigitur gloria, sed ad ejus relationem, profusus rubore vultibus, indignam se testabatur, pro qua Dominus suis servis præfatum dignatus esset impendere beneficium." Hildebert, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, selections.

Radegund observes discretion and limits; women upset kingdoms while Radegund is worthy of leadership because her authority is tempered by humility; women relish shameful deeds but Radegund blushes with modesty even when she performs a miracle. Both Fortunatus and Hildebert present a model for female sanctity, but Hildebert situates this model within the discursive context of misogynistic invective that was so popular among reformers.

### Marriage and the Ideal Wife

We know that the topic of marriage, both clerical and lay, was a significant concern of Hildebert's. As mentioned above, Hildebert spoke about marriage as a sacrament at the First Lateran Council and presided over the Synod of Nantes which passed rulings on clerical marriage, incestuous marriage, and the status of priests' sons. Hildebert also dealt with the concepts of marriage and virginity in a sermon on the Virgin Mary and in his letter to the recluse, Athalisa. It is therefore no surprise that Radegund's marital relations are the subject of a significant portion of Hildebert's Chapter 2 which delicately dances back and forth between the deed and its explanation: She gratified her husband without offending God; she preserved her *pudorem* but she always acquiesced to her husband's demands; she did not spoil her marriage with the evils of desire but she did not deny her husband his rights either; heroically preventing Clothar from the temptation of other women, she performed her marital duty, but did so without satisfying her own desire. As Hildebert writes,

But if you wish to know how she bore her marital cares, she gratified her husband in such a way that she did not displease the Creator. Her home [was] ignorant of shame and disgrace, her bedroom/marriage [was] a workshop of modesty.<sup>81</sup>

For what can I say about sharing the [marriage] bed? She always agreed to it so that her husband gained (although she yielded to her husband in conjugal

---

<sup>81</sup> "His Regina instans officiis, malebat in obsoleta domo servire pauperibus, quam in palatio dominari. Quod si ea, quæ cura maritum gerebant, nosse desideras, ita morigerata est conjugii, ne displiceret Creatori. Thalami ejus officina pudoris, & ignarum turpitudinis ac flagitii domicilium." Hildebert, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 10.

duty), not so that she might satisfy the alluring delights. Of course lest Satan tempt her husband, she fulfilled the [conjugal] debt to her husband, she did not drive it out. If in this there is any sin, either in her goodwill/complacency or in the intrusion of delight, she immediately hastened to erase it not only with so many tears but also with much bodily torment. In fact, inventing a reason she would rise [from bed], she placed a rough hairshirt over the pavement, which she clung to naked for a long time, until she was pierced with cold to her marrow and almost breathed out her spirit. Thus the queen fulfilling her matrimonial duties, together with conserving her modesty, she neither defrauded her husband with her reverence, nor diminished/impaired the good of marriage with desire. There were those who said that the king had married a nun rather than a laywoman. Moreover, the king himself bearing a life of piety with a distressed heart, accused his wife of imitating the religious life, adding that this severity agrees little with marriage, and [adding] more gently that it is permitted that a wife gratify her husband and a husband gratify his wife. The daughter of Christ not turning back in any way from her sacred purpose, sweetened the bitterness of the king with gentle speech.<sup>82</sup>

This convoluted description of Radegund's physical relationship with Clothar proved so confusing for later audiences that, as Jacques Dalarun suggests in "The Clerical Gaze," "Subsequently various mediocre hagiographers pretended that Radegund and Chlotar had never consummated their marriage. Hildebert had led the way by suggesting that all the saint's virtues were as nothing compared with the virtue she had forever sacrificed."<sup>83</sup> Even though Radegund's marital status did not pose such great problems for her sixth-century biographers who focused more on her charity and humility, in the early twelfth-century

---

<sup>82</sup> "Nam de consortio thori quid loquar? Ad quod ipsa semper ideo accessit, [Etsi marito obsequeretur in debito conjugali,] ut maritum lucrifaceret, non ut lenocinantem expleret voluptatem. Quippe ne sathanas maritum tentaret, marito debitum solvit, non exegit. In quo si quidquam, vel ejus gratia, vel voluptatis admixtione peccatum est, statim non lacrymis tantum, sed & multo corporis cruciatu delere properavit. Fingens enim causam qua surgeret, hispidum pavimento superponebat cilicium, cui nuda tamdiu inhærebat, quousque percussis frigore medullis, pene spiritum exhalaret. Sic Regina pariter & conjugio deferens, & pudorem conservans, nec maritum reverentia defraudavit, nec libidine bonum minuit nuptiarum. Fuere, qui dicerent, monacham potius ascitam regi uxorem, quam laicam. Ipse etiam rex propositum pietatis ægro ferens animo, uxorem simulatæ religionis arguebat, adjiciens illam nuptiis minime convenire severitatem, mollius & uxorem viro, & virum uxori licere morigerari. Quibus Christi Filia nequaquam a sacro revocata proposito, regis amaritudinem blandis sermonibus indulcabat." Hildebert, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 11.

<sup>83</sup> Dalarun, "The Clerical Gaze," 29.

Hildebert clearly felt the need to offer a more elaborate explanation for Radegund's non-virginal status.

In the twelfth century, the conjugal debt was fraught with complexity – there was no unanimous agreement on the degree of sinfulness inherent in marital intercourse and Hildebert's odd account seems to reflect the problematic nature of this issue among theologians. As Elizabeth Makowski argues in "The Conjugal Debt and Medieval Canon Law," "the Decretists expressed their distrust of sensual pleasure most vehemently in the Gregorian rigorism of the twelfth century which equated all sexual pleasure with sin."<sup>84</sup> The *Decretum Gratiani*, which lays out the Church's more-or-less "official" stance on marital intercourse, was not compiled until around 1150, but we can assume that Hildebert most likely also shared this suspicion of pleasure. Nonetheless, the idea of the "conjugal debt" stipulated that the spouse (either wife or husband) was bound to oblige the other's request. Gratian's views, developed from his interpretation of Gregory the Great's work, suggested that a union motivated by lust resulted in a venial sin – there was sin in pleasure, but it was forgivable. In addition, a spouse could only renounce intercourse if the other spouse fully consented. Furthermore, "payment of the debt" was necessary if there was a risk that refusal would drive the deprived party to sin by adultery.<sup>85</sup> These stipulations put the twelfth-century Radegund in a very difficult position.

In Hildebert's eyes, enjoyment of the act was sinful, but legally Radegund was obliged to obey her husband by "paying the debt." But even a forgivable sin is still a sin and Saint Radegund must be blameless on all accounts. Therefore, she needed to tread carefully

---

<sup>84</sup> Elizabeth Makowski, "The Conjugal Debt and Medieval Canon Law," *Journal of Medieval History* 3, no. 2 (1977), 111.

<sup>85</sup> Makowski, "The Conjugal Debt," 109.

so as not to “defraud” her husband of his rights to her body, but she also had to avoid sharing his enjoyment of the act at all costs. Hildebert achieves this delicate balance in four ways. Firstly, he asserts that she only submitted so that her husband would not be tempted by Satan to, presumably, enjoy the illicit embrace of concubines. Secondly, he explains that *if* there was any sin in her submission she hastened to erase it by performing self-mortification immediately after the act. Thirdly, he uses the voice of Clothar to explain that “it is permitted” for husbands and wives to gratify each other. Lastly, he dismisses the accusations that Radegund was illicitly imitating the life of a nun while she was still married.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, neither Fortunatus nor Baudonivia offer much explanation for Radegund’s marriage because the early Christian model of the saintly queen was predicated on the saint’s position as the king’s wife. Radegund was therefore part of a long line of noble and royal female saints whose most significant pious deeds could only be accomplished thanks to their position as ruling-class wives. Because Radegund could not have engaged in these activities without the resources she attained through her marriage to a powerful man, Fortunatus and Baudonivia do not attempt to disguise or explain away Radegund’s marital relations with Clothar. This was not the situation for Hildebert in the twelfth century.

Hildebert’s account of the “bedroom scene” translated above was adapted from Fortunatus’ account. Fortunatus describes how Radegund would physically distance herself at night from Clothar by leaving their bedroom under the pretense of “human necessity.” She would then lie on the floor in a hair shirt to pray, subjecting herself to the piercing cold, which, he is careful to mention, neither the warmth from the hearth nor from her bed could revive. The description continues, indicating Radegund’s preference for a chilled body and a

warm spirit, lest she appear “worthless” to Christ.<sup>86</sup> However, the key difference between Fortunatus’ and Hildebert’s texts is that Hildebert goes considerably farther than Fortunatus to explain *how* and *why* Radegund performed her marital duties. These attempts to *rationalize* Radegund’s behavior allow Hildebert to reinterpret problematic aspects of her historical identity as a married saint and adapt them to twelfth-century theological notions of marriage and female sanctity. This rationalization became necessary in the twelfth century because of the concerted efforts by reformers to eradicate clerical marriage, thus shining a theological spotlight onto the estate of marriage in general.

Returning to the analysis of Hildebert’s text, we can see that his additions are clearly responses to these contemporary debates. Firstly, he highlights Radegund’s obligation to prevent Clothar from sinning through adultery. If Radegund refused to pay the conjugal debt, Clothar would be tempted to seek out concubines and Radegund would be accountable for his sin through neglect of her wifely duties. This would not have been such a grave issue in the sixth century because it was only around the twelfth century that the concept of marriage was theologically reconstituted as a sacred union and arguments arose for the inclusion of marriage among the sacraments.<sup>87</sup> The historical Clothar was polygamous and it is believed that Radegund was not his only wife during their time together.<sup>88</sup>

Secondly, Hildebert explains that since desire can potentially “diminish the good of marriage,” it was necessary for Radegund to “erase” the corruption through penitence, thus negating any possibility of sin. In *Spiritual Marriage*, Dyan Elliot notes that the majority of female saints acknowledged in the twelfth through fifteenth centuries were from the laity.

---

<sup>86</sup> Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.5.

<sup>87</sup> Dyan Elliot, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 134.

<sup>88</sup> McNamara, *Sainted Women*, 61.



She argues that “this development is largely owing to the rise of penitential practices and women's affinity for such practices,” noting that, “married women, particularly those who had at one time been sexually active, appear to have made the best penitents.”<sup>89</sup> Just as we know Hildebert was particularly interested in marriage regulations, he was also interested in women and penitence. The only other life of a female saint he wrote was the *Life of Mary the Egyptian*, which recounts the story of a fifth-century prostitute who became known as the patron saint of penitents. Mary of Egypt (c. 344 – c. 421) was born of noble stock but her insatiable sexual appetites ruined her family’s reputation.<sup>90</sup> After realizing the error of her ways while contemplating an image of the Virgin at a church in Jerusalem, she decided to live as a hermit in the desert beyond the Jordon river. The extreme asceticism she practiced for the next 17 years was so transformative that when Zosimus encountered her in the wilderness she was so “blackened by the sun” that she was barely recognizable as a woman.<sup>91</sup> As Hildebert writes, Mary’s “punishment atoned for pleasure,”<sup>92</sup> and elevated her to the status of sainthood even surpassing the saintliness of Zosimus, a monk and priest, who seeks Mary’s spiritual advice. As Hildebert writes in his *Vita Beatae Mariae Aegyptiacae*,

Hurry holy old man! [referring to Zosimus] You are about to see things better than you hope. What you see and follow are the footprints of a woman; A woman goes before you, a woman who is not inferior to you. As with her foot, so with her life does this hermit surpass you. By her retreats she has so earned merit that now she is renowned everywhere. In her retreats she learned well to conquer the world.<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> Elliot, *Spiritual Marriage*, 204-205.

<sup>90</sup> “Germine non vili genuit me patria Nili: Sed postquam crevi, generis titulos abolevi.” Hildebert, *Vita Beatae Mariae Aegyptiacae*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 19.

<sup>91</sup> “Imbribus infecta, nigra phœbo, curva senecta, Hispida per mendas, partes intacta tegendas.” Hildebert, *Vita Beatae Mariae Aegyptiacae*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 11.

<sup>92</sup> “Pœna voluptatem redimit.” Hildebert, *Vita Beatae Mariae Aegyptiacae*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 34.

<sup>93</sup> “Sancte senex, propera, visurus spe meliora: Quæ legis & sequeris vestigia, sunt mulieris. Femina precedit, quia nec tibi femina cedit: Ut pede, sic vita te præterit hæc eremita: Hæc meruit latebris ut nunc sit ubique celebris: In latebris didicit bene mundum vincere.” Hildebert, *Vita Beatae Mariae Aegyptiacae*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 11.

Hildebert's decision to compose *vitae* for two sexually active early Christian female saints gives us some insight into his attitudes towards female spirituality. Women's ability to excel in penitence could pave the way for even the most downfallen to achieve sainthood. While Radegund's legal marriage can hardly be compared to Mary's prostitution, for Hildebert in the twelfth century, even licit sexual activity required atonement in a way that it didn't for Fortunatus in the sixth century.

Lastly, Fortunatus mentions that "people said that the King had yoked himself to a *monacha* rather than a queen," but Hildebert elaborates this by adding that Clothar himself accused Radegund of behaving like a nun, suggested that her behavior was incompatible with married life, and explained that their marriage entitled them to gratify each other. Clothar's objections reference the contemporary theological debates surrounding the duties and pitfalls of married life. The idea that married people were equally obliged to pay the conjugal debt and that one could only practice celibacy or join a monastic community if they secured their spouse's consent were topics that received significant attention among reformers in the twelfth century.<sup>94</sup> This might initially place Radegund in the wrong, but by adding that Clothar wasn't particularly pious himself and that Radegund did, in fact, "fulfill her marital duties," Hildebert is able to dismiss Clothar's accusations and justify Radegund's behavior. While Hildebert's innovative account of Radegund's marriage may seem convoluted on the surface, it is clear that he intended this as a logical response to specific points of concern within reforming circles.

---

<sup>94</sup> See for example, Makowski, "The Conjugal Debt;" Georges Duby, *The Knight, The Lady, and The Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Pantheon, 1983); Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*; Elliot, *Spiritual Marriage*.

In her 1986 article, “Persuasive Voices: Clerical Images of Medieval Wives,” Sharon Farmer highlighted the hitherto overlooked theological discourse on women’s capacity as a moral force for their husbands. Her study focused on churchmen and theologians, such as Thomas of Chobham, who actively promoted the image of “pious wives” who used persuasive tactics to stimulate moral behavior (especially charity) in their husbands.<sup>95</sup> This discovery helped turn the tide of scholarship away from the traditional narrative that women were universally disparaged by the Church in eleventh-, twelfth-, and thirteenth-century theological discourse.

Like Thomas of Chobham, Hildebert similarly constructs Radegund as a moral influence on her husband and inspires him to more acts of charity than Fortunatus’ Radegund. Both Fortunatus and Hildebert describe how Radegund’s charitable activities often caused her to return home to the palace very late and that this angered her husband. In both versions, Clothar later regrets yelling at her and feels compelled to compensate Radegund with gifts. Hildebert expands Fortunatus’ two-line account of their marital strife into about seven sentences. Firstly, Hildebert notes that “the queen put her service to the poor before the command of the king,” again demonstrating the superiority of religion to royal authority. Secondly, Hildebert’s Clothar compensates Radegund for losing his temper in two waves: he gives her “bountiful gifts” when he begs her pardon for rebuking her and sinning against both the Holy Spirit and the Church. Radegund distributes all of this to the poor, and when his “indignation was quieted” he “gave thanks to God and he ordered that more bountiful contributions (of money) be prepared for her, that she could come more abundantly to the needs of the destitute.” Here we can see Hildebert conforming Radegund’s practice of

---

<sup>95</sup> Sharon Farmer, “Persuasive Voices: Clerical Images of Medieval Wives,” *Speculum* 61, no. 3 (July, 1986): 517-543.

sanctity to the contemporary ideal of the “pious wife,” which further allows him to rationalize the potential obstacle of her position as a sexually active wife.

In Farmer’s 2005 study of Jacques de Vitry’s exemplum recounting a noblewoman’s charity towards a male leper, she elaborates further on the medieval idea of the “pious wife” and how it intersected with martyrdom and hospital work. She notes that the married woman in the story faced two-fold martyrdom: first, by embracing the leper she risks contracting leprosy, and second, by administering care to the leper in her marital bed she risks the potentially violent anger of her husband who would assume his wife had committed adultery with the male stranger.<sup>96</sup> Radegund’s insistence on putting charity and palliative care for the poor before the needs of her husband similarly put her at risk from Clothar’s wrath. As Farmer argues, pious wives “were wedded to – and caught between – two spouses.” In several *Lives* of married saints, Christ essentially becomes part of a love triangle between charitable women and their husbands.<sup>97</sup> That Radegund was “more Christ’s partner than her husband’s companion” was an idea Hildebert carried over from Fortunatus and Baudonivia’s texts. However, Hildebert’s addition that Radegund was able to extract such bountiful contributions for the poor from Clothar seems to be either a precursor to Thomas of Chobham and Jacques de Vitry’s models of the pious wife a century later or contemporary with the monastic examples discussed by Farmer. Chobham’s *Summa Confessorum* even goes so far as to assert that wives should “be preachers to their husbands, because no priest is able to soften the heart of a man the way his wife can.”<sup>98</sup> As moral forces for their husbands,

---

<sup>96</sup> Sharon Farmer, “The Leper in the Master Bedroom: Thinking Through a Thirteenth-Century Exemplum,” *Framing the Family : Narrative and Representation in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, ed. Rosalynn Voaden and Diane Wolfthal, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, v. 280. (Tempe, Ariz.: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), 84.

<sup>97</sup> Dorothea of Montau, Delphine of Puimichel, Bridget of Sweden, Marie of Oignies, and Hedwig of Silesia. Farmer, “The Leper,” 89.

<sup>98</sup> See discussion in Farmer, “The Leper,” 88, and “Persuasive Voices,” 517-543.

“disobedient” wives like Radegund who secretly distributed their husbands’ wealth as alms were praised in the twelfth through fifteenth centuries. This interpretation of Hildebert’s *Life of Radegund* thus contributes to work like Farmer’s that proposes a more complex attitude towards women’s spirituality in the Reform era.

### ***Conclusion***

As this analysis has shown, Radegund entered the twelfth century as a vehicle for Hildebert’s reform ideals. This first of many adaptations of the *Life of Radegund* was not a simple streamlining of Fortunatus and Baudonivia’s disparate accounts into a single cohesive narrative.<sup>99</sup> Hildebert strategically selected, omitted, added to, and adapted their work to showcase a type of female sanctity that responded to contemporary debates and harmonized with his theological and social goals. The “Reformed Radegund” embodies the perfect feminine qualities an ecclesiastic would encourage in queen, countess, abbess, or nun. Whilst still living in the world, Radegund performed her role as a wife without sacrificing chastity or modesty and her pious behavior inspired her husband to greater and greater acts of charity for the poor. As an ideal lay ruler she supported the Church generously without interfering in ecclesiastical affairs. After entering the religious life, her unquestioning deference to clerical knowledge and passive role in the education of her congregation made her a perfect example for twelfth-century monastic leaders facing reform directives. It is details like these that can be useful in helping us think about Fiona Griffiths’ call to consider women’s experience of reform together with men’s perception of women and sexuality.

As we shall see in the following chapter, the spread of Radegund’s cult throughout France to England and Italy was facilitated by Radegund’s versatility in assuming new

---

<sup>99</sup> As suggested in Kitchen, *Saints’ Lives and the Rhetoric of Gender*, 226, n.5.

identities and meanings for her devotees. Hildebert's Radegund was a model for noble wives and lay rulers who supported the Reformed Church. Her queenly and saintly attributes were shaped by the ideals of ecclesiastical reformers. But Radegund's historical identity as a Frankish queen through her cross-cultural marital alliance with Clothar became the most important driving factor for the appearance of her cult in Norman England and Sicily.

### Chapter 3

#### **Dynastic Saint and Cultural Artifact:**

#### **Radegund and Claims of Dynastic Continuity in Norman Sicily and Anglo-Norman England in the Twelfth Century**

In the previous chapter, I discussed the two ways that Radegund's institutional identity was cultivated in the long twelfth-century. First, we saw how Radegund's two Poitiers foundations actively shaped her cult to highlight their institutional authority. At the same time, Hildebert of Lavardin reshaped Radegund into an ideal queen-saint for the reformed Church and set her up as a model for women's proper place in the Church's hierarchy. But these identities did not follow her as her cult expanded outside the city walls of Poitiers. Rather, her legacy as one of the first Merovingian queens seems to have been the aspect that most resonated with the Norman nobles who imported her cult to England and Sicily.

When William Rufus, King of England and third son of William the Conqueror, captured Le Mans in 1099, Hildebert was not the only French captive transplanted to English shores. Over the next century, Radegund's cult, together with the cults of several other continental saints, began to appear in locations throughout England. Churches, chapels, priories, and abbeys were dedicated to Radegund<sup>1</sup> and her name was listed in several English calendars of saints.<sup>2</sup> Unsurprisingly, many of these were patronized by noble continental

---

<sup>1</sup> There are at least 14 cult sites in England including priories, abbeys, monasteries, churches, and chapels with 4 confirmed foundation dates between 1100-1200, 4 confirmed foundation dates between 1200-1350, and 6 unknown dates of foundation.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Bede, *The Complete Works of Venerable Bede, in the original Latin, collated with the Manuscripts, and various printed editions, and accompanied by a new English translation of the Historical Works, and a Life of the Author*, ed. and trans. Rev. J.A. Giles (London: Whittaker and Co., 1843). "In Gallia Pictavis civitate depositio S. Radegundis reginæ, quæ in thoro Lotharii Francorum regis recubans, potius monacha vocabatur quam uxor. Cujus consortium spernens, Christum, quem dilexit, amplexa est, tantamque meruit virtutem, ut etiam mortuam suscitaret."

families, such as the twelfth-century church of Saint Mary and Saint Radegund at Whitwell on the Isle of Wight established by the Norman family, the De Esturs, or St. Radegund's Abbey at Bradsole founded in 1191 by Geoffrey, Earl of Perche.<sup>3</sup> Likewise the Sicilian Normans, who welcomed Hildebert in 1101 with generous hospitality and rich gifts for his cathedral, imported Radegund and other Frankish saints, such as Hilary of Poitiers and Martin of Tours. The dazzling mosaic programs of the Cappella Palatina (1143) and Monreale (1183) in Palermo both depict *sancta Radegundis* in the regalia of a Byzantine empress. As a Frankish queen-saint, Radegund performed the function of a saintly ambassador for those who claimed Frankish decent outside of Francia. The Normans abroad infused England and Sicily with their (sometimes imagined) ancestral Frankish identity by bringing over their cultural artifacts. Architectural elements, music, intellectual traditions,<sup>4</sup> the Gallican liturgy,<sup>5</sup> and Frankish saints all served to project an identity firmly linked to their continental origins. This was particularly important for the Sicilian Normans who "exploited various French royal traditions in order to justify and glorify their own new monarchy."<sup>6</sup>

For both English and Sicilian Normans, Radegund was also endowed with new gendered meaning in the twelfth century based on her historical association with cross-cultural marriage. It is well-established that Normans consolidated their power in England and Italy through noble and royal intermarriages with foreign women. As a war captive bride, Radegund would have served as a good role model for the Anglo-Saxon heiresses married off

---

<sup>3</sup> Perche is medieval county of France in the northeast corner of Aquitaine between Normandy and Maine.

<sup>4</sup> Hugh Thomas, *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation and Identity 1066-1220* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 368-370.

<sup>5</sup> Eve Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic: The Royal Programmes of Norman Sicily, 1130-1187* (Oxford [Oxfordshire]: Clarendon Press, 1990), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic*, xxi.



to Norman magnates and for the French noblewomen sent to Sicily to become Sicilian-Norman queens and princesses. Radegund's (albeit forced) exogamous marriage to the king of the Franks solidified Clothar's control of Thuringia and, half a millennium later, reflected the marriage patterns of Normans seeking to legitimize their power abroad through the strategic establishment of kinship networks.

This chapter traces the origins of Radegund's cult in Norman England and Sicily by examining liturgical materials such as calendars, martyrologies, and missals; the foundation and patronage records of priories, abbeys, and churches dedicated to Radegund; and representations of Radegund in the artistic programs of two royal chapels. The majority of these can be traced to donors of Norman descent or to families with political/hereditary ties to regions in the West of France where Radegund's cult had proliferated. As this chapter explores the development of Radegund's royal identity as a Merovingian dynastic saint in Norman England and Sicily, I continue investigating how individuals and communities drew on the memory of saints to define themselves, and in turn, reshaped their saints to reflect their values.

### ***The Cult of Radegund in Norman Sicily***

The descendants of the d'Hauteville Normans who conquered Sicily in 1091 recognized Radegund as a symbol of Frankish dynastic authority when they incorporated her image into the artistic programs of two important royal foundations: the Cappella Palatina and Monreale in Palermo. The Cappella Palatina was commissioned by Roger II as the royal chapel of the Norman kings of Sicily. Roger died before the chapel was finished and it was completed by his son, William I, in 1143. The Cathedral of Monreale was built by William's son, William II, in 1183. Elaborate mosaic programs featuring specially chosen saints and

biblical imagery were designed for the two structures to project claims of Norman royal authority. The kings of Sicily also used these artistic programs to highlight their political alliance with France against their greatest rivals, the Byzantine and German Empires.<sup>7</sup> Even though Radegund's portrait is only one among the hundreds of historical and biblical figures represented at both monuments, her presence there was nonetheless strategic and demonstrates that her identity as a Merovingian dynastic queen-saint was her most recognizable and valuable attribute when transported outside of Francia in the twelfth century.

Roger II and his heirs were perpetually cultivating a legitimate royal identity for themselves and the Cappella Palatina was one of the grandest examples of these efforts. As Herbert Houben explains, Roger sought to promote the fiction that Sicily was once an ancient kingdom to increase the legitimacy of his recently acquired kingship from (Anti)Pope Anacletus II. Houben writes,

Roger was concerned to present his monarchy not as something which he himself had built from scratch, but rather as a legitimate kingdom that had been 'restored' by the pope with the consent of princes and people...only the restoration of the former state of affairs...This official line was emphasized in the foundation charter of the Palatine chapel in Palermo in 1140.<sup>8</sup>

To project this sense of continuity and legitimacy, Roger and his descendants used complex religious symbolism in their royal chapels that evoked dynastic connections to Frankish royal ancestors and fused royal claims with biblical prophetic imagery.<sup>9</sup> In *Messages in Mosaic: The Royal Programmes of Norman Sicily (1130-1187)*, Eve Borsook argues for the centrality

---

<sup>7</sup> Ernst Kitzinger, "The Mosaics of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo, An Essay on the Choice and Arrangement of Subjects," *The Art Bulletin* (Jan 1, 1949), 288.

<sup>8</sup> Hubert Houben, *Roger II of Sicily: a Ruler Between East and West*, trans. Graham A. Loud and Diane Milburn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 55.

<sup>9</sup> Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic*, xxi; 67-68.

of French/Frankish identity to the Sicilian-Norman monarchy, which has often been overlooked in studies of the Cappella Palatina and Monreale – two sites where art, politics, theology, and ceremony were strategically merged.<sup>10</sup> Although they had been in Sicily for over a century by the time the Cappella Palatina and Monreale were built, these descendants of the Norman d’Hauteville family were nonetheless “thoroughly aware of their French heritage” and “exploited various French royal traditions in order to justify and glorify their own new monarchy.”<sup>11</sup> In particular, they relied on Frankish royal custom and ceremonial by celebrating the Gallican liturgy and by incorporating parts of the Frankish coronation ceremony. The biblical phrase used by the Franks for the acclamation of kings, “Ecce mittam angelum meum,” appears in two locations on the walls of Monreale.<sup>12</sup> Originally from the *Adventus Domini*, the first words of the first Lesson read on the first Sunday of Advent in reference to the prophesy of the Coming of the Lord, this acclamation was used for the reception of kings in the Gallican Church.<sup>13</sup> Borsook also points out how Monreale’s famous coronation mosaic depicting Christ crowning William II, when viewed together with the entire artistic program, proclaims William as the true heir of the biblical King David’s Jerusalem and evokes a sense of continuity with Frankish kingship. The imagery,

“associates Norman monarchy with Davidic kingship, where the covenant with God is sealed by anointment with the holy chrism on which the Frankish kings always based their divine right to rule as Christ’s earthly ministers. Like the Franks, Normans saw themselves as God’s chosen people, and their king therefore assumed the role of a new David... This link with the earthly Jerusalem coincided with French monarchical ideas and the pretensions of both haunt the mosaic programmes of the Norman kings of Sicily.”<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic*, xxi.

<sup>11</sup> Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic*, xxi.

<sup>12</sup> Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Ernst H. Kantorowicz, “The “King’s Advent”: And the Enigmatic Panels in the Doors of Santa Sabina,” *The Art Bulletin* 26, no. 4 (Dec., 1944): 218.

<sup>14</sup> Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic*, 67; xxii.

The use of biblical imagery and symbolism to project political claims was not new to medieval monarchies and these assertions would have been understood by those they were intended to impress.

The elaborate Christological cycles and representations of the Sicilian kings typically receive more attention by scholars of Sicilian-Norman royal monuments than do the vast quantity of saints that seem to just fill up the spaces in between. Monreale's hagiographic program contains 171 saints while the Cappella Palatina's program numbers 132.<sup>15</sup> However, Sulamith Brodbeck argues for the strategic importance of the saints, stating that, "more than any other image in the building, the saints were expressly chosen by the sovereign in his role as sponsor, and by the same token they reflected his dynastic affiliations."<sup>16</sup> This assertion is the basis for Brodbeck's encyclopedic 2010 study, *Les saints de la Cathédrale de Monreale en Sicilie: iconographie, hagiographie et pouvoir royal*, which explores the symbolic meanings of each saint included in Monreale's mosaic program.

Ernst Kitzinger considers how the Cappella Palatina's artistic program associates the Sicilian Norman monarchy with Frankish tradition by considering the message evoked by the special positioning of the Christological scene, *The Entry into Jerusalem*, with two Frankish saints. Since the earliest days of Christianity, *The Entry into Jerusalem* has been iconographically associated with the *adventus*, or triumphal reception, of a ruler. At the Cappella, the king's throne faces *The Entry into Jerusalem*, flanked by the Frankish saints, Denis and Martin. Saint-Denis, considered the "first bishop of Paris" and "apostle of Gaul," was firmly established as one of the patron saints of French royalty by the twelfth century.

---

<sup>15</sup> Sulamith Brodbeck, *Les saints de la Cathédrale de Monreale en Sicilie: iconographie, hagiographie et pouvoir royal* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2010), 27; 39.

<sup>16</sup> Sulamith Brodbeck, "Monreale from its origin to the end of the Middle Ages," *A Companion to Medieval Palermo: The History of a Mediterranean City from 600 to 1500*, ed. Annliese Nef (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 402.

Saint Martin, a fourth-century bishop of Tours, was known as “the apostle to the Gauls.” He was one of the most well-known Frankish saints and his two foundations in Tours were important centers of culture and influence.<sup>17</sup> Kitzinger notes that mosaicists were working on this area of the chapel at precisely the same time that Roger and Louis VII met to discuss the possibilities of a Franco-Sicilian alliance for a potential Second Crusade. This makes “the appearance of the two patron saints of the French king and the French army on either side of the triumphal scene of the entry into Jerusalem peculiarly suggestive” and should be understood as “a tribute to France, her army, and her king.”<sup>18</sup> Borsook’s analysis of these royal monuments highlights their role in promoting a sense of French/Frankish identity for the Sicilian-Norman kings and Kitzinger emphasizes their relation to the current political associations between France and Sicily. Taken together, it is clear that the designers of the Cappella Palatina and Monreale used religious symbolism to proclaim a sense of continuity and legitimacy for the Sicilian-Norman kings based on their association with Frankish tradition.

We should therefore see Radegund’s representation in the artistic programs of both foundations as a small but nonetheless important part of this larger message of continuity and legitimacy. In his 1949 *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily*, Otto Demus very briefly suggests that the inclusion of Radegund “points to the dynastic ties with France.”<sup>19</sup> Brodbeck is one of the few scholars to devote more than a couple of sentences to Radegund in his full-length study of Monreale’s saints. He provides a careful description of her portrait in Monreale, summarizes her life, and notes that her cult spread to England during the Plantagenet period

---

<sup>17</sup> See Sharon Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin: Legend and Ritual in Medieval Tours* (Cornell University Press, 2019).

<sup>18</sup> Kitzinger, “The Mosaics of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo,” 289-290.

<sup>19</sup> Otto Demus, *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1949), 322.

(though it actually arrived in England much earlier). However, his succinct conclusion is only that “Radegund’s cult is a direct borrowing from the French tradition and does not seem to have any larger echo in Sicily outside of the two mosaic representations.”<sup>20</sup> If we follow Brodbeck’s assertion that, “nothing is by chance, neither the choice of saints, nor their positions, not even their attributes,” then the inclusion of Frankish saints that had no active cult in Sicily may be able to tell us quite a lot about how Radegund – as saint and as historical figure – was interpreted outside of France in the twelfth century.<sup>21</sup>

The proliferation of Radegund’s cult throughout France at this time<sup>22</sup> would have ensured wide recognition and, once transported outside of Francia, her most recognizable attribute was her identity as a Merovingian dynastic saint. At both the Cappella Palatina and Monreale, Radegund is portrayed in full Byzantine imperial dress with an elaborate robe decorated with precious stones. She wears the Byzantine *kamelaukion*, a crown decorated with hanging strands of pearls, which reveals part of her hair. At the Cappella Palatina she holds a cross in her right hand and an orb in her left, while at Monreale, she holds a cross in her left hand and her right hand is gesturing with open palm. The appearance of this Frankish saint at both chapels in the style of a Byzantine empress could carry several implications. If we conclude that Radegund was chosen as part of the larger aim of projecting symbolic associations between the Sicilian-Norman kings and the Frankish dynasty to lend continuity and legitimacy to their new monarchy, Radegund-as-Byzantine-Empress could represent Roger II’s ambitions to conquer Constantinople, which Kitzinger argues, was a “thinly disguised scheme” in Roger’s Second Crusade talks with Louis VII.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Brodbeck, *Les saints de la Cathédrale de Monreale*, 673.

<sup>21</sup> Brodbeck, *Les saints de la Cathédrale de Monreale*, 27.

<sup>22</sup> See Chapter 4 for the spread of Radegund’s cult in France.

<sup>23</sup> Kitzinger, “The Mosaics of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo,” 289.

The iconographical unification of Frankish and Byzantine in Radegund's portrait references her diplomatic relations with the Eastern Roman Emperor Justin II and Empress Sophia which secured her the famous fragment of the True Cross. Brodbeck has already pointed out that Radegund's iconography at Monreale is nearly identical to a portrait of Saint Helena, Roman Empress and mother of Emperor Constantine, at the Hermitage of St. Neophytos in Cyprus.<sup>24</sup> Neophytos dedicated his hermitage to the Holy Cross and obtained a piece of the relic in 1165.<sup>25</sup> Helena is traditionally credited with discovering the Cross in Jerusalem and it was a piece of this same cross that Justin II gave to Radegund in the sixth century. In recognition of the magnitude of this gift, Radegund's convent in Poitiers was rededicated to the Holy Cross. Baudonivia was the first to associate Radegund with Helena when she compared their passion for relic gathering in her *Vita Radegundis*, stating, "What Helena did in oriental lands, Radegund did in Gaul."<sup>26</sup> The artistic programs at Monreale and St. Neophytos were finished around the same year, 1183, so we cannot definitively conclude which piece influenced which. Nevertheless, portraying Radegund as a Byzantine empress – as a new Helena – clearly demonstrates that the Sicilian-Normans recognized and interpreted Radegund in terms of her royal identity, with a Byzantine twist, which matched the Mediterranean context and the Norman kings' aspirations. Up until this time, Radegund's monastic identity was privileged in the art and traditions originating in Poitiers. We can recall that the illustrated *Life of Radegund* (BMP 250), emphasizes monastic claustration and never depicts Radegund wearing a crown after her ordination as deaconess. Highlighting

---

<sup>24</sup> Brodbeck, *Les saints de la Cathédrale de Monreale en Sicilie*, 675.

<sup>25</sup> Cyril Mango and Ernest J. W. Hawkins, "The Hermitage of St. Neophytos and Its Wall Paintings," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 20 (1966): 123-124.

<sup>26</sup> "Quod fecit illa in Orientali patria, hoc fecit ista in Gallia." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 16.24.

Radegund's monastic identity served the institutional claims of the canonical church of Sainte-Radegonde and the abbey of Sainte-Croix in Poitiers. In much the same way, emphasizing Radegund's royal identity, and dressing it in Byzantine garb, served the Sicilian kings' need to project their monarchy's continuity and legitimacy while simultaneously speaking to their Mediterranean aspirations.

The Sicilian-Normans imported Radegund to Sicily as a saintly ambassador to Francia. Even though Radegund was a relatively small part of their royal mosaic programs, she was strategically selected and displayed for her dynastic connotations. The Sicilian-Normans perceived Radegund as a specifically Frankish saint, and they used her, together with other Frankish saints, to evoke their own associations with Frankishness. In doing so, they helped project the claim that their new monarchy was rooted in tradition and they simultaneously referenced their diplomatic ties with France and the current French rulership. As we are about to see, the Sicilian-Normans were not the only French émigrés to recognize and make use of Radegund's dynastic affiliations.

### ***The Cult of Radegund in Norman England***

Over the course of the twelfth century, at least eight institutions dedicated to Radegund were founded in England. While it's true that Radegund's feast day appears in English liturgical materials considerably earlier, this gives us little more than confirmation that her cult was known and celebrated there as early as the eighth century. The histories of the priories, abbeys, and churches dedicated to Radegund in England during the course of the twelfth century provide the best opportunities for a more detailed analysis. Documentary evidence for half of these foundations points towards patrons with ties to Western France, namely Normandy and Aquitaine. After the Norman Conquest of 1066, there was increased



cultural exchange between England and the continent which may have played an important role in the maturation of Radegund's cult in England. Noble immigrants imported elements from their linguistic, artistic, intellectual, and religious cultures. Imported saints, especially ones like Radegund who had dynastic ties to the Merovingians, became saintly ambassadors for their continental homeland.

No institutions dedicated to Radegund appear in England before the twelfth century, but Radegund's feast day was recorded in English calendars and martyrologies centuries before. The earliest textual evidence for Radegund's cult in England is her inclusion in the martyrology of the Venerable Bede (672/3 – 735). Her name appears under her traditional feast day, August 13, along with a brief description of her life,

“Queen Radegund is buried in Gaul in the city of Poitiers, who, reclining on the couch of Clothar, king of the Franks, was called a nun more than a wife. Spurning her husband, she embraced Christ, whom she loved, and she earned such great virtue, that she even raised the dead.”<sup>27</sup>

Bede likely learned of Radegund from Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks*, which was an important model for his *Historia ecclesiastica*. In his widely read *History of the Franks*, Gregory includes the text of letters Radegund wrote, describes various episodes of her life, and points his readers to his *Book of Miracles* for a fuller account of his role officiating at Radegund's burial three days after her death. There is also considerable evidence that Bede was familiar with the work of Fortunatus.<sup>28</sup> As Michael Lapidge notes, Bede cites Fortunatus by name a dozen times in his *De Arte Metrica* and once each in his *De Orthographia*,

---

<sup>27</sup> “In Gallia Pictavis civitate depositio S. Radegundis reginæ, quæ in thoro Lotharii Francorum regis recubans, potius monacha vocabatur quam uxor. Cujus consortium spernens, Christum, quem dilexit, amplexa est, tantamque meruit virtutem, ut etiam mortuam suscitaret.” J.A. Giles, *The Complete Works of Venerable Bede*. Note the similarity in the language used by Bede and the language used by Fortunatus, “De qua regi dicebatur habere se magis jugalem monacham, quam reginam.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.5.

<sup>28</sup> Susan Rosser, “Aethelthryth: A Conventional Saint?” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 79, no. 3 (1997): 15.

*Historia Ecclesiastica*, and *Explanatio Apocalypsis*. Interestingly, all of these quotations come from Fortunatus' poem, *Ad viginitate*, which he wrote for Radegund and Agnes in honor of Agnes' installation as abbess of Sainte-Croix.<sup>29</sup> In her article on the Anglo-Saxon saint, Aethelthryth, Susan Rosser suggests that Aethelthryth's behavior might have been modeled on Radegund's life and that Bede's poem in praise of Aethelthryth's virginity could have been influenced by Fortunatus' *Ad viginitate*. Bede's calendar entry, which states that Radegund "was called a nun more than a wife," is almost a direct borrowing from Fortunatus' *Vita Radegundis*, who writes that "it was said that the king had yoked himself to a nun rather than a queen."<sup>30</sup> This connection between Bede and Fortunatus seems to have persisted in manuscript traditions into the twelfth century. MS Harley 649, which was produced at the Benedictine abbey of St. Mary and St. Benedict at Ramsey in Cambridgeshire in the first quarter of the twelfth century, is a compilation of biblical commentaries and homilies by Bede and Fortunatus' *Vita Radegundis*.<sup>31</sup>

The spread of ideas through the medieval intellectual network stands as a solid explanation for why Radegund's August 13<sup>th</sup> feast day showed up in an eighth-century English martyrology. Much less clear is why at least four tenth and eleventh-century English calendars mark February 11 as Radegund's feast day. For example, the "Leofric Missal" (c.970) has the entry "Pictavis sanctae Radegundis virginis" (Saint Radegund the Virgin of Poitiers) for February 11.<sup>32</sup> It is tempting to suppose that the English scribes simply got this

---

<sup>29</sup> Michael Lapidge, the appendix 'Knowledge of the poems in the earlier period' in R.W. Hunt, 'Manuscript evidence for knowledge of the poems of Venantius Fortunatus in late Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England*, viii (1979), 291.

<sup>30</sup> "De qua regi dicebatur habere se magis jugalem monacham, quam reginam." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.5.

<sup>31</sup> Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, London, The British Library, MS. Harley 649, twelfth century, 100v-103v.

<sup>32</sup> See Francis Wormald, *English Kalendars Before A.D. 1100* (London: Harrison and sons, ltd., printers, 1934), 45, 199, 213. See also, "Leofric Missal" (c.970), Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. 579 fol. 39v; Oxford, Bodleian

foreign saint's feast day wrong, but the February 11 feast day also appears in the eleventh century Missal of Robert of Jumièges (d. 1052/1055), the first Norman Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>33</sup> It is unlikely that Robert could have made such a mistake, since before crossing the channel he was prior of the monastery of St. Ouen in Rouen, only 70 kilometers from the early eleventh-century Église Sainte-Radegonde in Giverny.<sup>34</sup>

The patronage of institutions dedicated to Radegund in Anglo-Norman England offers better prospects for analysis because so many of the foundation charters and records of donations have been preserved. This makes it possible to trace these institutions' origins to specific families or individuals. The Normans are well-known for assimilating cultural, linguistic, religious, and artistic elements of the peoples they conquered.<sup>35</sup> However, they also sought to preserve and promote their own traditions and histories. There was considerable cultural interchange between Anglo-Saxon England and Western France, especially Aquitaine, in the century leading up to the Conquest of 1066. But after the Conquest, the influence of Norman culture and communications with Western France intensified. The conflicts between Henry II and Stephen of Blois for the English throne and then between Henry II and Louis VII over territories in Brittany, central France, and Toulouse provided more opportunities for interchange in the second half of the twelfth century. Radegund's cult had proliferated throughout many of the lands being fought over and those claiming power in France or seeking to build up their legitimacy in England by

---

Library, MS. Hatton 113, fol 3v; *St. Wulfstan's Portiforium*, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS. 391, fol. 4; *Book of Hours: Sarum Use*, Cambridge University Library, MS Dd.4.17, fol. 13v.

<sup>33</sup> H. A. Wilson, ed., *The Missal of Robert of Jumièges* (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1896), 10, fol. 6v.

<sup>34</sup> A feast day for Radegund is recorded in several other English calendars from before the thirteenth century, but since these have not been digitized and Covid-19 restrictions inhibited travel at the time this project was researched, it was not possible to determine if they mark August 13 or February 11.

<sup>35</sup> Felice Lifshitz, *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria: Historiographic Discourse and Saintly Relics, 684-1090*. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1995), 208-216; Thomas, *The English and the Normans*, 35.

emphasizing dynastic connections might have been particularly interested in making use of a Merovingian queen-saint.

The Norman ruling class were not interested in totally transforming English culture – in fact, they found much to admire.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, their ascendancy did bring about some significant changes, especially to the governance and organization of the English Church.<sup>37</sup> William the Conqueror and his followers saw the Church as an important source of power and set about strategically replacing its leadership with Normans. As Hugh Thomas notes, the Normans saw the church “as a conduit for continental cultural influence” and by William’s death in 1087, there was only one native English bishop remaining.<sup>38</sup> The Normans initiated an architectural revolution in England when they began rebuilding every major English church (except Westminster Abbey) in the Romanesque style within 50 years of the Conquest.<sup>39</sup> These rebuildings might have provided an opportunity for the rededication of some institutions to continental saints like Radegund, Hilary, and Martin. Initially, the Normans prioritized patronage of French religious institutions, but second-generation immigrant nobles increasingly granted lands to English churches.<sup>40</sup> These English land grants by Anglo-Norman families seem to account for a good portion of the known Radegund institutions founded in the twelfth century.

A chapel dedicated to Radegund inside the church of Saint Mary and Saint Radegund at Whitwell on the Isle of Wight “was built and endowed by the De Esturs, a Norman family,

---

<sup>36</sup> Especially textiles, book decoration, and sculpture. See Thomas, *The Norman conquest*, 370; 374. William of Poitiers praised the textiles produced by English women. See *The Gesta Guillelmi of William of Poitiers*, ed. R.H. C. Davis and Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford, 1998).

<sup>37</sup> Hugh M. Thomas, *The Norman conquest : England after William the Conqueror* (Lanham : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 119.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas, *The Norman conquest*, 120; 48.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas, *The Norman conquest*, 129; Thomas, *The English and the Normans*, 370.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas, *The Norman conquest*, 122.

who had Saint Radegund as their patron.”<sup>41</sup> Fred Brittain writes that near the church “there are two paths up the cliffs known as the ‘Redgond’ and the ‘Cripples’ Path,’ up which pilgrims, perhaps from France, used to ascend to the church.”<sup>42</sup> This implies that Radegund’s cult was actively being promoted at this location. The De Esturs (also called Esturs or Stur) were lords of Gatcombe manor and held Whitwell in demesne.<sup>43</sup> Gatcombe manor is listed in Domesday Book as belonging to “William the son of Stur.”<sup>44</sup> Not much is known about the De Esturs except that they came over from Normandy during the Conquest. Hugh de Estur was a knight in William the Conqueror’s Norman army and received these lands on the Isle of Wight in recognition for his service at the Battle of Hastings.<sup>45</sup> According to a contemporary charter, “Hugh de Insula, son of William, son of Stur of the Isle of Wight gave to the Abbey of Marmoutier the tithe of the mill of Touralvilla, which he held by hereditary right.” Marmoutier was an important abbey founded by Saint Martin in Tours in the fourth century, which was just steps away from the twelfth-century Church of Sainte-Radegonde on the rue Saint-Gatien. Although there is no extant record of the De Esturs patronizing an institution dedicated to Radegund in France, Hugh’s endowment of the Radegund church on the Isle of Wight and his gift of the mill to Marmoutiers demonstrates his family’s interest in retaining connections to their ancestral homeland. It also shows that this Norman family recognized Radegund and her identity as a French/Frankish saint of the Loire as important to their reputation in England.

---

<sup>41</sup> Fred Brittain, *Saint Radegund: Patroness of Jesus College, Cambridge* (Cambridge: Bowes & Bowes, 1925), 66-67.

<sup>42</sup> Brittain, *Saint Radegund*, 67.

<sup>43</sup> Sir Richard Worsley, *The History of the Isle of Wight* (London: A. Hamilton, 1781), 209.

<sup>44</sup> Edward Boucher James, *Letters Archaeological and Historical Relating to the Isle of Wight*, Volume 2 (London Henry Frowde, 1896), 512.

<sup>45</sup> Roy Murphy and Roy Richardson, *Wootton Bridge Historical Non-profit Organization* (website), last modified January 26, 2022, <http://woottonbridgeiow.org.uk/norman.php>.

Sir John Vernon founded the Priory of Saint Radegund at Longleat sometime before 1235.<sup>46</sup> Much like the De Esturs, little is known of the lords of Vernon. According to *Collins's Peerage*, the city of Vernon in Normandy was controlled by the Vernon family. The sons of William de Vernon, Richard and Walter, were part of William the Conqueror's Norman forces. After Walter's death, Richard assumed control of the family properties in Normandy and was granted lands and titles in England.<sup>47</sup> Hoare has reproduced an engraving of the priory's seal in his 1822 *The History of Modern Wiltshire*. The seal represents Radegund standing between what appear to be two bushels of oats, crowned, holding a small knife or tool, surrounded by the inscription SIGILL: SANTE: RADE . . . DIS DE LONGALETA<sup>48</sup>

St. Radegund's Abbey at Bradsole near Dover in Kent was founded in 1191 by Geoffrey III, Earl of The Perche, and his wife Matilda (Richenza) of Saxony.<sup>49</sup> The Perche was a county of Francia located to the west of Paris between Normandy and Maine in the Seine-Loire basin.<sup>50</sup> Richenza took the name Matilda after her mother, who was the daughter of Henry II of England. She ruled the Perche as regent while Geoffrey fought in the Third Crusade and for her son, Thomas, during his minority after Geoffrey's death in 1202.<sup>51</sup> In her study of the county of the Perche, Kathleen Thompson discusses the origins of the Perche in

---

<sup>46</sup> 'Houses of Augustinian canons: Priory of Longleat', in *A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 3*, ed. R. B. Pugh and Elizabeth Crittall (London, 1956), pp. 302-303. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/wilts/vol3/pp302-303> [accessed 21 September 2020].

<sup>47</sup> Arthur Collins, *Collins's Peerage of England; Genealogical, Biographical, and Historical*, vol. 7 (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, Otridge and son, 1812), 396.

<sup>48</sup> Sir Richard Colt Hoare, *The History Of Modern Wiltshire*, vol. 1 (J. Nichols and son, 1822), 61.

<sup>49</sup> S. J. Mackie, *A Descriptive and Historical Account of Folkestone and Its Neighborhood* (Folkestone: J. English, 1883), 163; for date see S. E. Winbolt, "St. Radegund's Abbey, Dover," in *Archaeologia Cantiana, Transactions of the Kent Archaeological Society*, v. 43, 1931, 187.

<sup>50</sup> Kathleen Thompson, *Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France: The County of the Perche, 1000-1226* (Suffolk, U.K.: Royal Historical Society, 2002), 9-10.

<sup>51</sup> Thompson, *Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France*, 142; 146.

the eleventh century and how it developed into an important power center by the twelfth thanks to the ambitions of the Percheron counts and by virtue of their strategic location between Normandy, Anjou, Blois, and the lands of the Frankish kings. They reinforced their family's position through the usual devices of the count's court, dispute settlement, and especially through their religious patronage.<sup>52</sup> Geoffrey and Matilda in particular supported hospitals and leprosaria in the Perche and founded and patronized a number of religious houses.<sup>53</sup> What we know of their involvement in St. Radegund's Abbey comes from a charter issued in 1216 by their son, Count Thomas, confirming their 1191 donation. St. Radegund's Abbey had been a part of Matilda's *maritagium* and, as Thompson argues, Thomas used this confirmation as a way of asserting his rights to his family's English property which he sought to recover when his forces helped Prince Louis "the Lion," son of Philip Augustus, regain south-eastern England for France in 1216.<sup>54</sup> The abbey was confirmed again in the thirteenth century by King Henry III who also gave 100 acres of land adjoining "the church of Saint Radegund of Bradsole." Radegund's Bradsole church continued to benefit from royal patronage, receiving donations from Kings Richard and John.<sup>55</sup> A thirteenth-century seal from the abbey depicts Radegund seated on a throne and offering a pastoral staff to an abbot kneeling before her. The inscription reads SIGILL' ABBATIS ET CONVENTUS SANCTE RADEGUNDIS. A similar seal of the abbey from the fifteenth century represents Radegund holding a pastoral staff and book.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Thompson, *Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France*, 5.

<sup>53</sup> Thompson, *Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France*, 142.

<sup>54</sup> Thompson, *Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France*, 157.

<sup>55</sup> L'Abbé Émile Briand, *Histoire de sainte Radegonde, reine de France, et des sanctuaires et pèlerinages en son honneur* (Poitiers: Libraire Religieuse H. Oudin, 1898), 314.

<sup>56</sup> 'Houses of Premonstratensian canons: The abbey of Bradsole or St Radegund', in *A History of the County of Kent* vol. 2, ed. William Page (London, 1926), pp. 172-175, British History Online, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/kent/vol2/pp172-175#fnn61>

The Priory of Saint Mary and Saint Radegund in Cambridge – now the site of Jesus College – is the most well-known English institution associated with Radegund. The twelfth-century conventual church is preserved as the college chapel and references to Radegund in art and local lore abound. The priory's ownership and patronage during the course of the twelfth century is rather convoluted. But, like the other three institutions founded at Whitwell, Longleat, and Bradsole, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the dedication to Radegund was motivated by its patrons' use of Radegund to evoke their Frankish heritage or to help solidify diplomatic ties.

According to Arthur Gray's extensive 1898 study of Jesus College's history, there is no extant foundation charter or record of the priory's first endowment.<sup>57</sup> However, we do know that after the Conquest, the land became the property of William the Conqueror, who granted it to the Norman nobleman, Peter de Valongies, in 1086 according to Domesday Book.<sup>58</sup> Gray notes that the land was part of the episcopal see of Ely and argues that although the priory was not founded by Bishop Nigel of Ely (1133-1169), he was involved in its origins and development.<sup>59</sup> The bishopric of Ely encompassed the county of Cambridgeshire so the priory was under Nigel's oversight. Nigel was an important Anglo-Norman official who was educated at the prestigious school of Laon in northern France and served as Treasurer of England under King Henry I, before he was appointed to the bishopric of Ely in 1133. He supported Empress Matilda as Henry's heir during the contest for the English throne that took place between Stephen of Blois and Matilda in the 1140s. As per a charter preserved in the treasury of Jesus College, Nigel granted the nuns a piece of property

---

<sup>57</sup> Arthur Gray, *Jesus College* (London: F.E. Robinson, 1902), 1.

<sup>58</sup> Gray, *Jesus College*, 5.

<sup>59</sup> Gray, *Jesus College*, 2.



adjoining their cloister in return for a rent of 12 pence, which payments he later rescinded when he gave them the land in perpetual alms.<sup>60</sup> In 1153/1154, Countess Constance, the only daughter of King Louis VI of France and daughter-in-law to King Stephen of England (Stephen of Blois), granted the nuns exemption from certain payments on their lands in perpetual alms and gave them fishing and water rights to the Borough.<sup>61</sup> Gray notes that Cambridge, likely held by Constance as part of her dower, was one of the towns typically given to the queens of England and ladies of the royal family.<sup>62</sup>

Radegund's name was first associated with the priory after Matilda's grand-nephew, King Malcolm IV of Scotland, initiated the building (or rebuilding) of the church. According to a charter dated to 1160/1164, Malcolm gave the nuns 10 additional acres of land adjoining Nigel's grant from property obtained by his grandfather during the wars between Stephen and Empress Matilda.<sup>63</sup> The kings of Scotland were some of Matilda's most avid supporters in the war of succession; Malcolm's grandfather, King David, was the first layman to take the oath of fealty to Matilda in 1127.<sup>64</sup> Malcolm specified that his donation was for the foundation of the priory's church (*ad fundendam ecclesiam suam*) and that the nuns would owe him a rent of two shillings which they would offer at the church's altar.<sup>65</sup> A few years later in 1160/1164, Malcolm issued a second charter reaffirming the land grant and abolishing the nuns' rent. This is the earliest document referring to the Church of Saint Mary

---

<sup>60</sup> Gray, *Jesus College*, 3.

<sup>61</sup> Gray, *Jesus College*, 9. The exemptions were from hagable and langable for all their lands within and without the Borough. "Hagable, *i.e. haga-gafol*, a payment for a *haw* or message in a town, and langable, *i.e. land-gafol*, payment for land occupied by a burgess in the common fields."

<sup>62</sup> Gray, *Jesus College*, 11.

<sup>63</sup> Gray, *Jesus College*, 14.

<sup>64</sup> G.W.S. Barrow, *The acts of Malcolm IV, king of Scots 1153-1165 : together with Scottish royal acts prior to 1153 not included in Sir Archibald Lawries "Early Scottish charters"* (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 1960), 5.

<sup>65</sup> Barrow, *The acts of Malcolm IV*, 12; see page 76 for a transcription of the charter.

and Saint Radegund. It should also be noted that even though this is the first appearance of Radegund's name in connection with the priory, this does not preclude the priory's association with Radegund earlier. Nigel's charter referred to the institution as "the cell outside of Cambridge" (*cellule extra villam Cantebruge*)<sup>66</sup>; Constance made her gift in 1153/1154 "to the nuns of Cambridge (*sanctimonialibus de Cantebrig*)<sup>67</sup>; and the first charter of Malcolm issued in 1157/1161 granted land "to the nuns of Cambridge (*monialibus de Grantebrige*)."<sup>68</sup> All of these patrons had good reasons to support Radegund as the titular saint, especially Constance, who was in line for the queenship of England and, as a princess of the House of Capet, would have considered herself a (political) descendent of the Merovingians.<sup>69</sup>

But, if we believe that it was Malcolm who chose Radegund as the titular saint, why would a Scottish king endow a church dedicated to a Frankish queen-saint in Cambridge? There are a number of likely reasons. Like England, Scotland also had considerable Norman influence. As noted by G. W. S. Barrow in *The Kingdom of the Scots: Government, Church and Society from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Century*, there were two periods of "rapid and intensive Norman settlement in Scotland," between 1107 and the 1140s and from the middle of Malcolm's reign in 1160 to about 1200.<sup>70</sup> Malcolm and his predecessor, King David I, granted Norman barons large lordships in Scotland and during Malcolm's reign there was a predominance of Anglo-Norman and Anglo-Breton advisors on his counsel.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> Gray, *Jesus College*, 74.

<sup>67</sup> Gray, *Jesus College*, 75.

<sup>68</sup> Gray, *Jesus College*, 76.

<sup>69</sup> See Spiegel's work on *les trois races de France* and the importance of tracing the line of succession backwards to earlier dynasties, even if the relationship is only "imaginary." Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative," *History and Theory* 22, no. 1 (1983).

<sup>70</sup> G. W. S. Barrow, *The kingdom of the Scots: Government, Church and Society from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Century* (London : Edward Arnold, 1973), 320.

<sup>71</sup> Barrow, *The acts of Malcolm IV*, 7.

Malcolm's mother, Ada de Warenne, was from an old and prestigious Norman family that had been involved in the Conquest of England.<sup>72</sup> Barrow suggests that "Normans whose families originated in north-west Francia immigrated to the Scottish kingdom and retained their identity as families."<sup>73</sup> Surrounded by Norman advisors and courtiers, Malcolm could have chosen Saint Radegund as an affirmation of his own royal Frankish heritage.

The choice of Radegund as the titular saint at the Anglo-Norman foundations in Whitwell, Longleat, Bradsole, and Cambridge is supported by the substantial scholarship on Norman identity crafting in the West and the contribution of saints' cults to identity formation. In his study of post-Conquest Anglo-Norman relations, *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation and Identity 1066-1220*, Hugh Thomas writes that saints' cults "played a role in reinforcing Norman identity, though in the absence of saints from their own people, the Normans appropriated earlier saints from the region."<sup>74</sup> Felice Lifshitz' *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria* elaborates on this concept with an in-depth analysis of how the Viking conquerors of "pious Neustria" strategically used the cult of Saint Romanus of Rouen to consolidate their "Norman" identity. In the tenth century the Vikings appropriated Romanus, a Merovingian-era bishop, as their primary patron and produced hagiographies that rewrote the history of Neustria as a demon-infested pagan land that Romanus heroically Christianized. Lifshitz describes a process of co-assimilation that united the "pious Neustrians" and the "Vikings" under a single "Norman" identity through their shared veneration of Romanus. Their identification with the cult of Romanus made the

---

<sup>72</sup> Barrow, *The acts of Malcolm IV*, 328.

<sup>73</sup> Barrow, *The kingdom of the Scots*, 319.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas, *The English and the Normans*, 38.

Normans “as Frankish as the most Carolingian Frank” by the eleventh century.<sup>75</sup> Radegund was by no means a “Norman” saint, but by the twelfth century her cult had centers in almost every duchy and county of Francia. Poitiers was Radegund’s town, much in the same way Tours was “Martinopolis.”<sup>76</sup> Yet dozens of towns and villages outside of Poitiers claimed Radegund as their patroness on account of her remembered visits and miracles. As Lifshitz argues, “it was through participation in traditional festivals that most people, including the clergy, acquired their identities and their versions of the past.”<sup>77</sup> I would argue that just as the celebration of Radegund’s cult in towns throughout Francia shaped the histories and identities of her devotees, so also did the propagation of her cult in Anglo-Norman England help patrons identify with their (sometimes imagined) Frankish/Merovingian legacies.

In addition to identity formation, we can also view Anglo-Norman associations with the cult of Radegund in terms of their diplomatic value. Felice Lifshitz argues that the institution and elaboration of saints’ cults is generated by a fundamentally “political” impulse.<sup>78</sup> As a popular Frankish queen-saint, Radegund carried connotations of Frankish royal authority and legitimacy that would have been recognized by audiences on both sides of the channel. This would have been especially significant during the unstable twelfth century when French and English territories were rapidly changing hands.

George Beech’s study of pre-Conquest interactions between Anglo-Saxon England and Aquitaine discusses some diplomatic uses of saints’ cults. Communication networks

---

<sup>75</sup> “The conquered Neustrians became “Normans” the moment they accepted that the region had been “pagan” and infested with demons in the Merovingian period, demons whom Romanus had battled, and that (in accordance with Romanus’ prophecy), transcendent, sacred-historical meaning had only been super-added to the region’s identity when the Vikings arrives. Both the “pious Neustrians” and the “Vikings” lost their earlier identities, and became “Normans.”” Lifshitz, *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria*, 216.

<sup>76</sup> Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin*, 13.

<sup>77</sup> Lifshitz, *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria*, 13.

<sup>78</sup> Lifshitz, *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria*, 13.

were developing between the 1020s and 1070s thanks to interchanges between political figures, artists, scholars, merchants, monastic communities, and pilgrims.<sup>79</sup> The basis of this connection was the political and personal friendship between King Cnut of England and Duke William of Aquitaine (also count of Poitiers) which, Beech theorizes, influenced the introduction of both Radegund and Hilary's cults into England.<sup>80</sup> In pursuit of a diplomatic relationship with southern France, Cnut sent William a codex listing St. Martial of Limoges alongside the apostles, while Cnut's wife, Emma, financed the rebuilding of St. Hilary's church in Poitiers in 1049.<sup>81</sup> Soon after this, "Aquitanian" pilgrims were recorded at St. Ecgwine's shrine at Evesham in England, an Abbey that was generously patronized by Cnut whose relative was abbot. At the same time, Saint Radegund, together with Saint Hilary and other Aquitanian saints, appeared in 3 out of 20 extant liturgical calendars from Evesham and Worcester (another cult site of St. Ecgwine). These connections between Cnut and William, Radegund and Ecgwin, reveal how the cult of saints, and Radegund in particular, was an integral part of broader patterns of diplomatic and cultural exchange. Beech is incorrect in assuming that the introduction of Radegund's cult into England can be traced back to the relationship between Cnut and William since her name appears in English calendars centuries before and institutions weren't founded in her name until centuries after. Nonetheless, Beech's study offers a valuable perspective. Recognizing Hilary and Radegund as symbols connected with royal authority in Aquitaine, Cnut's patronage, or at least his encouragement of their patronage, demonstrates how Radegund's royal image during this period could be exploited as a diplomatic tool.

---

<sup>79</sup> George Beech, "England and Aquitaine in the century before the Norman Conquest," *Anglo-Saxon England*, Vol. 19 (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 100.

<sup>80</sup> Beech, "England and Aquitaine," 101.

<sup>81</sup> Beech, "England and Aquitaine," 84; 87.

The evidence that Anglo-Norman patronage of Radegund institutions was motivated by their patrons' evocation of Frankish heritage through this Merovingian queen-saint is compelling. But, if we believe that it was Malcolm who chose Radegund, there could be an alternative explanation related to his personal spiritual and diplomatic interests.

Both Arthur Gray and Fred Brittain, respective authors of 1898 and 1925 histories of Jesus College, believe that Malcolm was introduced to the cult of Radegund during a visit to Poitiers. Malcolm acceded the throne at twelve years old and the combination of his youth and the unstable political climate made him more easily susceptible to pressure from King Henry II of England. In 1157, Malcolm was pressed into becoming Henry's vassal and in 1159 he was called to France with the rest of Henry's forces from England, Normandy, and Aquitaine to claim Toulouse from Louis VI, which Henry now held by right of his marriage to Eleanor.<sup>82</sup> Malcolm has been described by historians as an overtly pious, chaste young man who aspired to the Christian ideal of knighthood. Barrow writes that the two quarreled over Henry's refusal to knight him at a meeting in Carlisle and that this aspiration is likely what motivated eighteen-year-old Malcolm to go to France against the wishes of his Scottish nobles. Malcolm joined Henry's forces at Poitiers in June of 1159 where, Brittain suggests, the Scottish king's devotion to Radegund was the outcome of a vow he made there.<sup>83</sup>

John Sherman's seventeenth-century *Historia collegii Jesu cantabrigiensis* ("History of Jesus College Cambridge") offers a slightly different explanation for Malcolm's interest in Radegund. Sherman doesn't mention any specific vows but characterizes Malcolm as the greatest of all of Radegund's devotees. Like Gray and Brittain, he writes that Malcolm "first began to burn with love for this queen" when he was in Poitiers with Henry II and "both his

---

<sup>82</sup> Barrow, *The acts of Malcolm IV*, 10-11.

<sup>83</sup> Brittain, *Saint Radegund*, 71.

ears were struck by her fame.” Sherman goes on to describe how Malcolm’s dedication to Radegund was mutual: he and Radegund chose each other because of their shared commitment to virginity. He cites the popular (though apparently unfounded) tradition that “Malcolm too is commonly called ‘the maiden’ from his abhorrence of marriage,” and that, “according to his courtiers he lived as a monk, [just as] the queen lived as a nun.” None of Radegund’s medieval biographers suggest that Radegund remained a virgin throughout her marriage, though Sherman is clearly referencing the same excerpt cited by Bede from Fortunatus’ sixth-century *Vita Radegundis*, “people said that the king had yoked himself to a nun rather than a queen.” Beyond this very personal spiritual connection between Malcolm and Radegund, Sherman also mentions “the alliance between Gauls and Scots undertaken in the time of Achaius and Charlemagne.” This mythical alliance between Charlemagne and King Achaius of Scotland stipulated that neither France nor Scotland could make peace with England without each other’s consent.<sup>84</sup> The so-called “auld alliance” was popularized during Sherman’s life and was invoked to support Mary Stuart’s rights to the throne of England and Scotland. While Sherman’s information on Malcolm’s personal and spiritual life may be suspect, his assertion that “Not only in Gaul, but in fact in England immediately after the conquest, Radegund was glorified by worshippers,” is likely an accurate picture of the surge of interest in Radegund’s cult in the eleventh-twelfth centuries.

### ***A Model for Exogamous Marriage in Norman England and Sicily***

For both English and Sicilian Normans, Radegund was also endowed with new gendered meaning in the twelfth century based on her historical association with cross-cultural marriage. Exogamy – the intermarriage between a foreigner and a native – was a

---

<sup>84</sup> Alexander Wilkinson, *Mary Queen of Scots and French Public Opinion, 1542-1600* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan division of St. Martin’s Press, 2004), 70.

political strategy the Normans and other medieval colonizers practiced after conquering a region to secure their power in the eyes of the conquered people.<sup>85</sup> When Radegund was eleven years old, Clothar defeated her uncle, Hermanfrid, in battle, seized Thuringia for the Frankish Kingdom, and took Radegund into his household as a captive. Ten years later in 540, Radegund's forced marriage made her queen of the Franks and legitimized Clothar's control of Thuringia. Radegund's exogamous union with Clothar reflected the marriage patterns of Normans half a millennium later who sought to legitimize their power abroad through the strategic establishment of kinship networks. As a foreign bride captured in war and transported to a faraway kingdom, Radegund would have served as a good role model for the Anglo-Saxon heiresses married off to Norman magnates and for the Frankish noblewomen sent to Sicily to become Sicilian-Norman queens and princesses.

The work of scholars like Eleanor Searle, Elisabeth Van Houts, Joanna Drell, Léon Robert Ménager, and Hugh Thomas has established that Normans consolidated their power in England and Italy through noble and royal intermarriages with foreign women. Searle was the first to point out that William the Conqueror promoted marriages between his followers and Anglo-Saxon heiresses and widows so that their descendants would hold their English estates by hereditary *and* conquest rights.<sup>86</sup> These cross-cultural marriages solved a number of the Norman colonizers' problems by mitigating conflict surrounding the dispossession of Anglo-Saxon lords from their lands and by creating stable transitions of property to new Anglo-Norman heirs.<sup>87</sup> Van Hout's 2011 article on intermarriage in eleventh-century

---

<sup>85</sup> Elisabeth Van Houts, "Intermarriage in Eleventh-Century England," *Normandy and its Neighbours, 900-1250: essays for David Bates* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2011), 237.

<sup>86</sup> Eleanor Searle, "Women and the Legitimization of the Norman Conquest," *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies 328* (Pasadena: Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences California Institute of Technology, 1980), 40.

<sup>87</sup> Searle, "Women and the Legitimization of the Norman Conquest," 40, 6.



England took Searle's work a step farther with a comprehensive quantitative study of marriages and engagements between Anglo-Saxon women and Norman knights and noblemen. She noted that the period from the late 1080s onward saw the largest increase in alliances between foreign men and indigenous women, which coincides with the beginning of the second generation of Norman newcomers.<sup>88</sup>

Even though exogamy seems to have minimized immediate native resistance to foreign incursions as Searle has found, attitudes towards intermarriage varied.<sup>89</sup> Contemporary chroniclers such as Orderic Vitalis (1120) and William of Malmesbury (1118) made note of the phenomenon in their histories and both authors were, in fact, products of Anglo-Norman intermarriages themselves. Their positive assessments of peaceful cohabitation were tempered with accounts like that of Frutolf of Michelsberg (1103), a Bavarian monk, who presented a more negative view of the practice, writing that in 1066 English widows were forcibly married off to Norman conquerors.<sup>90</sup> Van Houts finds considerable evidence of widespread sexual threats to Englishwomen who took refuge in monasteries to protect themselves from Norman sexual violence and marriage proposals alike. Before Matilda of Scotland became queen to King Henry I, she was hidden by her aunt, the abbess Cristina, at the monasteries of Romsey and Wilton to protect her from the advances of William Rufus, son of William the Conqueror. An account by Archbishop Anslem's secretary, Eadmer, notes that fear of the "rampant lust" of the Normans drove Christina to disguise Matilda as a Benedictine nun when male visitors and suitors arrived at the convent.<sup>91</sup> But in the end, Matilda married William's brother, Henry. This helped him

---

<sup>88</sup> Van Houts, "Intermarriage in Eleventh-Century England," 246.

<sup>89</sup> Searle, "Women and the Legitimization of the Norman Conquest," 8.

<sup>90</sup> Van Houts, "Intermarriage in Eleventh-Century England," 246.

<sup>91</sup> Van Houts, "Intermarriage in Eleventh-Century England," 255.

secure important Anglo-Saxon allies that legitimized his claim to the English throne and the production of their Anglo-Norman heirs, Empress Matilda and William Adelin, united the two factions in peace.<sup>92</sup>

We also see the same marriage patterns in eleventh- and twelfth-century Italy. Joanna Drell's *Kinship and Conquest: Family Strategies in the Principality of Salerno during the Norman Period* notes the significance of marriage alliances between the family of Robert Guiscard and the indigenous Lombard ruling family of Salerno. Robert's own marriage in 1058 to the Lombard princess, Sikelgaita, strengthened his power to such a degree that, as William of Apulia writes in his *Deeds of Robert Guiscard*, the Lombards "had not obeyed him before" but "obeyed him now."<sup>93</sup> As Drell argues, "Robert's marriage gave him a foothold for Norman power in the fertile and strategic region of Salerno. Through the marriages of his children he was able to create an elaborate kin network linking the Norman adventurers with the Lombard nobility in a way that transformed the kinship network in the region."<sup>94</sup> The marriage patterns of Roger I, Roger II, and William II demonstrate a slightly different strategy with similar results. These kings of Sicily all made exogamous alliances with French noblewomen. Roger I's first and second wives were Norman noblewomen, Judith d'Évreux and Eremburga of Mortain. Roger II married Sibylla from the ducal family of Burgundy and later Beatrice of the comital family of Rethel. William II married Joan of England, the daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II, who between them controlled Normandy, Aquitaine, Anjou, Maine, in addition to England, large parts of Wales, and the

---

<sup>92</sup> Lisa Hilton, *Queens Consort: England's Medieval Queens from Eleanor of Aquitaine to Elizabeth of York* (New York, NY: Pegasus Books, 2010), 44-45.

<sup>93</sup> Marguerite Mathieu, *Guillaume de Pouille, Le Geste de Robert Guiscard* (Palermo: Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neellenici, 1962), book I, 33 ; Joanna Drell, *Kinship and Conquest: Family Strategies in the Principality of Salerno During the Norman Period* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>94</sup> Drell, *Kinship and Conquest*, 1.

eastern half of Ireland. If, as Borsook argues, the Kings of Sicily cultivated their French heritage by exploiting French royal traditions, we can interpret these marriages with French women (some of whom were royal) as part of a similar strategy to project dynastic continuity and legitimacy.

In this light, Radegund's suitability as a model for exogamous union would not have been overlooked in twelfth-century England and Sicily. Despite Radegund's clear unwillingness to marry the man who conquered her homeland, she did the best she could in her role as wife and queen until Clothar's murder of her last remaining relative drove her to seek ordination as a deaconess. The captive Thuringian princess married to a foreign king navigated her new role as a Frankish queen much like Matilda of Scotland. Both women initially resisted marriage and as queens, they were well-known for their piety and devotion to the poor, developed political and spiritual relationships with the clergy, built hospitals, supported the church, and founded religious institutions. It also seems logical that the mosaic portraits of Radegund at Monreale and the Capella Palatina connoted more than just dynastic continuity for the new Sicilian-Norman monarchy. Much like the French wives of Roger I, Roger II, and William II, Radegund was symbolically relocated to Sicily and dressed in the Byzantine imperial garb of her new home. The blue robe, golden pallium, and pearl trimmed crown Radegund wears at the Capella Palatina perfectly matches the regalia Roger II wears in his famous coronation mosaic in Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter has argued that, to those emigrating from the territories of Western France for Sicily and England, Radegund was above all a Frankish cultural artifact. As one of the first Christian queens of Francia, she was imagined as a holy ancestor whose legacy

might act as a rallying point for claims of power and legitimacy or who might simply stand as a reminder of the hereditary prestige of the Merovingians.

As expressions of Radegund's cult reached England and Sicily, we can see how they fit into the larger project of identity formation as overseas-Normans sought to cultivate their (sometimes imagined) Frankish heritage. As Lifshitz argues, the institution and elaboration of saints' cults was generated by fundamentally "political" impulses and participation in festivities associated with these saints had the power to shape both people's identities and the ways they understood their past.<sup>95</sup> This process operated on multiple levels as patrons consciously and unconsciously drew on and elaborated the different nuances of Radegund's meanings. On the one hand, we have seen how Malcolm of Scotland may have been drawn to Radegund for any number of spiritual, diplomatic, and/or political reasons: recognition of their shared abhorrence of marriage; a way to ingratiate himself with Henry II after he became Count of Poitou; a strategy to assimilate with his Norman courtiers by evoking his own Norman heritage. Similarly, the Norman kings of Sicily, who sought to project their associations with the Frankish/French monarchy, integrated Radegund into their royal mosaic programs. Her identity as one of the first Christian queens of Francia referenced the kings' own French heritage while simultaneously alluding to their existing diplomatic relationship with France. The choice to depict this Frankish queen in the style of a Byzantine empress recalled Radegund's historical connections with the Eastern Roman Emperor and carried separate connotations of their Constantinople ambitions. This recognition and strategic use of Radegund's Frankish dynastic identity helped the Sicilian kings project the continuity and legitimacy they needed to justify their new monarchy.

---

<sup>95</sup> Lifshitz, *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria*, 13.

In this capacity, Radegund also provided a role model for noble and royal cross-cultural marriage alliances. The Normans in England and Italy relied on intermarriages with carefully chosen women whose ancestry and land holdings granted them and their heirs a special legitimacy they otherwise could not achieve as foreigners. This imbued Radegund with a new gendered meaning that would later be elaborated by the ruling families of France in the fifteenth century, as the next chapter will show.

## Chapter 4

### **Pilgrim, Grain Goddess, and French Royal Patroness:**

#### **The Expansion of Radegund's Popular Cult Throughout France in the Twelfth Through Fifteenth Centuries**

By the end of the twelfth century, Poitiers ceased to have the monopoly on Radegund's intercessory power. As Radegund's popularity surged and her cult spread throughout Europe, new cult sites were established that didn't – and weren't able to – project the same institutional emphasis that Hildebert and the caretakers of her cult in Poitiers did. While some churches dedicated to Radegund appeared in large cities, like Tours, many more were established in smaller villages, and the highest concentration were in the Loire Valley of West-central France. The proliferation of Radegund's cult sites here followed the contours of her travels *before* her arrival in Poitiers as recorded in the sixth-century accounts of Fortunatus and Baudonivia. After Clothar murdered her last remaining relative, Radegund forced Bishop Médard of Noyon to consecrate her as a deaconess, and she embarked on a pilgrimage of charity to various hermits' cells and monasteries, stopping in Metz and Tours, and staying for at least a year at her villa in Saix before finally coming to Poitiers.<sup>1</sup> Many of the villages along her imagined route share the common foundation legend that their church or chapel was erected on the site where Radegund stopped to rest while traveling. Indeed, many sites display the very stone on which she rested, imprinted with her footstep, or marked

---

<sup>1</sup> Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.11-12 ; Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.5.

by the tread of her donkey. Others have holy fountains where she miraculously produced a spring to quench her thirst, or caves in which she sheltered.<sup>2</sup>

Many of these sites also celebrated an apocryphal miracle involving Radegund and an oat field which may have developed around this time. At least seven villages claimed to be the site of the miracle and many others received pilgrims who brought votive offerings of oats to Radegund's altars in return for healing miracles.<sup>3</sup> While the Radegund of Poitiers was promoted as a nun and monastic foundress, the Radegund of the Loire was decidedly secular and agrarian. This Radegund was remembered as a traveler – a pilgrim whom other pilgrims could identify with. She left sacred traces in the natural environment, rather than in documents, and the existing landscape features became imbued with her presence. The sheer quantity of extant shrines suggest the presence of countless others, now lost to the fortunes of time. The varieties in geographical location, environmental qualities, and communal memories inspired unique interpretations of Radegund at each of these sites. The religious landscape can tell us a great deal about how communities perceived their environment and how they incorporated aspects from the natural world around them into their religious practice. The farther Radegund's cult spread, the more meanings she carried as she was adapted to the needs and settings of those who venerated her.

By the fifteenth century, the Loire Valley had developed a particularly high concentration of rural shrines, local legends, and village churches dedicated to Radegund. As

---

<sup>2</sup> For example, the Église Sainte-Radegonde en Gatine in Tours (Briand, *Histoire de sainte Radegonde*, 424), the Chapelle de Sainte-Radegonde in Bouresse et Verrières (Briand, 422), the Église Sainte-Radegonde in Saix (Briand 417), the Chapelle de Sainte-Radegonde in Courant (Briand, 437), and the Église Sainte-Radegonde in Missy Sainte-Radegonde (Briand, 430). [See the digital map that identifies many of Radegund's extant cult sites.](#)

<sup>3</sup> In addition to Saix, the additional sites include Vouillé, Bouresse et Verrières, Sainte-Radegonde-en-Gâtine (Vienne), la Genétouze (Vendée), Riantec (Morbihan), l'Épinay-Sainte-Radegonde et Lanneray (Eure-et-Loire), Sainte-Radegonde (Somme). It is not possible to discover the earliest date when the Miracle of the Oats was claimed by these villages. Aigrain, *Sainte Radegonde*, 64.

I argue in the last section of this chapter, the character of this sacred landscape produced a perspective of Radegund's cult which was filtered through local expressions of lay popular piety. Exposure to this perspective of Radegund's cult made her an approachable and desirable patroness for the House of Valois, the ruling family of France. Jean de Berry made the first step in the secular reinterpretation of Radegund into the Valois patroness when he removed a relic from her tomb at the Église Sainte-Radegonde in Poitiers for display in his Sainte-Chapelle in Bourges.<sup>4</sup> King Charles VII inherited his grand-uncle's devotion to Radegund along with his titles of Count of Poitou and Duke of Berry. Charles' semi-nomadic wartime lifestyle exposed him to the Radegundian landscape of the Loire where he would have encountered almost exclusively non-monastic interpretations of Radegund. This influenced her adoption as an important symbol of secular power for the Valois family whose tenuous political position vis-à-vis the Burgundians and their English allies during the Hundred Years' War was anything but certain.

### ***The Proliferation of Radegund's Cult Throughout France in the Twelfth Century***

Much of what we know about Radegund's cult sites outside of Poitiers comes from the work of L'Abbé Emile Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde* (1898), and L'Abbé René Aigrain, *Sainte Radegonde* (1918). The majority of Briand and Aigrain's information on rural cultic practices was compiled from their private correspondence with local clerics and antiquarians who personally witnessed, heard about, or read uncited accounts of the rituals. Because of this, it is unfortunately not possible to trace the existence of these practices back to the twelfth century in every case because the documentary evidence for these *loci* of popular religion has not survived. Sometimes all we know for sure is the original foundation

---

<sup>4</sup> Favreau, "Le Culte de Sainte-Radegonde à Poitiers au Moyen Âge," 105.



dates of churches and chapels and that the springs, caves, fountains, and stones were an established part of Radegund's cult at the turn of the twentieth century when Briand or Aigrain conducted their studies. While it is possible that some of these traditions were developed during the Catholic Revival of the nineteenth century, a great many of them have existed since the time of their associated churches and chapels in the Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup>

Forty-two of the extant ninety-seven churches and chapels dedicated to Radegund in France are known to have been founded in the twelfth century.<sup>6</sup> The town of Athies claims one of the longest and most uninterrupted associations with Radegund. After Clothar seized Thuringia, he took Radegund as a captive and sent her to his royal villa at Athies, then located in the county of Vermandois, now in the department of the Somme in the North of France. Radegund spent ten years here while she was educated in the Christian faith, "letters, and other things suitable to her sex."<sup>7</sup> After her marriage to Clothar in the Frankish capital of Soissons, she returned to Athies where she built a hospital for poor women. She "acted like a servant," washing the poor in warm baths and "tending to the putrescence of their diseases." She mixed potions to revive those suffering from excessive sweating and ensured the poor were provided with food.<sup>8</sup> From the sixth century to the twenty-first, this site has been in constant use as a medical caregiving facility and has been operated mainly by female religious caregivers.

Throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the counts of Vermandois, the lords of Athies, and the counts of Nesles occasionally plundered the hospital, which was maintained

---

<sup>5</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*; Aigrain, *Sainte Radegonde*.

<sup>6</sup> This statistic is based on a database I developed from a survey of various primary and secondary sources, including modern historical scholarship, topographical dictionaries, and some less academic French patrimony and diocesan websites. See the Appendix.

<sup>7</sup> Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.1

<sup>8</sup> Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.4.

by Radegund's endowments. In the eleventh century, seeing the error of their ways, the counts of Nesles erected a new hospital on the site named Sainte-Radegonde. The "pious daughters" of the counts of Nesle ran the hospital under the guidance of the local curate and the count's officers. "After the crusades" in 1186, count Philippe de Vermandois and M. V. de Beauvillé established a leprosarium there and made generous donations as restitution for their earlier crimes against the hospital.<sup>9</sup>

There is very little remaining of the original Merovingian villa of Athies aside from a single ruined tower because the site was rebuilt many times over the centuries after being destroyed by wars and natural disasters. The first church of Athies was the oratory of the royal palace "where the young saint Radegund liked to pray."<sup>10</sup> The twelfth-century church was established as a priory in 1175 by the religious of Saint-Thierry of Reims who set up a chapel dedicated to Radegund.<sup>11</sup> The steeple, transept, and choir were added in 1178. At the end of the seventeenth century, the church was restored and enlarged so that it now has "the proportions of a small cathedral."<sup>12</sup> The church's medieval artistic program highlights scenes from Radegund's life, other saints associated with her, and biblical events. The two subjects of the tympanum are the Nativity and Flight into Egypt. The apocryphal story of the holy family's flight into Egypt is associated iconographically with the Radegundian legend of the Miracle of the Oats, which will be further discussed in the next section of this chapter.

---

<sup>9</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte-Radegonde*, 410 ; The names of count Philippe de Vermandois and M. V. de Beauvillé and the date of 1186 are cited in M.J. Garnier, *Dictionnaire Topographique du Département de la Somme*, in *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de Picardie*. Troisième Série, Tome I (Paris : Librairie de J.B. Dumoulin, 1867), 48.

<sup>10</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte-Radegonde*, 411.

<sup>11</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte-Radegonde*, 411.

<sup>12</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte-Radegonde*, 412. Briand cites a letter from Duneuf-Germain sent on August 24 1864, which in turn cites the personal knowledge of M. l'abbé Décagny for the dates of the construction.

The facility fell into ruin during the wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but was revived as a Hotel-Dieu by royal letters patent in the mid-seventeenth century. The institution now operates as an Alzheimer's care facility called La Résidence Radegonde. According to their brochure, La Résidence Radegonde is extremely proud of its long history as a medical care facility and traces its "ancient origins" back to "the young Queen Saint Radegund" who founded it in 550.<sup>13</sup>

About fifty kilometers south of Athies was the site of another Merovingian royal villa in Péronne that Radegund would frequent. According to local tradition, Radegund stopped several times in the nearby town of Cartigny on her way from Athies to Péronne. She dispensed donations among the clergy and populace and the area was "placed under her protection."<sup>14</sup> Pedro de Ribadeneira, the sixteenth-century Spanish hagiographer and Jesuit priest, notes in his *Flos Sanctorum* (1599–1610), that the miracle reported by Fortunatus in which Radegund freed a group of prisoners occurred here.<sup>15</sup> Cartigny was most well-known for *Le Catelet*, a house of the Knights Templar. In the twelfth century, the Knights funded the construction of a church dedicated to Radegund near *Le Catelet* in memory of her visits there. The church still displays a stone called the "Pierre de Sainte-Radegonde" where it is believed that Radegund rested on one of her voyages from Athies. L'Abbé Paul de Cagny's study of the area around Péronne notes that several houses of lay sisters were active near the church during this time.<sup>16</sup> The church was fortified in the fifteenth century but was completely destroyed during the bombardments of the First World War. It was rebuilt in the

---

<sup>13</sup> Téléchargements, La Résidence Radegonde (website), copyrighted 2022, <https://www.residencesainteradegonde.fr/telechargements-pa-13.htm>

<sup>14</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte-Radegonde*, 414.

<sup>15</sup> *Les vies des saints et fêtes de toute l'année, par le r. p. Ribadénéira. Traduction française, revue et augmentée des fêtes nouvelles, des vies des saints et bienheureux nouveaux par m. l'abbé É. Daras* (Paris : L. Vivès, 1858), 225.

<sup>16</sup> L'Abbé Paul de Cagny, *Histoire de l'arrondissement de Péronne* (Quentin, 1869), 206.

early 1920s and new stained-glass windows and liturgical furniture were constructed by Gérard Ansart and the Tambouret workshops in 1927.<sup>17</sup>

Although Tours was very much Saint Martin's town, it also had a strong devotion to Radegund, likely due to the friendship between Gregory of Tours and Radegund during her life. In the eleventh century, a semi-subterranean church dedicated to Radegund was built into the hillside on the north side of the Loire River. It is located on the winding rue Saint-Gatien, the main street of the former village of Sainte-Radegonde, now a district of Tours<sup>18</sup> and a stone's throw from Marmoutier Abbey. As we know from Fortunatus' account, Radegund visited Tours on her charitable pilgrimage before removing herself to the solitude of her royal villa at Saix,

Can any eloquence express how zealous and munificent she showed herself there? How she conducted herself around the courts, shrines, and basilica of Saint Martin, weeping unchecked tears, prostrating herself at each threshold! After mass was said, she heaped the holy altar with the clothing and bright ornaments with which she used to adorn herself in the palace. And when the handmaid of the Lord went from there to the neighborhood of Candes whence the glorious Martin, Christ's senator and confidant, migrated from this world, she gave him no less again, ever profiting in the Lord's grace.<sup>19</sup>

According to Briand, there is a local tradition surrounding the foundation of Radegund's church in Tours. While Radegund proceeded on her pilgrimage around Touraine, she visited a series of caves on the north side of the Loire River where Saint Gatien and his followers

---

<sup>17</sup> Église Sainte-Radegonde de Cartigny, Monuments édifices remarquables, Guide Tourisme de France 2022 (website), copyright Yalta Production, Janvier 2013 / Février 2021, <https://www.guide-tourisme-france.com/VISITER/eglise-sainte-radegonde--cartigny-37461.htm>

<sup>18</sup> Rev. J. L. Petit, "The Church of Saint Radegonde, Near Tours," *The Archaeological Journal*, Volume 44, 161 (Royal Archaeological Institute, 1887), 161.

<sup>19</sup> "Hinc felici navigio Turonis appulsa, quæ suppleat eloquentia, quantum officiosam, quantum se monstravit munificam? Quid egerit circa sancti Martini atria, templa, basilicam, flens lachrymis insatiata, singula jacens per limina, ubi, Missa celebrata, vestibus & ornamento, quo se clariori cultu solebat ornare in palatio, sacrum componit altare. Hinc cum in vicum Condatensem, ubi gloriosus vir Martinus, & Christi satis intimus senator migravit de seculo, Ancilla domini pervenisset, dedit non inferiora, Domini crescens in gratia." Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.11.

celebrated mass during the time of the Christian persecutions of the third century. To preserve the memory of Radegund's visit, the Église Sainte-Radegonde was built on this very site which incorporated the early Christian caves into its structure.<sup>20</sup> As we will see in Chapter 7, this site became a Tuberculosis hospital for children called the Sanatorium de Sainte-Radegonde at the turn of the nineteenth century and was administered, in part, by the nuns of Sainte-Radegonde-près-Tours.

One of the most well-documented of Radegund's medieval cult sites is the Chappelle Sainte-Radegonde at Chinon. Carved into the cliffs above the Chateau overlooking the Vienne River, this prehistoric cave dwelling containing a pre-Christian holy spring is believed to have been inhabited by Jean the Recluse for thirty years during the sixth century.<sup>21</sup> According to Baudonivia's *Vita Radegundis*, after making her pilgrimage of charity and settling at her villa in Saix, Radegund learned that Clothar had changed his mind and wished to reclaim her. After fasting and holding vigils at Saix, she sent a nun named Fridovigia to visit Jean the Recluse in his hermit's cave twenty kilometers away in Chinon. Jean sent her a haircloth and foretold that if Clothar forcibly her back as his wife, he would receive the divine punishment of God. Immediately after this, Clothar was persuaded to endow a convent for Radegund in Poitiers, which would later become the abbey complex of Sainte-Croix. However, Clothar again made an attempt to retrieve her and, thanks to the diplomatic interventions of Bishop Germanus of Paris, Clothar relinquished his plan to reclaim the queen and prostrated himself at Germanus' feet at the Church of Saint Martin at Tours to beg forgiveness for his sins.<sup>22</sup> Although Baudonivia writes that Radegund sent the

---

<sup>20</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 449.

<sup>21</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 447

<sup>22</sup> Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.4.

nun, Fridovigia, as her emissary to Jean, in the twelfth century the cave was converted into a chapel dedicated to Radegund in memory of her imagined visit.<sup>23</sup> The cave-chapel seems to have become a very popular pilgrimage destination for Radegund's devotees, since a little later in the twelfth century, a more spacious nave was also added to the mouth of the cave to accommodate the increase in visitors.<sup>24</sup> A twelfth-century statue of Radegund, which somehow narrowly escaped the ravages of two waves of iconoclasm during the Protestant Reformation and French Revolution, today occupies a place of honor on the altar.<sup>25</sup> This cave was considered a holy place centuries before Radegund's life. But it was the memory of her presence there that transformed this sacred space into an institutionally controlled chapel.

### ***The Miracle of the Oats***

Beginning as early as the thirteenth century, Radegund's departure from Clothar and entrance into religion as related by Baudonivia above was reimagined anew as the *Miracle des Avoines* ("Miracle of the Oats"). Despite its omission from the early Latin *vitae* of Fortunatus (c. 585), Baudonivia (c. 600), Gregory of Tours (c. 600), and Hildebert of Lavardin (c. 1100), the legend of the Miracle of the Oats became so popular in the late Middle Ages that it inspired ritual observances in several villages in the Loire and an official feast day at Poitiers. Although its precise origins are unclear, the legendary Miracle of the Oats recasts the significantly less exciting account of Radegund's conflict with Clothar as a dramatic escape accompanied by biblically inspired miracles. It is possible to trace the legend and its celebration using a variety of textual and artistic sources, such as stained glass, liturgical writings, editions of Radegund's *vitae* in print and manuscript, and ethnographic

---

<sup>23</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 447.

<sup>24</sup> "Laissez-vous conter La Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde," *Ville de Chinon*, distributed August 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 448

studies of Radegund's cult from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These sources confirm that the legend was fully accepted as part of the Radegund tradition by the fifteenth century while the ritual of offering oats at Radegund's shrines had become an established practice by at least the early sixteenth century. Offering oats to Radegund has continued up until today (2017) at certain sites.

The Miracle of the Oats departs significantly from Baudonivia's version. According to this new tradition, Radegund fled from Clothar on foot after her ordination as deaconess and found herself in an oat field near Saix. There, she came upon a peasant sowing oats and told him that if anyone should ask whether he saw anyone pass, he was to reply that neither man nor woman passed by since he sowed his oats. Then, by the will of God, in that very hour the oats the peasant had newly sown grew to full height, hiding Radegund and her two companions, Agnes and Disciola. When Clothar rode up to the peasant on his horse and asked him if he had seen anyone pass by, he was able to truthfully reply that he didn't see anyone pass *since he had sown the oats*. Clothar then realized that a miracle has taken place and, marveling at the power of God, now understood that he should cease his pursuit rather than commit an offense against divine clemency.<sup>26</sup>

As Robert Favreau writes, this miracle was most likely inspired by the apocryphal story of the holy family's flight into Egypt.<sup>27</sup> As Mary and Joseph fled Herod's soldiers with the infant Jesus, they met a laborer sowing wheat. The baby Jesus reached into the sower's sack and scattered a handful of wheat on the road which immediately grew to full height. When Herod's soldiers asked the laborer if he had seen a woman and child pass by, the sower

---

<sup>26</sup> Jean Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque de Clotaire premier de ce nom et de sa tresillustre espouse madame sainte Radegonde* (Paris: les Frères de Marnef ; Poitiers : Enguilbert I de Marnef, 1517), book 2, folio v. 41.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Favreau, *Sainte-Radegonde* (Poitiers: Association les amis de Sainte Radegonde, 1999), 11.

responded that he saw them while he was sowing the very wheat that now stood fully grown before them. The soldiers assumed that he must have seen them pass by almost a year before, and turned back. Emile Mâle's *Religious Art in France* discusses the popularity of this episode from the Apocryphal Gospels in thirteenth century art, despite their exclusion from the biblical canon.<sup>28</sup> As Paul Sébillot writes in *Le Folklore de France*, this legend appears in many versions and with many different characters in Poitou and the larger department of Vienne.<sup>29</sup>

The extant cult sites established to commemorate the Miracle of the Oats around the Loire attest to its popularity. A church dedicated to Radegund was built at Saix around the twelfth century and a chapel was later erected in the "Champ carré," the field where the miracle took place according to the earliest written records. As reported by Briand in his 1898 study of Radegund's cult sites, pilgrims and the villagers of Saix celebrated the feast day by recreating Radegund's voyage at the "Champ carré," offering packets of oats, and visiting the fountain where she was said to have rested and tended the sick.<sup>30</sup> While the reconstruction and enlargement of this chapel is documented in 1851 and 1857, it is not possible at this time to discover the exact date of foundation. Briand states that before its reconstruction, the chapel had stood there "since time immemorial," but no sources offer a precise date.<sup>31</sup> While the Miracle of the Oats "historically" took place in the village of Saix, at least six other villages throughout France claimed the miracle for themselves and had slightly different traditions and customs associated with the feast day. Aigrain lists the

---

<sup>28</sup> Emile Mâle, *Religious Art in France: The Thirteenth Century, A Study of Medieval Iconography and Its Sources* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1984), 222.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Sébillot, *Le Folklore de France: Tome Troisième, La Faune et la Flore* (Editions Imago, 1984), 530.

<sup>30</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 418.

<sup>31</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 418.



following additional sites that claimed the miracle of the oats in his 1918 study: Vouillé, Bouresse et Verrières, Sainte-Radegonde-en-Gâtine (Vienne), la Genétouze (Vendée), Riantec (Morbihan), l'Épinay-Sainte-Radegonde et Lanneray (Eure-et-Loire), and Sainte-Radegonde (Somme).<sup>32</sup> The church of Sainte-Radegonde de Riantec held a solemn procession on her feast day around the fountain of Saint Radegund. According to their local tradition, Radegund crossed this region while fleeing Clothar and a spring bubbled up miraculously in the place where her horse took a false step. Nearby is the "Champ de la Sainte" which Riantec claims as the site of the Miracle of the Oats.<sup>33</sup> The diocese of Luçon also makes this claim and celebrates the cult of Radegund with a pilgrimage to a chapel housing some of her relics. At Sainte-Radegonde de Bouresse et Verrières, the villagers celebrated the miracle of the oats and had a legend that Radegund left her footprint there in a stone.<sup>34</sup> The population of Sainte-Radegonde en Gâtine claim that their field, the "Champ de l'avoine" was the site of the miracle and also have a local tradition surrounding "les pierres de sainte Radegonde." According to the legend, Radegund passed through this village on her voyage and, having encountered a marshy field crisscrossed by streams, placed some large steppingstones down so that she could access the church more easily. Both she and her donkey left footprints in the stones, which were known as "les pierres de Sainte Radegonde."<sup>35</sup> The village of Missy-sur-Aisne claims that during her flight from Clothar, Radegund hid in a cave there and when Clothar approached her, the rock miraculously

---

<sup>32</sup> According to L'Abbé René Aigrain's *Sainte Radegonde*, "il y a au moins une demi-douzaine de localités qui revendiquent le miracle comme un des faits de leur histoire, sans parler de Saix qui en toute hypothèse aurait les titres les meilleurs." Aigrain, *Sainte Radegonde*, 64. It is not possible to discover the earliest date when the Miracle of the Oats was claimed by these villages. Nonetheless, the creation of an official feast day at Poitiers in the fourteenth century must have inspired devotional interest at least in Saix, the official site of the miracle, or visa versa.

<sup>33</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 464.

<sup>34</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 422.

<sup>35</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 424.

became soft and trapped the hooves of his horse. Pilgrims come to wash in a fountain near this cave on Easter and deposit votive offerings to invoke cures for leprosy and ulcers.<sup>36</sup> At Sainte-Radegonde par Baignes, pilgrims “made vows” (*faisait des voeux*) and offered objects made of oats to invoke cures for their rheumatism.<sup>37</sup> At Clairfougere, pilgrims would traverse the chapel dedicated to Saint Radegund on their knees and leave handfuls of oats in a little window to cure their skin diseases.<sup>38</sup> Despite the variety in rituals, these different cult sites share some commonalities. Firstly, veneration typically revolved around a natural feature that was divinely transformed, rather than a relic. For Radegund’s devotees outside of Poitiers, her intercession could be accessed through physical contact with places she was remembered to have visited and parts of the natural landscape that she touched. Secondly, the practices at many of these sites involved movement that was intended to recreate or at least reference Radegund’s sixth-century voyage. As pilgrims themselves, devotees followed in Radegund-the-pilgrim’s footsteps to achieve a spiritual connection that might otherwise only be possible at her tomb.

When Radegund first became associated with oats is difficult to determine with absolute certainty. In *The Armour of Light: Stained Glass in Western France 1250-1325*, Meredith Parsons Lillich attempts to trace the origins using art and liturgical materials. She notes the presence of two stained glass fragments in the Church of Sainte-Radegonde in Poitiers decorated “with little comb-like forms, probably packets of oats left by pilgrims at the tomb” dated to the 1270s.<sup>39</sup> The fifteenth-century lectionary of the Church of Sainte-

---

<sup>36</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 431.

<sup>37</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 436.

<sup>38</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 460.

<sup>39</sup> Meredith Parsons Lillich, *The Armour of Light: Stained Glass in Western France 1250-1325* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 111.

Radegonde describes a miracle that occurred in Poitiers in 1303 when a sick person implored the saint and rubbed oats on his limbs “selon la coutume.”<sup>40</sup> This represents the earliest textual evidence for a documented oat-related miracle involving Radegund, though it implies the “custom” of associating Radegund with oats is considerably older. The legendary also includes a narration of the Miracle of the Oats story, which suggests a potential link between the oat-rubbing miracle in the church and the legend involving Radegund’s flight. Even though the lectionary dates to the fifteenth century, the miracle recorded in 1303 suggests that Lilllich’s theory that the Miracle of the Oats originated as early as the twelfth-century is very plausible. The earliest French vernacular translation of Fortunatus, Baudonivia, and Hildebert’s *Vita Radegundis* into French, which dates to between 1300-1400, includes an account of the Miracle of the Oats.<sup>41</sup> A similar account also appears in two other fifteenth-century luxury manuscripts. The *Vie, miracles et office de sainte Radegonde* is identified as belonging to Charlotte de Savoie<sup>42</sup> and *The breviary of Anne de Prye* (1485), the abbess of La Trinité at Poitiers from 1480-1505, depicts an illustration along a lower border showing the sower being accosted by a soldier as Clothar and his entourage ride through the miraculously growing oats.<sup>43</sup> The earliest and most definitive evidence for the miracle’s institutional recognition is an episcopal ordinance from 1358 at Poitiers which cites a feast of Radegund in February and a Feast of the Oats on the last day of February.<sup>44</sup> A document related to procedure between the nuns of Sainte-Croix and canons of Sainte-Radegonde from March 31, 1472, mentions “the last day of February, which one calls in this city the Day of

---

<sup>40</sup> *Lectionnaire de Sainte Radegonde*, Poitiers, Bibliothèque municipale de Poitiers, MS. 253, fol. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Français 1784, XIVe siècle (Bibliothèque nationale de France), f. 66v.

<sup>42</sup> *La Vie de tres glorieuse royne madame sainte Radegonde*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, FR 5718, 66r-67v; François Avril, “Un portrait inédit de la reine Charlotte de Savoie,” *Études sur la Bibliothèque Nationale et Témoignages Réunis en Hommage à Thérèse Kleindienst* (Paris : Bibliothèque nationale, 1985), 256.

<sup>43</sup> *Bréviaire d'Anne de Prye*, Poitiers, Trésor de la Cathédrale Saint-Pierre, MS. unnumbered.

<sup>44</sup> Poitiers, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 26 (377), fol. 1v: *Radegundis de advenis*.

Saint Radegund of the Oats.” By the sixteenth century, a more elaborate and solemn feast was celebrated at the church of Sainte-Radegonde.<sup>45</sup>

The earliest documented account of actual oat offerings to Radegund comes from the turn of the sixteenth century and notes that “the common people” offered oats at “her holy altars” and received all kinds of miracles in return, from the restoration of sight to job promotions.<sup>46</sup> An account from 1621 relates that “in many places” those who wished to be cured or to receive some favor brought little sachets of oats to a church dedicated to Saint Radegund.<sup>47</sup> A vernacular *Life of Radegund* published just a few years later in 1627 by a professor at the College of Rodez, describes one of these oat-offering cures at a church dedicated to Radegund in his town. As he reports, in 1613, a laborer named Geraud Peyrat suffered from paralysis of the arm and traveled as a pilgrim to the church of Sainte-Radegund in Rodez. Geraud was advised to offer a shirtsleeve full of oats and, after also lighting candles and venerating some of Radegund’s relics the church was displaying, his paralyzed arm was miraculously cured.<sup>48</sup> Could this custom have been similarly widespread in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fifteenth centuries when the Miracle of the Oats was first developing and becoming institutionalized? Since the first documented oat-related healing miracle occurred in 1303 and so many churches dedicated to Radegund were founded throughout

---

<sup>45</sup> Robert Favreau, “Le Culte de Sainte-Radegonde à Poitiers au Moyen Âge,” 98.

<sup>46</sup> Henry Bradshaw, *Here begyneth the lyfe of saynt Radegunde* (London: Rycharde Pynson, 1525), STC 3507, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, folio v. 27.

<sup>47</sup> “en plusieurs lieux, ceux qui veulent obtenir santé par les prières de sainte Radegonde ou rendre leurs voeux en action de grâces pour quelque bénéfice receu, portent de petits sachets d’avoine qu’ils attachent à l’église dédiée à la sainte.” Etienne Moquot, *La vie de Sainte Radegonde jadis royne de France et fondatrice du royal monastere de Sainte-Croix de Poictiers* (Poitiers : A. Mesnier, Imprimeur du Roy, demeurant devant les Cordeliers, 1621), 1.80.

<sup>48</sup> Joseph Dumonteil, *Histoire de la vie incomparable de sainte Radegonde* (Rodez : Paul Desclaux et Amans Grandsaigne, 1627), 659.

France in the preceding century, it seems highly probable that offering oats to Radegund was an established part of Radegund's thirteenth-century cult.

Pamela Berger's study on grain goddess traditions suggests that this practice's pagan roots may have accounted for its popularity. She notes that the feast's celebration in February coincided with the annual sowing season in France and, "Since Radegund's biographers did not specify at what season the saint fled her husband, the grain miracle was easily syncretized with the early spring plowing and seeding customs."<sup>49</sup> Berger ultimately argues that it,

marked a pagan seasonal rite that was subsequently Christianized... The oats miracle legend suggests that the peasants of Poitou regarded Radegund as the protectress of their oats crop, and that at seeding time their thoughts, prayers, and even their ritual observances were directed toward this new female guardian. The church would have seen this substitution as dangerous.<sup>50</sup>

She also finds evidence for a similar hagio-folkloric tradition associated with three other women who were popularly venerated as saints with February feast days, Macrine, Walpurga, and Milburga.<sup>51</sup> The episode involving Macrine was popularized in Rabelais' sixteenth-century *La vie de Gargantua et de Pantagruel*.

Berger's study is somewhat circumspect as historiography, but nonetheless adds an interesting dynamic to our understanding of Radegund's popular cult at a time when documentary evidence is scant. The recorded offerings of oats by locals and pilgrims would have been a far cry from the dignified processions and readings overseen by canons and nuns that would have marked the feast day in Poitiers. Whether the clerics of Poitiers found this agrarian version of Radegund "dangerous" or not, they decided to embrace it when they

---

<sup>49</sup> Pamela Berger, *The Goddess Obscured: Transformation of the Grain Protectress from Goddess to Saint* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 58.

<sup>50</sup> Berger, *The Goddess Obscured*, 56.

<sup>51</sup> Berger, *The Goddess Obscured*, 55-76. Berger refers to the events of the Miracle of the Oats as the "grain goddess topos," which typically includes "passage by an arable field; arrival at the time of plowing and sowing; instigation of amazing fertility and growth; protection not only of the seed, but also of human life." (69)

incorporated the feast day into their liturgical calendar. Their decision may have been motivated by a desire among Poitevin religious to maintain control over their “official” interpretation of Radegund’s image. Whatever their reasons might have been, it is particularly interesting that the Miracle of the Oats feast day actually supplanted the existing feast day on February 28 celebrating the *inventio* of Radegund’s relics instituted by Abbess Beliarde that the section introduction for chapters two, three, and four opened with.<sup>52</sup> The spread of Radegund’s cult came full circle in Poitiers with this bridging of Radegund’s official and less-official cults as the agrarian and the monastic were celebrated together.

The institutional adoption of the Miracle of the Oats at the abbey of Sainte-Croix and the church of Sainte-Radegonde prompts the question, to what extent is it possible to determine whether the Miracle of the Oats and the ritual offering of oats at Radegund’s shrines was a “bottom up” or “top down” development? In other words, did the legend and ritual originate at the “site(s)” of the Miracle and inspire the official feast day at Poitiers, or did the official feast day provide the impetus for the spread of its observance to the rural villages? On the one hand, Lillich’s art-historical evidence and the 1303 oat miracle recorded at the church of Sainte-Radegonde suggests a Poitiers origin. However, the choice of February 28 for the Feast of the Oats, which replaced the feast commemorating the rediscovery of Radegund’s relics that marked the revitalization of her Poitiers cult in the eleventh century, minimized the proprietary role of both the canons of Sainte-Radegonde and the nuns of Sainte-Croix over their foundress’ legacy. The eleventh-century *inventio* feast centered Radegund’s relics and the site of their power in the crypt of the church of Sainte-Radegonde. This was the domain of her monastic descendants, who controlled access to

---

<sup>52</sup> For the date of February 28, see Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, 92.

Radegund's miracle-working body, oversaw feast day proceedings, and ensured that those proceedings aligned with their interests. The *inventio* feast also centered Radegund's monastic caretakers – especially the abbesses of Sainte-Croix – whose predecessor's discovery of the relics and subsequent renovations made Radegund's tomb a lucrative repository of miracles. Perhaps it was this consideration that prompted the recording of the 1303 oat-rubbing miracle in the fifteenth-century lectionary. By making an early claim to this efficacious oat miracle, the canonical church showed that pilgrims did not have to be outside the city near a “Champ de l'avoine” to celebrate the Miracle of the Oats. This all suggests that small steps in the development of the Miracle of the Oats took place both in Poitiers and at Radegund's rural cult sites simultaneously, perhaps as part of a long series of mutual responses.

But exactly where and when the Miracle of the Oats and its accompanying rituals originated is less valuable than what the legend can tell us more broadly about the cult of Radegund in social, religious, and even gendered terms. What can we make of this legend that seems to meld hagiography, biblical traditions, folklore, and even local environmental features equally? I would suggest that the development of the Miracle of the Oats as an alternative to Baudonivia's account of Radegund and Clothar's final separation responds to a growing need around the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries to soften Radegund's potentially illicit abandonment of her husband. As I argued in Chapter 1, Fortunatus recognized the potential scandal that could arise in the sixth century surrounding Radegund's escape and took strategic steps in his writing to demonstrate her lack of consent to the marriage. Perhaps this was not enough of a justification for their separation in the later Middle Ages when the institution of marriage had become fully established as an

indissoluble holy sacrament. The Miracle of the Oats mobilized biblical precedent and indisputable divine approval to legitimate Radegund's flight from her husband. Furthermore, most versions add that Clothar himself recognized Radegund's deeds as divinely sanctioned, such as Jean Bouchet's conclusion that, "Clothar thought that this miracle had been performed by the authority and power of God to make him understand that He did not want Holy Radegund to be distracted from the religious life."<sup>53</sup> The Miracle of the Oats also omits the details from Baudonivia's text where Radegund writes letters requesting Bishop Germanus' aid, thereby removing Radegund's agency in the dissolution of her marriage. A miracle from God trumps a bishop's diplomatic intervention, implying that no living person – neither saint nor even Christ's representative on earth – could interfere with the sacrament of marriage.

Without possessing the grand legacy of Radegund's Poitiers institutions, agrarian communities and small towns remembered Radegund for the ways she touched their own histories. Radegund's cult in Poitiers was shaped by her memory as a monastic foundress and rested on the spiritual authority derived from her miracle-working relics. The canons of Sainte-Radegonde and the nuns of Sainte-Croix saw themselves as continuing in Radegund's footsteps, following the same way of life within the walls of the institutions she had built and protected. The spread of Radegund's "popular" cult throughout France around the twelfth century also (literally) followed in her footsteps as churches and chapels were established in towns along her imagined route of travel. But the real significance here lies in the fact that Radegund's cult outside of Poitiers took on different meanings for different groups depending on their communal memories and even the features of their natural environment.

---

<sup>53</sup> Bouchet, *Histoire et Chronique*, book 2, folio v. 41.



As we saw in the last chapter, this versatility carried Radegund far beyond the scope of her remembered travels to places like England and Sicily where she never set foot. As we will see in the next section, Radegund's popular rural identity in France as protectress of agriculture together with her role as a Merovingian dynastic saint in Norman England and Sicily would pave the way for centuries of connection to the ruling families of France as a symbol of secular power.

### *Charles VII*

As we saw in the last chapter, Radegund was celebrated as early as the twelfth century as a Merovingian dynastic saint by Norman elites and their descendants in England and Sicily. During this time, Radegund's Poitiers institutions continued to receive the royal privileges and protections they had benefited from since their foundation. But it is not until the fifteenth century that we see French kings take a personal interest in Radegund herself. Scholars specializing in manuscript conservation and patronage have offered a variety of reasons for the appropriation of Radegund by the House of Valois during the tumultuous time of the Hundred Years' War. As suggested by Christian de Mérindol, King Charles VII would have recognized Radegund as a symbol of Poitiers, the site where he established his second Parlement after fleeing from Paris. Mérindol likewise notes that, as the sainted wife of the Frankish king Clothar, Radegund was a symbol of royal legitimacy for the Valois.<sup>54</sup> Veronique Day also considers the symbolic potential of Radegund. During a time of renewed royal interest in relics of the Passion, Radegund's acquisition of a fragment of the True Cross and her promotion of its cult in the sixth century made it possible for the Valois to establish a

---

<sup>54</sup> Christian de Mérindol, "Le Culte de sainte Radegonde et la monarchie française à la fin du Moyen Age," *Les Religieuses dans le cloître et dans le monde des origines à nos jours* (Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 1994), 792.

symbolic spiritual connection with the Merovingian legacy. As a promoter of peace, Day writes that Radegund was also a particularly good model for royal women. She was “the quintessential muse of defiant political success and unshakeable faith, very much like Joan of Arc.”<sup>55</sup> These scholars share a strong tendency to focus on the symbolic merits of Radegund, but none have suggested that there might be a more substantial – even geographical – explanation for her appropriation by the Valois in the fifteenth century.

During the Hundred Years’ War, Charles moved his court to Bourges in 1419 and set up his Parlement in Poitiers.<sup>56</sup> In 1425 he moved his court to Chinon, and by 1444 he had relocated to Tours, which became the royal capital until the kings of France finally returned to Paris in 1523.<sup>57</sup> For the greater part of his life, Charles was disconnected from the Parisian seat of French royal power. Disparagingly referred to as the “king of Bourges” by his contemporaries, this “king without a kingdom”<sup>58</sup> would have needed to forge a royal identity for himself in the Loire Valley. Luckily, Charles would not have needed to look very far for inspiration.

As the first section of this chapter demonstrated, there was a particularly high concentration of Radegund’s cult sites in the Loire Valley and, in fact, it is difficult to find a place Charles went during his four decades in the Loire that did *not* celebrate the memory of Radegund. Jean de Berry had introduced Radegund’s cult to Bourges seven years before Charles’ arrival there. When Charles established his Parlement in Poitiers, he naturally would

---

<sup>55</sup> Veronique Day, “Recycling Radegund: Identity and ambition in the Breviary of Anne de Prie,” *Excavating the Medieval Image: Manuscripts, Artists, Audiences* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2004), 160.

<sup>56</sup> Jonathan Sumption, *The Hundred Years War*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 572 ; 592.

<sup>57</sup> Bernard Chevalier, *Tours ville royale, 1356-1520 : origine et développement d'une capitale à la fin du Moyen Age* (Chambray : C.L.D., 1983), 11.

<sup>58</sup> Chevalier, *Tours ville royale*, 123; Gaston du Fresne de Beaucourt, *Histoire de Charles VII*, Volume 6 (Paris: Librairie de la Société bibliographique, 1881), vi. ; “king of Bourges” in Malcolm Vale, *Charles VII* (University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1974), 3.

have been immersed in Radegund's legacy. Chinon and Tours were likewise important centers for Radegund's cult and only a short distance from Saix, the site of Radegund's royal villa and the popular thirteenth century Miracle of the Oats. Charles did not stay long in his new capital of Tours, but traveled from chateau to chateau in the Loire with his extensive entourage.<sup>59</sup> These journeys would have exposed him to numerous other sites of Radegund's cult, such as Sainte-Radegonde-de-Marconnay,<sup>60</sup> Vouillé,<sup>61</sup> Sainte-Radegonde-en-Gâtine,<sup>62</sup> Dercé,<sup>63</sup> Sainte-Radegonde-de-Mirebeau,<sup>64</sup> and many others.<sup>65</sup>

The constant exposure to this Radegundian landscape could not have failed to make an impression on Charles, his family, the members of his entourage, and the many French nobles who established themselves in the Loire and began building lavish chateaux. As he

---

<sup>59</sup> Chevalier, *Tours ville royale*, 123.

<sup>60</sup> The chapel dedicated to Radegund here dates back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest written record that this village was named for Radegund comes from 1461: *Sainte Ragond de Marconnay*. Cited in Louis Rédet, "Sainte-Radegonde-de-Marconnay," *Dictionnaire topographique du département de la Vienne comprenant les noms de lieu anciens et modernes* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1881), 389.

<sup>61</sup> The Église Sainte-Radegonde was rebuilt in 1099 after a fire as noted in Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 421. It was a dependent of the Chapitre de Sainte-Radegonde in Poitiers as early as 1250. Charles VII authorized the fortification of the church and burgus of Vouillé according to letters patent from April 7, 1431 to the Chapitre de Sainte-Radegonde. Cited in Rédet, "Vouillé," *Dictionnaire topographique*, 446.

<sup>62</sup> The church here was dedicated to Radegund by 1383, according to Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 423. The parish of Sainte-Radegonde-en-Gâtine was part of the diocese of Poitiers as early as the fourteenth century when it was cited by bishop Gauthier de Bruges (1279-1305) who composed a cartulary laying out the organization of the diocese of Poitiers into subdivisions. (f<sup>o</sup>175) Cited in Rédet, *Dictionnaire topographique*, xiv.

<sup>63</sup> Mentioned by Louis Trincant in a collection of place names and families in the Loudun region he composed at the beginning of the seventeenth century. He was procurer du roi au bailliage de Loudun. "In the parish of Dercé there is a very old chapel of Saint Radegonde...where they no longer perform any service. But many still make pilgrimages there and the inhabitants of the parish have a custom of going there in procession on the first Sunday of the month. They say that this chapel was built on the site where Saint Radegonde rested on her way from Chinon to Poitiers." The earliest written record of the Chapelle Sainte Radegonde de Dercé is 1547, but if Trincant described it as "très antienne" at the beginning of the seventeenth century, there is a very good chance it was built around or before the fifteenth century. Cited in Rédet, "Sainte-Radegonde, chapelle détruite," *Dictionnaire topographique*, 388.

<sup>64</sup> The earliest mention of a church dedicated to Radegund here is the *Ecclesia Sanctae Radegundis de Burgunio* in a papal bull from 1102 written by Pope Paschal II for the abbey of Vézelay, ap. Bibl. Cluniac. notes, col. 133. The village was originally named for the *villa Burgundio*, first recorded in 974. Cited in Rédet, "Sainte-Radegonde, Mirebeau," *Dictionnaire topographique*, 389. The church is now called the Eglise Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption de Mirebeau but it remains attached to the parish of Sainte-Radegonde en Haut-Poitou.

<sup>65</sup> [See the digital map.](#)

shaped his royal identity in the Loire Valley, Charles would have recognized the merits of publicly expressing a devotion to Radegund. His position was a tenuous one and his appropriation of a saint who was both the object of popular local devotion and a link to the royal dynasty of the Merovingians was a deliberate strategy to bolster his reputation on both a local and a political level.

Charles VII was by no means the first member of the ruling elite to take an interest in Radegund's cult. However, royal involvement in the cult of Radegund had been mostly limited to the support of Radegund's institutions in Poitiers. Since the foundation of Radegund's convent in 552, members of the ruling family and the local nobility had taken a continuously active interest in the Abbaye Sainte-Croix which benefited from privileges, patronage, reform programs, and a steady stream of royal abbesses. Most significantly, Anne d'Orléans, the sister of King Louis XII, was abbess of Sainte-Croix from 1484-1491.<sup>66</sup>

What was new in the fifteenth century was the way that Charles and his heirs reinterpreted Radegund's image to serve a new particularly lay agenda for the kingdom of France. These new interpretations of Radegund drew on specific aspects of her life and character, reformulating them into images that were useful and relevant to fifteenth-century French royal and lay needs. In particular, Radegund's non-monastic role as a peacemaker and her position as a chaste holy queen allowed for the translation of her image in the fifteenth century into a protectress of France against the English invaders and a model of comportment for elite and royal lay women. It is also around this time that Radegund was first depicted in

---

<sup>66</sup> Dorothe Kleinmann, *Radegonde: Une Sainte Européenne, vénération et lieux de vénération dans les pays germanophones* (Loudun: PSR éditions, 2000), 45.

artistic representations with the fleur-de-lis, a symbol of royalty particularly emphasized by the Valois to associate them with Clovis and the legacy of the Merovingian dynasty.<sup>67</sup>

The adoption of Radegund as the Valois patroness cannot be explained by Radegund's symbolic merits alone. As foundress of the Merovingian dynasty, queen Clotilde, Radegund's sainted mother-in-law, would have satisfied the symbolic needs of the Valois far better than Radegund herself. Clotilde was instrumental in the conversion of Clovis and the entire Frankish kingdom, she fought to protect the patrimony of her three grandsons, she established several religious foundations, and she retired to the Abbey of Saint-Martin at Tours where she later died and was buried. Clotilde fulfilled the duties of wife, mother, and queen, whereas Radegund abandoned her husband and her royal position at court. But unlike Clotilde, Radegund's cult was so widespread that by the fifteenth century, there were nearly fifty churches and chapels dedicated to her memory in France alone. It was the physical exposure to the Radegundian geography of the Loire that was instrumental in the Valois appropriation of Radegund.

### ***How Jean de Berry Decoupled Radegund from Monastic Poitiers***

Charles would have first encountered Saint Radegund in his grand-uncle's Saint-Chapelle at Bourges. In 1412, seven years before Charles' arrival in Bourges, Jean de Berry received permission to open Radegund's tomb and secure some of her relics for his sumptuous palace chapel, modeled after the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris. The significance of this event – or rather the portrayal of its significance in literature, art, and the liturgical calendar of the church of Sainte-Radegonde in Poitiers – marks the dramatic beginning of the Valois devotion to Radegund.

---

<sup>67</sup> Mérindol, "Le Culte de sainte Radegonde," 791.

As recorded by the Poitiers historian Jean Bouchet in his 1517 *Histoire et cronicque de Clotaire premier de ce nom et de sa tresillustre espouse madame sainte Radegonde*, it was due to "la grande et singulière dévotion qu'il avoit à sainte Radegonde," that Jean de Berry, then also count of Poitiers, was able to secure the consent of the prior and canons of Sainte-Radegonde to open her tomb on May 28, 1412.<sup>68</sup> The bishop of Poitiers and other prelates accompanied Jean into the crypt with great ceremony and when the masons opened the marble tomb, even though she had been buried for over eight centuries, they found the body of the holy queen more fragrant than balsam and completely intact with veil, crown, and hands folded. Although Jean had received permission to take her head and the two rings she was buried with, Radegund herself had other ideas. Jean had successfully removed Radegund's wedding ring, but when he attempted to take the second ring – the ring that signified her religious profession – Radegund's finger curled around it. Further, when he touched her skull to remove it from the tomb, a supernatural light filled the crypt and the lid of the tomb shut itself up "sans œuvre d'homme." Jean contented himself with his trophy, but as he turned to go, one of the masons threw himself before the tomb. His eye had been badly injured by a stray piece of marble when the tomb was opened but "par la grande espérance qu'il eut d'avoir soudain guérison," he had kept his wound secret and had waited patiently for the saint's intervention. He then begged that he be allowed to touch Radegund's ring to his eye. Not only was the mason's injury immediately healed, but his eyesight was restored so that it was even better than it had been before.<sup>69</sup>

Either due to the efforts of Jean de Berry or the canons of Sainte-Radegonde, this miraculous event was memorialized in several different ways which created the first of many

---

<sup>68</sup> Jean Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, book 4, folio 88.

<sup>69</sup> Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, book 4, fol. 89.

very tangible links between the Valois and Radegund. The assembled crowd was so amazed by these three miracles that it was soon decided that the event should be solemnized with a special service every year to commemorate the opening of the tomb. Bouchet writes that he saw and read about this service and notes a few lines in his *Histoire et cronicque*.<sup>70</sup>

The opening of the tomb was also commemorated with a mural and an inscription, as related in several more recent histories of Radegund. In his 1621 *La vie de Sainte Radegonde*, Père Etienne Moquot provides us with the now lost inscription:

In the year 1412, the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, Jean – words illegible – ruler in France, accompanied by several prelates, canons, and others, opened the tomb of Saint Radegund, where he found the corpse in the same condition in which she was buried, and from her hands where there were found two rings, the said duke took that of the king Clothar [her wedding ring], and immediately she withdrew her hand to retain her ring of the religious life.<sup>71</sup>

Moquot also stated that the mural was located behind the choir on the left side at Sainte-Radegonde. Antoine René Hyacinthe Thibaudeau confirms this in his 1839 *Histoire de Poitou*, adding that there was a second mural on the right side depicting the injured mason receiving his cure by touching the ring to his eye.<sup>72</sup>

This event represents the first recorded miracle to have occurred for the benefit of the Valois family through Radegund's intercession. It also implies that there might have been some resistance on the part of the canons of the church of Sainte-Radegonde to Jean de Berry's attempt to decouple Radegund from her monastic milieu. As I noted in Chapter 2, Radegund (her physical body as well as her memory) was a crucial source of the spiritual authority claimed by her monastic foundations. Jean de Berry's position as count of Poitou

---

<sup>70</sup> "Commence le respons des premières vespres , Electi à regalibus , nolite, etc., et la collecte Omnipotens Deus , gui B. ancillam; et Pintroïte de la messe commence , SS. Radis reginæ visionem sacri corporis , etc." Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, book 4, fol. 89.

<sup>71</sup> Moquot, *La vie de Sainte Radegonde*, 572.

<sup>72</sup> Antoine-René-Hyacinthe Thibaudeau, *Histoire du Poitou*, tome I (Robin, 1839), 208.

gained him permission to remove three relics: Radegund's skull, her wedding ring, and her ring of religious profession. It does not seem like a coincidence that "Radegund" only allowed him to remove her wedding ring – a symbol of her secular position as wife and queen. "Her" refusal to relinquish the skull and religious ring certainly benefited the canons who did not have to part with the most significant relics of their holy foundress. If Radegund's skull was allowed to permanently reside in Bourges, that would significantly dampen the enthusiasm of pilgrims for Poitiers. The yearly ceremony and commemorative inscription celebrated Radegund's monastic identity by reinforcing her resistance to Jean's efforts. The miraculous healing of the mason's eye, recorded by Jean Bouchet but *not* by the canons in the commemorative inscription, acted as a public demonstration of the authenticity and efficacy of Jean's new relic, confirming Radegund's willingness to become the Valois patroness.

Jean de Berry made a "grosse" offering to the church of Sainte-Radegonde (likely to placate the canons) and when he returned to his Sainte-Chapelle in Bourges with Radegund's ring, he displayed it together with images of her and several other saints.<sup>73</sup> This relic served to associate Radegund with Bourges, with the Valois, and since it resided in Jean's Sainte-Chapelle, it also evoked connections with the ruling seat of Paris.

### ***Charles VII and Radegund's Sacred Landscape***

After Jean de Berry's death four years later, and after the death of Jean's immediate heir, Jean of Touraine, Charles VII inherited his grand-uncle's titles of Duke of Berry and Count of Poitiers in 1417 and established his Parlement in Poitiers.<sup>74</sup> Here, Charles would

---

<sup>73</sup> Bouchet, *Histoire et chronique*, fol. 89 ; J. Guiffrey, *Inventaires de Jean duc de Berry (1401-1416)* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1894), n°1274, inv. 1401-1403.

<sup>74</sup> Mérindol, "Le Culte de sainte Radegonde," 790.



have been completely immersed in Radegund's legacy. Her two foundations, the Abbaye Sainte-Croix and Église Sainte-Radegonde were influential institutions in Poitiers and Charles, as well as members of his court, would have regularly come into contact with them.

In Poitiers, Radegund was a fundamental aspect of the religious and political identities of these two institutions which actively promoted a particularly monastic image of their holy foundress. Outside of Poitiers, however, these monastic foundations no longer held the monopoly on their patroness' intercession or identity. As we saw in the first part of this chapter, devotees venerated Radegund in the places where she left physical traces in the landscape during her travels before the start of her monastic life. The miraculous springs she produced to slack her thirst and her footsteps preserved in stone became regional pilgrimage destinations where Radegund's intercession could be attained without visiting her entombed relics in Poitiers.

In addition to these local interpretations of Radegund's cult, Charles would also have been exposed to another, more widespread popular image of Radegund. The newly invented tradition of the Miracle of the Oats, as discussed earlier, is significant to our understanding of the impact of Charles' geographic space in a number of ways. By the fourteenth century, the canons of Sainte-Radegonde would celebrate the Miracle of the Oats as an official feast day on February 28 at the Abbey of Sainte-Croix.<sup>75</sup> But its importance to the lay rural population of the Loire is shown by fact that the *Champs des Avoines* ("Field of Oats"), where the "Miracle of the Oats" occurred, was claimed by half a dozen villages which all appear to have had slightly different traditions and customs associated with the feast day. Whether Charles himself ever personally witnessed any local celebrations of the Miracle of the Oats

---

<sup>75</sup> Favreau, *Sainte-Radegonde*, 11.

cannot be determined with any certainty. However, it is worth restating that the legend appears in Poitevin historian Jean Bouchet's *Histoire et Cronique* (1517) and in the breviary of Anne de Prie. Even though Anne de Prie belonged to the monastic milieu of Poitiers, she was also part of the wealthy Prie family as the numerous – in fact, almost excessive – display of coats of arms in her breviary attests to. The book is full of rich illustrations depicting several portraits of Anne herself, biblical imagery, and some select scenes from Radegund's life, including the Miracle of the Oats. The "Miracle of the Oats" eventually became a legitimate Poitiers feast day, but it may have begun as a popular rural legend in regions Charles and his royal entourage frequented.

Chinon, as discussed in the first part of this chapter, was one of these sites infused with the memory of Radegund and, I would argue, perhaps played the greatest role of all in shaping Charles' identification with the holy queen. Just twenty kilometers from Radegund's villa at Saix, Chinon had been an important seat of political power for the kings of both France and England since the twelfth century and was even more so when Charles and his wife, Marie d'Anjou, moved the royal court there in 1425. I already related how the memory of Radegund's visit to Chinon's cave-chapel served to supplant its earlier dedication to Jean the Recluse in the twelfth century. In 1428, just one year before Charles' famous meeting with Joan of Arc, Marie d'Anjou gave birth to a daughter in Chinon. The little princess, Radeconde de Valois, was born in August, the month of her name sake's feast day.<sup>76</sup> Little is known about Radeconde de Valois, except that she died in Tours in 1445 shortly after she returned on foot from a pilgrimage to the Basilica of Notre-Dame de l'Epine.<sup>77</sup> Princess

---

<sup>76</sup> Chevalier, *Tours ville royale*, 134.

<sup>77</sup> P.L Carrez, *Étude sur le château de Sarry, ancienne campagne des évêques de Châlons-sur-Marne* (Châlons: Martin Frères, 1899).

Radegonde was buried in the Cathedral of Saint-Gatien in Tours, which was just across the river from Tours' church of Sainte-Radegonde that contained the caves in which Gatien used to secretly celebrate mass.<sup>78</sup> Possibly more so than any of Charles' other associations with Radegund, his choice to name his daughter after the royal saint carries an important significance. The name itself was not very popular. In fact, this is the only other royal woman in the history of France to have ever been named Radegonde.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, it cannot be a coincidence that Charles chose it. His travels in the Loire, and in particular, his time at Chinon, the site of the Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde, clearly played a crucial role in Charles' devotion to Radegund.

### ***Radegund's New Royal Iconography***

From village to royal court, Radegund took on new meanings for a wider audience than ever before in the fifteenth century. The Radegund that Charles and the Valois family appropriated was not a saint whose miracle working abilities were limited to the cloister, nor was she so perfect in her humility as to reject her worldly status as queen. Rather, the new texts and images produced during the fifteenth century emphasized Radegund's royal status and her ability to work miracles outside the convent for the protection of the people of France. This new conception of Radegund as a patroness of secular power was reflected in what became her new standard depiction. Beginning in the fifteenth century, Radegund was almost exclusively portrayed as a half-nun half-queen wearing a Benedictine nun's habit,

---

<sup>78</sup> de Beaucourt, *Histoire de Charles VII*, vol. 4, p. 94, note 4.

<sup>79</sup> Favreau, "Le Culte de Sainte-Radegonde," 107 ; Joseph Salvini, "Un demi-millenaire. La delivrance de la Normandie en 1450 et le culte de sainte Radegonde," *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest* Ser. 4, vol. 1 (1950/51): 489.

crowned, holding a book in one hand and a scepter in the other, and wrapped in a blue cloak embroidered with gold fleur-de-lis.<sup>80</sup>

The fleur-de-lis on an azure field was the traditional arms of the kingdom of France and, as noted earlier, the fleur-de-lis was a symbol of royalty particularly emphasized by the Valois to associate them with Clovis and the legacy of the Merovingian dynasty.<sup>81</sup> The pontifical and missal executed for Jean de Berry in 1404-1407 (Latin 8886) contains one of the earliest portrayals of Radegund wearing the blue fleur-de-lis cloak. In a painting by the “Master of Luçon,” Radegund is shown kneeling before a stone altar. Her hands are clasped in prayer and she holds a fleur-de-lis tipped scepter in the crook of her arm. She is crowned both with a golden nimbus of sainthood and with a gold crown tipped with fleur-de-lis. Underneath her blue cloak embroidered with fleur-de-lis, she is wearing a black Benedictine nun’s habit.<sup>82</sup> According to an inventory from the Sainte-Chapelle in Bourges, Jean de Berry donated this book to their treasury around the time it was made.<sup>83</sup> It is even possible that this book was displayed to visitors alongside Radegund’s relic at his Sainte-Chapelle to further reinforce her connection to secular power in Bourges outside her monastic milieu of Poitiers.

If we compare this image of Radegund with one that appears in a psalter produced twenty years earlier for prince Alphonso of England, we can see a drastic difference in

---

<sup>80</sup> See plates in Michel Laverret, “L’iconographie de sainte Radegonde dans les manuscrits,” *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de L’Ouest et des Mudées de Poitiers*, 5<sup>e</sup> série, tome II, 2<sup>e</sup> trimestre de 1988.

<sup>81</sup> Mérindol, “Le Culte de sainte Radegonde,” 791; See also Michel Pastoureau, *Heraldry: its origins and meaning* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2010), 99-100, “In the 14th-century French writers asserted that the monarchy of France, which developed from the Kingdom of the West Franks, could trace its heritage back to the divine gift of royal arms received by Clovis. This story has remained popular, even though modern scholarship has established that the fleur-de-lis was a religious symbol before it was a true heraldic symbol. Until the late 14th century the French royal coat of arms was Azure semé-de-lis Or (a blue shield “sown” (semé) with a scattering of small golden fleurs-de-lis), but Charles V of France changed the design from an all-over scattering to a group of three in about 1376.”

<sup>82</sup> *Pontificale-missale Johannis, ducis Bituricensis*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS lat. 8886, c. 1404-1407.

<sup>83</sup> *État des joyaux, ornements, livres et autres objets remis à Arnoul Belin, trésorier de la Sainte-Chapelle du palais de Bourges, par Robinet d’Estampes, garde des joyaux du duc de Berry*. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS nal. 1363, c. 1404-1407.

iconography. In this manuscript, commissioned as a gift for prince Alphonso by his father king Edward I on the occasion of his marriage to Margaret, Radegund is portrayed only in the black garb of a Benedictine nun with a nimbus.<sup>84</sup> According to Lucy Freeman Sandler's catalogue of gothic manuscripts from 1285-1385, this psalter is one of the best examples of the "Court Style" of manuscript illumination which imitated the style of the French royal court at Paris.<sup>85</sup> Nonetheless, it is the monastic image of Radegund that appears in the Alphonso psalter without any suggestion of Radegund's royal status. As Veronique Day notes, "By the later fifteenth century, when the religious fervor typical of earlier medieval monasticism had yielded to increasingly worldly concerns, earlier images of spiritual force and mystic desire gave way to the more standardized images of iconic figures bearing stock attributes."<sup>86</sup> After Jean de Berry's pontifical and missal, Radegund's iconography became standardized as the half-queen half-nun. Her now standard crown and blue fleur-de-lis cloak bolstered the claim that she was the patroness of French royalty. This claim was further reinforced in later Valois manuscripts which depict Radegund standing alongside the books' patrons, together with their coats of arms. The Alphonso psalter, despite its artistic influence from the French court, may have circumvented the standard depiction of a royal Radegund to avoid celebrating a decidedly "French" queen in favor of a less politically charged monastic depiction of this internationally popular saint.

Charles VII's daughter-in-law, Charlotte de Savoie, commissioned a copy of the *Life of Radegund* around 1470 (Français 5718).<sup>87</sup> On the first page of this manuscript, Charlotte is

---

<sup>84</sup> *The Alphonso Psalter*. London, The British Library, MS 24686, c. 1284-1316.

<sup>85</sup> Lucy F. Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts, 1285-1385* (London: H. Miller Publishers, 1986,) II, no. 1.

<sup>86</sup> Day, "Recycling Radegund," 161.

<sup>87</sup> *Vie, miracles et office de sainte Radegonde*. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS Français 5718. Dated to 1470-1480 and identified as belonging to Charlotte de Savoie by François Avril, "Un portrait inédit de la reine Charlotte de Savoie" (Paris : Bibliothèque nationale, 1985), 256.

depicted kneeling in prayer before Radegund and two of Radegund's nuns, possibly Agnes, Disciola, or Baudonivia. While Charlotte's crown has been laid to one side of the cloth she kneels upon, Radegund wears the double crown and nimbus that indicates her secular position as queen and her holy status as a saint. Radegund appears according to her new standard depiction: a Benedictine nun's habit under a voluminous blue cloak embroidered with fleur-de-lis. In her hands she holds the usual book and a fleur-de-lis tipped scepter. Charlotte's coat of arms, now almost entirely rubbed away, are borne by two angels just below the scene.

Charles' second cousin, Louis XII, who became king after Charles VIII in 1498, likewise commissioned a *Life of Radegund* around the year 1500. The first full-page miniature represents Saint Radegund standing behind Louis XII as dauphin, who adores Christ on the cross. Louis' arms, together with those of his wife, Anne de Bretagne, and the royal house of France appear in the border. The last miniature shows Louis and Anne kneeling together and praying before the Virgin Mary, with Radegund standing behind them.<sup>88</sup>

In all of these cases, Radegund appears as the French royal patroness whose special connection with the Valois dynasty serves to emphasize the unbroken succession of kings that reaches back to the Merovingians.

### ***Radegund as the Protectress of France***

And thus it was that the said recovery [of Normandy] was made on the twelfth day of August in the year 1450, which is the eve of the feast of Saint

---

<sup>88</sup> "Lot 23: Vie et Legende de Madame Sainte Radegonde," Catalogue of Ninety-One Manuscripts on Vellum Illuminated by English (Anglo-Saxon), Byzantine, French, Flemish, Dutch, Burgundian, German, Italian and Spanish Artists, of The VIIth to the XVIIth Century, chiefly from The Famous Hamilton Collection, and till lately in the possession of The Royal Museum of Berlin, Auction 23 May 1889 by Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, London 1889, 27. Also cited in *Manuscrits et livres précieux retrouvés en Allemagne* (Paris : Bibliothèque nationale, exposition organisée par la Commission de récupération artistique, 1949), 11, no.8.

Radegonde. To render grade unto God, the good king by the deliberation of his council ordered general processions from then on perpetually throughout all the cities of his realm, the 14<sup>th</sup> day of October, except in the city of Poitiers, where he wanted the said procession to be made the said day of the completion of the said recovery, which would be the day before the said feast of Saint Radegund, because he thought the said thing (the recovery of Normandy) to have occurred so suddenly, not by strength but by the aid of God, and the merits and prayers of our Lady and the said Saint, and that's what he wrote to a Patriarch, then bishop of Poitiers, of which letter I have seen a copy.<sup>89</sup>

One of King Charles VII's greatest victories in the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453) was the recapture of Cherbourg, which expelled the last of the English troops from Normandy. According to Père Etienne Moquot, writing about a century later, the fact that Charles publicly attributed this triumph to Radegund's intercession demonstrates his "*bonne & grande deuotion*" to this saint who "not only loved noble French blood during her life, but afterwards as well."<sup>90</sup>

The connection between Radegund and French secular power was reinforced by this military victory that transformed her into a protectress of France whose miracle working abilities extended beyond the sacred space of her tomb. The Hundred Years' War was the defining feature of Charles VII's ascendancy and reign. I will not attempt to relate the complexities of this series of conflicts between the kingdoms of France and England which began over disputed claims to the French throne between the English House of Plantagenet and the French House of Valois. But what concerns us here is the nationalistic character of the wars and how Radegund's fifteenth-century identity as a decidedly French "national" saint emerged from that context. As Anne Curry suggests, "ideas of national identity

---

<sup>89</sup> Moquot, *La vie de Sainte Radegonde*, 531-532.

<sup>90</sup> Moquot, *La vie de Sainte Radegonde*, 532-533.

hardened” during this “war between peoples” played a significant role in the development of France and England into nation states.<sup>91</sup>

In 1450, the last English stronghold in Normandy was Cherbourg. When the French army under Charles VII’s command retook the city on August 12, the eve of Radegund’s feast day, Charles attributed his victory to Radegund’s special intervention. He instituted a national procession to commemorate the event, and his wife, Marie d’Anjou, placed a lamp in Radegund’s tomb in Poitiers to burn perpetually to thank her for the reconquest of Normandy.<sup>92</sup> For Charles, Radegund’s power was not limited to her tomb. But, as king of France *and* count of Poitou, his special devotion to Radegund – the patroness of the capital of Poitou – also symbolized French royal proprietorship over the region. Because Charles’ exposure to Radegund had been filtered through non-monastic lay interpretations in the Loire Valley, he conceived of Radegund’s power as something that could not only be removed from her monastic geography of Poitiers, but could act in the service of the Valois cause and the people of France.

This image of Radegund as a protectress of the French people was drawn from her historical role as peacemaker among the warring Frankish tribes as related by Baudonivia,

She was always solicitous for peace and always worked diligently for the welfare of the fatherland... Whenever she heard that bitterness was arising between them, trembling all over, she directed such letters to one and then to the other entreating them not to make war amongst themselves, nor to take up arms, but to establish peace, lest the land perish. Likewise, she directed letters to their nobles, asking them to give the high kings good counsel so that their reign would restore the welfare of the people and the land... By her intercession, there was peace among the kings...<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Anne Curry, *The Hundred Years' War, 1337-1453* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003), 92.

<sup>92</sup> Favreau, *Sainte-Radegonde*, 12.

<sup>93</sup> “Semper de pace sollicita, semper de salute patriæ curiosa, quandoquidem inter se regna movebantur, quia totos diligebat reges, pro omnium vita orabat, & nos sine intermissione pro eorum stabilitate orare docebat: ubi vero inter se ad amaritudinem eos moveri audisset, tota tremebat, & quales litteras uni, tales dirigebat alteri, ut



However, in the fifteenth century, this role was reimagined within the contemporary context of the wars between England and France. As Veronique Day states, Radegund became “a symbol of French resilience in response to the English.”<sup>94</sup> But this symbolic role was grounded in geographical implications. For Radegund to become a national French saint and patroness of the Valois she had to be disengaged from Poitiers as the exclusive site of her power and identity. This disengagement did not come easily. Just as the canons of the church of Sainte-Radegonde sought to retain their monopoly on Radegund’s physical remains by commemorating Jean de Berry’s failure to remove her corporal relics, we also see a desire on the part of Poitevins to ensure that Radegund remained their special patroness. As Robert Favreau relates, the annual procession instituted by Charles to commemorate the deliverance of Normandy took on a special meaning for Poitevins. Until 1789, the deliverance of Normandy was celebrated in Poitiers as a procession honoring Radegund herself, rather than Charles’ victory.<sup>95</sup> Nonetheless, Charles’ acknowledgement of Radegund’s patriotic intervention of restoring Normandy to the French Crown would go on to become the enduring foundation of her identity. As I show in the following chapters, over the next several centuries, this event would be drawn on again and again as evidence of the Catholic monarchy’s legitimacy and divine right to rule.

---

inter se non bella, nec arma tractarent, sed pacem firmarent, patriæ ne perirent. Similiter & ad eorum proceres dirigebat, ut præcelsis regibus consilia ministrarent, ut eis regnantibus, populi & patria salubrior redderetur...Et intercedente ea, pax regum...” Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 10.16.

<sup>94</sup> Day, “Recycling Radegund,” 161.

<sup>95</sup> Favreau, *Sainte-Radegonde*, 12.

## Chapter 5

### **Perfect Wife or Virginal Abbess?**

#### **The Vernacular Radegund as a Model of Sanctity for Elite Women in Sixteenth-Century France and England**

This chapter considers two sixteenth-century rewritings of Radegund's life, Henry Bradshaw's (d. 1513) Middle English *Lyfe of Saynt Radegunde*, printed posthumously in 1525 by Richard Pynson in London, and Jean Bouchet's (1476-1557) French *Histoire et cronicque de Clotaire premier de ce nom et de sa tresillustre espouse madame sainte Radegonde*, printed in 1517 by Enguilbert de Marnef in Poitiers and Paris. These two texts are remarkable for being the first vernacular printed lives of Radegund, and they signify an important stage in the development of Radegund's international cult. Through a close reading of Bradshaw's English *Lyfe* against Bouchet's contemporaneous French biography, I consider how Radegund's legacy was reshaped in response to new needs, expectations, and concerns. By situating these texts in the social, political, and specifically religious contexts in which they were produced, I also consider what they can tell us more broadly about Radegund's cult in England and France in the early sixteenth century.

Like earlier textual and artistic images of Radegund, these sixteenth-century publications were political and devotional objects that promoted both the holiness of their subject and the personal interests of their authors. What distinguishes them from all preceding *Lives of Radegund* is their intentional appeal to a wider audience. While all the earlier *Lives* were written within an ecclesiastical context for a primarily ecclesiastical audience, Bradshaw and Bouchet's *Lives* were composed in the vernacular and published with printers in major cities where they were sold to the public.

Bradshaw and Bouchet both aspired to bring Radegund to the public through the printed word. And yet, like the earth's two magnetic poles, the forces of their own institutional concerns served to pull her in opposite directions as both authors rewrote the same traditional story for very different reasons. At the turn of the sixteenth century in England, Bradshaw was confronted with the dissolution of St. Radegund's Priory in Cambridge and the need to mount a defense for Benedictine monasticism. Across the channel in Poitiers several decades later, Bouchet's native city was destabilized by a violent abbatial conflict that brought armed troops into Radegund's convent. As an aspiring court poet, Bouchet also had his own interests in appealing to the royal family by rewriting the life of this Merovingian queen.

While both authors use "Radegund's" voice to promote their own different institutional concerns, they also conform their writing to the same conventions that pervaded their shared intellectual community in two important ways. Firstly, they rewrite, tone down, and emphasize different aspects of Radegund's *Life* to make her more appealing as a role model for elite and non-elite women. Despite their wide address to women in general, they both tailor this exemplarity to specific groups. While Bradshaw the monk reconstructs Radegund as a virgin and an abbess, Bouchet the bourgeois *procureur* imagines her as the perfect wife. Secondly, their *Lives* share the same emphasis on historical research, local history, source criticism, classicizing elements, and attention to rhetoric and style that characterized humanist scholarship. But they combined these practices with an interest in miracles, relics, local cultic practices, folklore, and other elements of traditional hagiography. Striving for balance between tradition and innovation, they reinterpreted this well-known saint to reflect the new literary and evidentiary expectations of their readers. Their choice to

adapt these expectations to the *Vita Radegundis* in the form of a vernacular “translation” gave them the flexibility to go beyond the original Latin texts to express their own religious, political, and intellectual interests.

Lastly, Bradshaw and Bouchet are the first authors to include the Miracle of the Oats as an incorporated part of Radegund's history. This is particularly significant because all earlier texts kept this legend distinct from the events of Radegund's life by listing it in the miracles section. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Miracle of the Oats originated sometime around the thirteenth century and its accompanying rituals began as a local phenomenon that later became a feast day in Poitiers. Bradshaw and Bouchet's incorporation of this miracle, and particularly Bouchet's addition of the most recent miracles from the Poitiers legendary, demonstrate an interest in reconstructing Radegund as a saint for all.

Henry Bradshaw and Jean Bouchet rewrote the *Life of Radegund* in response to their own concerns and those of their individual communities. This resulted in two very different adaptations of the same story, which nonetheless retained enough traditional elements to infuse these vernacular translations with much of the legitimacy of the original Latin versions. Both authors conformed their texts to humanist conventions and recreated Radegund as an exemplar for the “modern” sixteenth-century woman. In doing so, they were able to inject a sense of relevancy into the narrative of this sixth-century saint and contribute to the spread of her cult in the sixteenth century.

### ***Henry Bradshaw and Jean Bouchet***

Henry Bradshaw was a Benedictine monk at the abbey of St. Werburge in Chester. He was ordained subdeacon in 1499, and one year later he was ordained deacon and priest.

His community sent him to study theology at Gloucester College in Oxford.<sup>1</sup> When he returned to Chester, he wrote his *Lyfe and History of Saynt Werburge* the year of his death in 1513, and the *Lyfe of Saynt Radegunde* sometime before that. Both texts are written in “rhyme royal,” like the popular hagiographic work of John Capgrave and Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*.<sup>2</sup> In the 5600-line *Lyfe of Werburge*, Bradshaw combines an extensive history of his abbey and the town of Chester with Werburge’s life and her family’s genealogy. The *Lyfe of Radegunde* is only a fraction of the length and represents, as Bradshaw declares, a “poore translacion” of this Frankish saint’s “lyfe historiall” from Latin into English.<sup>3</sup> However, Bradshaw made such considerable changes and embellishments that the *Lyfe of Radegunde* is more his own work than a mere translation. Both texts were published posthumously by Richard Pynson, who succeeded William Faques as King’s Printer in 1506 for Henry VII and subsequently for Henry VIII.<sup>4</sup>

Considerably more is known about Jean Bouchet, who was born in Poitiers in 1476 and obtained at least a bachelor of arts from the Collège de Puygareau at the University of Poitiers where he studied under maître Julien Tortereau. He received the tonsure in his youth but had more glamorous aspirations.<sup>5</sup> As Jennifer Britnell writes in her biography of Bouchet, even though “didactic aims permeate all his writing... Bouchet's work did not always have the enlightenment of his inferiors as its main aim; he had patrons to cultivate

---

<sup>1</sup> Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (London: Knaplock, Midwinter and Tonson, 1721), 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> Fred Brittain, *The Lyfe of Saynte Radegunde* edited from the copy in Jesus College Cambridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), vii.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Bradshaw, *Here begynneth the lyfe of saynt Radegunde* (London: Rycharde Pynson, 1525), STC 3507, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, folio 30.

<sup>4</sup> Pamela Neville, “Richard Pynson, Kings Printer (1506 -1529): Printing and Propaganda in Early Tudor England” (Ph.D. diss., London University, 1990), 103.

<sup>5</sup> Auguste Hamon, *Jean Bouchet: Un Grand Rhétoriqueur Poitevin* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), 5, 7.

and he would have become a court poet if he could.”<sup>6</sup> When he was twenty, he left his native Poitiers to follow a deputation to Charles VIII’s court at Lyons in 1496 where he presented some poems to the king. He never achieved his goal of becoming a court poet, but he did secure the patronage of Louis de La Trémoille for fifteen years.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately he returned to Poitiers where he followed in his father’s footsteps to serve as a *procureur* (solicitor-at-law) for the rest of his life, but continued writing to and about the kings of France.<sup>8</sup> Bouchet began his literary career as a *rhétoriqueur* poet but later became firmly established as a historian. The *Histoire et cronicque* (1517) fits in well with Bouchet’s other historical works, *Anciennes et modernes genealogies des rois de France* (1528) and the famous *Annales d’Aquitaine* (1524); all three works present royal genealogies within a larger historical framework.<sup>9</sup> The *Histoire et cronicque* purports to be a translation of Radegund’s Latin *vita* into French, but as was the case with Bradshaw’s *Lyfe*, Bouchet’s substantial changes and creative additions truly make this text his own. Very much like Bradshaw’s *Lyfe of Werburge*, the 215-page *Histoire et cronicque* situates the life of Radegund within the broader chronology of French history.

### ***Institutional Concerns***

Bradshaw and Bouchet both wrote their *Lives of Radegund* during periods of local institutional crises and these concerns pervade their work. While Bradshaw seems to be

---

<sup>6</sup> Jennifer Britnell, *Jean Bouchet* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the University of Durham, 1986), xi.

<sup>7</sup> Louis de La Trémoille II was Bouchet’s most important patron. He was from one of the oldest families of Poitou and served as a general under Charles VIII, Louis XII, and Francois I. His advantageous marriage with Gabrielle de Bourbon, daughter of Louis de Bourbon, sealed the union between the La Trémoille family and “le sang de France.” As Bouchet mentions in the Prologue, La Trémoille is responsible for connecting Bouchet with Queen Claude’s mother, Anne of Brittany. See Jean-Pierre Bardet, ed., *Etat et société en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles: Mélanges offerts à Yves Durand* (Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000), 48; Britnell, *Jean Bouchet*, 273; Hamon, *Jean Bouchet*, 39.

<sup>8</sup> Britnell, *Jean Bouchet*, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Britnell, *Jean Bouchet*, 3.

responding to monastic dissolution with the promotion of Benedictine monasticism, Bouchet's work addresses the instability generated in Poitiers by a violent abbatial conflict and reflects Bouchet's own interests in appealing to the royal family. Furthermore, both authors employ the same literary strategy that allows them to communicate their particular didactic messages: Bradshaw and Bouchet each create an elaborate deathbed scene that allows them to speak through Radegund as she exhorts her congregation to maintain specific virtues. In particular, Bradshaw's Radegund urges the nuns gathered around her deathbed to follow the Benedictine Rule and to continue performing all of their religious obligations. Bouchet's Radegund reminds her nuns of how their community has never been divided, instructs them to observe the Caesarian Rule, and implores them to always be worthy of the alms they receive. While Bradshaw and Bouchet often copy word-for-word from the early *Lives* composed by Fortunatus, Baudonivia, and Gregory of Tours, both sixteenth-century authors entirely invented this episode with no precedent in any previous rewriting. "Radegund's" last words thus tell us considerably more about the concerns of our sixteenth-century authors than the events of her historical life.

As several scholars have suggested, Bradshaw may have been inspired to write his life of Radegund because he was particularly affected by the dissolution of St. Radegund's Priory in Cambridge by Bishop Alcock of Ely in 1496.<sup>10</sup> After expelling the remaining nuns, Alcock converted the priory into Jesus College Cambridge, which to this day preserves Radegund's memory with its full name, *The College of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint John the Evangelist and the glorious Virgin Saint Radegund, near Cambridge*. Founded in the mid-twelfth century, the community of nuns at Cambridge received many privileges and

---

<sup>10</sup> Brittain, *The Lyfe of Saynte Radegunde*, ix.

donations of property, but the convent was never wealthy. Signs of decline were visible as early as 1277 when their poverty was said to be “notorious.”<sup>11</sup> Their buildings were damaged or destroyed by storms and fires three times in the fourteenth century. Episcopal visitations in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries left accounts of extreme disrepair, lack of attendance to religious obligations, and a series of weak prioresses.<sup>12</sup> When the nuns failed to remedy the situation, Bishop Alcock appointed Joan Fulborne as prioress in 1487 after declaring that the nuns were unfit to hold their own elections.<sup>13</sup> Joan was ultimately unsuccessful. According to the letters patent of Henry VII for the dissolution of the priory and the erection of the College, there were only two nuns remaining at the priory in 1496, “of whom one is elsewhere professed, the other is of ill fame, and they can in no way provide for their own sustenance and relief, insomuch that they are fain to abandon their house and leave it in a manner desolate.” Alcock’s report emphasizes the moral degradation of the nuns, citing “their proximity to the University of Cambridge” as one of the many causes of their priory’s ruin.<sup>14</sup>

There is no evidence that Bradshaw himself was connected with the Priory of Saint Radegund or that he ever even visited it. However, it cannot be a mere coincidence that he

---

<sup>11</sup> According to Arthur Gray’s analysis of various priory documents, the priory’s poverty in 1277 was “haud paucis innotescit.” Gray, *The Priory of Saint Radegund Cambridge*, 31.

<sup>12</sup> In 1340 their lack of funds was used to justify their exemption from procuration charges. In 1373 the visitation records of Archbishop Wittlesey at Lambeth Palace “shows the Nunnery in deep embarrassment, its buildings dilapidated, and its services neglected for want of funds.” Thomas de Wormenhale’s report is summarized by Gray: the prioress, Margaret Clanyle, did not have the funds to repair the damaged refectory roof, she did not prevent nuns from receiving inappropriate visitors, she allowed the nuns to leave the cloister, and she did not find priests to celebrate for various benefactors of the convent. Gray, *The Priory of Saint Radegund Cambridge*, 35-36.

<sup>13</sup> “We...find all and singular the Nuns unfit and disqualified to elect their future Prioress and therefore decree that in such manner of election they are justly deprived of voice. Wherefore we take upon ourselves the task of providing from some other like religious place a fit person for the vacancy in the said Nunnery, the right of electing and providing for the same Nunnery having devolved canonically upon us...” Register of Bishop Alcock of Ely 1487, folio 153, reproduced in Gray, *The Priory of Saint Radegund Cambridge*, 43.

<sup>14</sup> “Letters patent of Henry VII for the foundation of Jesus College, dated June 12 in the eleventh year of his reign.” Reproduced in Gray, *The Priory of Saint Radegund Cambridge*, 44.



decided to write his *Lyfe of Saynt Radegunde* around the same time that the Priory was being dissolved. Furthermore, he reimagines Radegund as a perpetual virgin and the abbess of Sainte-Croix, which runs contrary to every text written about her up to that point, suggesting an institutional agenda.<sup>15</sup> This alteration is so surprising because there is every indication that Bradshaw otherwise followed the early medieval Latin *Lives*, which discuss the intimate details of Radegund's marriage and her great humility in declining the position of abbess at her own foundation.

Bradshaw's classification of Radegund as a virgin is unmistakable. He uses the word "virgin" or "virgyne" in relation to Radegund a total of 24 times. He also includes a chapter heading titled, "Of the virtuous lvyng of saynt Radegunde undre spousage and how she continued a pure virgyne," which further emphasizes her "mayden" status.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Bradshaw relates how Radegund strategically avoided consummating her marriage. For example, when Clothar "desired to supplie/ Naturall pleasure and voluptuous entention," God intervened just as he did with saints Agnes, Lucy, and Cecilia. He explains, "By diuine power and by miracle sothlie/ His feruent desire with carnall affeccion/ Were clerly extincted."<sup>17</sup> On other occasions, Bradshaw claims that Radegund evaded sexual union with Clothar by making excuses, feigning illness, remaining too busy to attend to him, and simply objecting that the time was inconvenient. The fact that none of these details appear in any previous *Lives* make Bradshaw's insistence on Radegund's virginity particularly meaningful.

---

<sup>15</sup> Radegund is never characterized as a virgin after her marriage with Clothar in any of the sixth-century texts composed by Gregory of Tours, Venantius Fortunatus, or Baudonivia. Hildebert of Lavardin's twelfth-century *Vita Radegundis* contains an elaborate discussion of how Radegund performed her conjugal duties to prevent her husband from sinning, which is likely where Bouchet draws his own description of Radegund's marriage from.

<sup>16</sup> Bradshaw, *Lyfe of saynt Radegunde*, folio 2 "The Table"

<sup>17</sup> Bradshaw, *Lyfe of saynt Radegunde*, folio 7.

It seems highly likely that Bradshaw's virginal abbess Radegund was meant as a counterpart to the series of ill-famed Cambridge prioresses, thus establishing a tradition of high religious standards for Radegund's spiritual descendants. The idea that Radegund was a virginal saint seems particular to England and marks a significant way that Bradshaw's rewriting of Radegund's life has directly shaped her English cult. Even to this day Radegund is remembered in England as a virgin, as her epithet "the glorious Virgin" in the name of Jesus College demonstrates.<sup>18</sup>

In Bradshaw's deathbed scene, "Radegund" urges her community to observe the three essentials of Saint Benedict's Rule: poverty, chastity, and obedience. She also insists that they keep their spiritual doctrines, customs, holy observances, and ceremonies.<sup>19</sup> Here, Bradshaw himself speaks through Radegund to convey values that hold a special importance for him. As a Benedictine monk writing during the dissolution of St. Radegund's Priory, Bradshaw had a strong incentive to defend his female counterparts in Cambridge. Elegiac and nostalgic, Bradshaw appropriates Radegund (and all of her saintly authority) to endorse the Benedictine rule and monasticism in general. This becomes all the more certain when we remember that Radegund's convent followed the Caesarian rule, which Caesarius of Arles created for his sister, Caesaria, in 512. After corresponding with Caesaria, Radegund adopted the *Regula virginum* for her convent around 550.<sup>20</sup> Sainte-Croix did not convert to the

---

<sup>18</sup> See Jesus College's website with a special page devoted to Radegund and her legacy there. Jesus College Cambridge (website), "Jesus College Cambridge: St. Radegund," copyright 2019, <https://www.jesus.cam.ac.uk/college/about-us/history/people-note/st-radegund>

<sup>19</sup> "She sayd dere systers I pray you euerychone / Dayly to obserue the essentials thre / Of saynt Benettes rule your holy religion / Parfyt obedience and wylfull pouerte / With the floure of clenness and pure chastite / Kepe your doctrines and customes sperituall / With gostly obseruauntes and cerimonies all." Bradshaw, *Lyfe of saynt Radegunde*, folio 24r.

<sup>20</sup> For a copy of a letter sent by Caesaria of Arles to Radegund expressing joy that Sainte-Croix adopted the *Regula virginum*, see "A letter from Caesaria, abbess of Arles," translated by Professor Joan Ferrante of Columbia University in the online repository, *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*,

Benedictine rule until the ninth-century monastic reforms.<sup>21</sup> In other words, it is historically impossible that Radegund ever exhorted her nuns to cleave to Saint Benedict's Rule.

While we may never know if Bradshaw had any personal connection with the Priory, Bouchet was considerably closer to the monastic controversies that transpired among the nuns at the Abbey of Sainte-Croix in Poitiers between 1491 and 1520. After the election of Jeanne de Couhé as abbess in 1491, her rival sent armed troops to occupy the abbey for months. Twenty years later in 1511, Jeanne resigned and her niece, Marie Berland, became the interim abbess. After the death of her aunt, Marie sought to bypass elections to become the new permanent head. She was blocked both by the bishop of Poitiers and the king of France. However, Louis XII had his own designs in mind and worked to pressure Sainte-Croix to elect Madeleine d'Orléans, half-sister of the future François I.<sup>22</sup> The last time an army entered the abbey during an abbatial conflict had been just after Radegund's death, when the princesses Chrochild and Basina rebelled against the election of a low-born abbess.<sup>23</sup>

Bouchet's deathbed scene seems to directly address this Sainte-Croix conflict, while also promoting Bouchet's personal interest in recommending himself and his town to the royal family. While Bradshaw's Radegund endorses the Benedictine Rule, Bouchet's Radegund entreats her nuns "to always keep the Rule that was sent to you by Saint Caesaria...and never wish to contravene the letter of your privileges that I have deposited in

---

<https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/915.html>. The original Latin appears in MGH, 7, *Epistolae Aevi Merovingici Collectae*, 450-53, ep.11. Gregory of Tours also discusses Radegund's adoption of Caesarius' Rule for Virgins in *History of the Franks* 9.40 and he includes a transcription of a letter written by Radegund to the Bishops in which she confirms her adoption of the rule in *History of the Franks* 9.41.

<sup>21</sup> Labande-Mailfert, *Histoire de l'abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, 81-82.

<sup>22</sup> Jennifer Edwards, "My sister for abbess: fifteenth-century disputes over the Abbey of Sainte-Croix, Poitiers," *Journal of Medieval History* 40, no. 1 (2014): 85; 103.

<sup>23</sup> Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, 9.38.

the coffer of the treasury of your monastery.”<sup>24</sup> Earlier in his account, Bouchet even includes a translation of this letter that Gregory of Tours had transcribed into his *History of the Franks*, stating that he personally “saw the authentic document (*carte*) in the treasury of the monastery of Sainte-Croix.”<sup>25</sup> In addition to reminding his audience of this physical vestige of Radegund’s intentions, he also recalls the unity the nuns enjoyed under Radegund’s guardianship. “Radegund” herself says, “It has been about 35 years since, by the grace and will of God, I first donned the habit of religion and 25 years since I retired as a recluse with my very dear and beloved sisters without any division, for which I thank God.”<sup>26</sup> Here, we can see Bouchet appealing to tradition and evoking a sense of the ideal past when Radegund’s community flourished without division. This can only be intended as a response to what Bouchet must have seen as the most divisive moment for the nuns of Sainte-Croix since the rebellion of the royal nuns shortly after Radegund’s death.

Aside from the fact that this decades-long conflict must have made life difficult in Poitiers for any resident, Bouchet had a very personal interest in seeing peace established. Around 1533, Bouchet used his connections with the La Trémoille family to secure admittance to Sainte-Croix for his daughter, Marie, without a dowry. Louis de Ronsard, related by marriage to La Trémoille, obtained letters from the king, the dauphin, Marguerite de Navarre, and the Comte de Saint-Pol on Bouchet’s behalf addressed to Abbess Louise de

---

<sup>24</sup> “Et vous prie aussi et conieure en la vertus diceluy nostre sauveur que vous gardez la reigle a vous envoiee par sainte cesare tout ainsi que par la grace de dieu vous avez co(m)mance faire et que ne vueillez contrevenir a lespistolle de vos privileges que ie laise on coffre du tresor de vostre monastere.” Jean Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, book 4, folio 81v.

<sup>25</sup> “iay veue en une carte en forme autenticque on tresor dud’monastere saicte croix et se com(m)ance do(n)nis sanctis et apostolica seder Et icelle epistolle ay translatee de mot a mot ainsi qui sensuit.” Ibid., book 3, folio 56r.

<sup>26</sup> “Leurs dist trente cinq ans a ou environ que par la grace & volunte de dieu iay prins habit de religion & vingt cinq ans a q(ue) iay demoure recluse avecques mes trescheres & bie(n) amees seurs sans division aucune do(n)t ie remercie dieu.” Jean Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, book 4, folio 81v.

Bourbon. Even though Louise took over as abbess of Fontevrault in 1534, Marie was admitted and made her profession as a nun of Sainte-Croix three years later.<sup>27</sup>

While this conflict was clearly a concern for Bouchet, we can also see his personal agenda of soliciting the favor of the royal family come to light towards the end of Radegund's speech, when she asks her nuns to pray for the king, his sons, and their benefactors. When we consider this speech together with Bouchet's other references to French royalty, we can see a thread of royal appeal running throughout Bouchet's entire text.

First, in his prologue, Bouchet addresses Queen Claude, Anne of Brittany (Claude's deceased mother), the deceased King Charles VIII, Louis de La Trémoille (Bouchet's patron), and La Trémoille's deceased wife, Madame Gabrielle de Bourbon. The *Histoire et cronicque* is dedicated to Claude (1499-1524), who was the wife of François I and the daughter of Louis XII and Anne of Brittany. Claude became the ruling duchess of Brittany after Anne's death and she was crowned queen in 1517, the year the *Histoire et cronicque* was published. In the last line of the prologue, Bouchet recommends himself by name to Claude as her "very humble and very obedient subject and servant." Furthermore, he begs that when she reads his book, she might "remember his poor family who wishes for augmentation."<sup>28</sup> It is unclear exactly what kind of augmentation Bouchet hopes for, but this appeal makes his intention of benefiting from royal favor abundantly clear. On the last page of the *Histoire et cronicque*, Bouchet reiterates his devotion to Claude in a double dedication, "principally to God and to the said saint for the exaltation of the royal blood of France...and secondly, to occupy you, most excellent and most illustrious Madame Claude, daughter and

---

<sup>27</sup> See Bouchet's *Epistres Familieres* 95, 105, 115, 116, 126; Britnell, *Jean Bouchet*, 6, 264.

<sup>28</sup> Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, Prologue, page 2.

wife of kings.”<sup>29</sup> Bouchet’s reference to his patron, La Trémoille, alongside Claude, Charles, and Anne, makes sense considering that La Trémoille was from one of the oldest families of Poitou and served as a general under Charles VIII, Louis XII, and François I. His advantageous marriage with Gabrielle de Bourbon, daughter of Louis de Bourbon, sealed the union between the La Trémoille family and “le sang de France.”<sup>30</sup> As Bouchet mentions in the Prologue, La Trémoille is responsible for connecting Bouchet with Claude’s mother, Anne of Brittany, who, together with Charles VIII, originally requested Bouchet to compose his *Life of Radegund*.<sup>31</sup>

Bouchet is very direct in his appeals to Queen Claude, but he also makes several indirect appeals. The images of Radegund and Clothar in fleur-de-lis cloaks and crowns just before the “Exhortation to Readers” makes a clear association between Radegund and the royal family of France. The way that Radegund is portrayed here as a half-queen-half-nun with a crown, nimbus, book, scepter, and fleur-de-lis cloak became her standard depiction beginning in the fifteenth century.<sup>32</sup> While the book and nimbus emphasizes her sanctity, the crown, fleur-de-lis tipped scepter, and fleur-de-lis embroidered cloak signifies her royal authority. The fleur-de-lis emblem was officially adopted by the Capetians in the twelfth

---

<sup>29</sup> “Lequel iay dedie prinipalmente a dieu & a la dicte saincte pour lexaltaion du sang royal de France...et secondement pour loccupation de vous tresexcellente et tresillustre princesse madame Claude fille de roy et femme de roy.” Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, book 4, folio 96v.

<sup>30</sup> Guy Antonetti, “Les princes étrangers,” in *État et société en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles: Mélanges offerts à Yves Durand*, ed. Jean-Pierre Bardet (Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000), 48.

<sup>31</sup> Dr. Jörn Günther, a rare books dealer in Switzerland, has recently advertised his acquisition of what he believes to be the lost *Life of Radegund* composed in 1496/1498 by Bouchet at Charles VIII’s request. As Bouchet notes in his prologue to the *Histoire et cronicque*, he found his first youthful attempt at rewriting Radegund’s history deficient and so the *Histoire et cronicque* represents a more polished version with numerous corrections. There are at least three manuscripts whose texts match the text of Günther’s book: BNF Français 5718, BNF Français 1784, and Rouen BM 1436. Günther’s manuscript differs slightly in wording, but BNF Français 5718, BNF Français 1784, and Rouen BM 1436 are identical to each other. More work still needs to be done to fully understand the connection between these four manuscripts and Bouchet’s role in composing their texts.

<sup>32</sup> See plates in Michel Laverret, “L’iconographie de sainte Radegonde dans les manuscrits,” *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de L’Ouest et des Mudées de Poitiers*, 5<sup>e</sup> série, tome II, 2<sup>e</sup> trimestre de 1988.

century, but a legend popularized by a thirteenth-century poem traces the fleur-de-lis back to Clovis, Clothar's father.<sup>33</sup> In this legend, Clovis received the emblem from God as an assurance of victory in battle. Later, French writers in the fourteenth century asserted that the monarchy of France could trace its heritage back to Clovis's divine gift.<sup>34</sup>

Returning to Radegund's death bed exhortation to pray for Clothar and "for the health and prosperity of his other sons who are still living," we can interpret it as a subtle nod to Charles VIII and Claude, whom we might consider as the Merovingian Clothar's "living sons" in the sense of being Clothar's "successors." This strategic move on Bouchet's part would have been favorably received by his royal and elite readers. At least since the Capetians, the kings of France had been interested in the maintenance of their royal legitimacy by tracing their genealogy back to the Merovingians, even if that genealogy was fanciful. In Chapter 3, we saw how important this was for Normans in Sicily and England, and in Chapter 4, Charles VII became the first French king to associate his reign with Radegund to solidify his power. As Gabrielle Spiegel notes, "Raised to the royal level, genealogy took on the overtones of a dynastic myth, synonymous in many respects with the central myth of French kingship as the unbroken succession of the *trois races* of France."<sup>35</sup> Bouchet himself composed a genealogy of the kings of France, which was printed at Paris in 1537, so he clearly recognized the significance of associating the current French royalty with

---

<sup>33</sup> In the thirteenth-century poem composed by Guillaume de Nangis at the abbey of Joyenval, Clovis received the fleur-de-lis emblem from God as an assurance of victory in battle. See Mérindol, "Le Culte de sainte Radegonde," 791 and Arthur Charles Fox-Davies, *A Complete Guide to Heraldry* (England: J.C. & E.C. Jack, 1925), 273. In the twelfth century, the fleur-de-lis was adopted by the Capetians as an armorial emblem and appeared on coins of Louis VII and Philip Augustus, as well as Philip's royal seal. See Sandra Hindman and Gabrielle M Spiegel, "The Fleur-de-Lis Frontispieces to Guillaume de Nangis's *Chronique abrégée*: Political Iconography in Late Fifteenth-Century France," *Viator* (Berkeley) 12 (1981): 385-386.

<sup>34</sup>Pastoureau, *Heraldry*, 99-100.

<sup>35</sup> Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative," *History and Theory* 22, no. 1 (1983), 47.

the “sons” of Clothar. The alliance between the French monarchy and Radegund, in her role as a Merovingian dynastic saint, would become cemented by the seventeenth century and take on even greater political overtones, as I show in Chapter 6.

Lastly, we can see how both Bradshaw and Bouchet use “Radegund’s” deathbed speech to address their contemporary religious climate and, thus, make Radegund relevant and appealing to their readership. Most significantly, they reimagine Radegund receiving the sacraments of confession, communion, and extreme unction, not all of which were considered official sacraments at the time of Radegund’s death. While Bouchet simply mentions that Radegund received the sacraments, Bradshaw portrays Radegund making a statement of belief, confirming “Radegund’s” endorsement of the Church’s doctrine on the incarnation and transubstantiation, which accords with the Nicene Creed<sup>36</sup> and the Fourth Lateran Council (1215).<sup>37</sup>

As the church techith / I beleue stydfastly  
That thou descendyd from blis eternall  
And was incarnat / in mayden Mary  
Suffred passyon / and deth moost thrall  
Man soule to redeme / from payne infernall  
And that thou institute / thy blessed body  
In furme of bredde to vs sacramentally<sup>38</sup>

This promotion of “Radegund’s” steadfast belief in the Church’s teachings is particularly significant for Bradshaw when we consider the complex theological context in which he was writing. The *Lyfe* was completed at least a decade before Martin Luther posted his Ninety-

---

<sup>36</sup> “We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible... And in one Lord Jesus Christ... who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary, and was made man...”

<sup>37</sup> “His body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine, the bread and wine having been transubstantiated, by God's power, into his body and blood.”

<sup>38</sup> Bradshaw, *Lyfe of saynt Radegunde*, folio 25.



five Theses and Zwingli began officially promulgating his view that the Eucharistic bread “signifies” (not “is”) Christ’s body. Nonetheless, Lollardy was resurfacing and there were a number of executions of Lollard heretics in England in the fourteenth century and early 1500s.<sup>39</sup> The most common form of eucharistic heterodoxy exhibited in these heresy trials was remanence, “the belief that the substance of bread and wine remain after the consecration.”<sup>40</sup> This differs from the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation where the substance of bread and wine literally becomes the body and blood of Christ. Bradshaw’s elaboration of Radegund’s death made it possible for him to communicate his theological views to an audience that would have recognized this as an appeal to a broader sense of orthodox unity against the threat of heresy.

For Bouchet, Radegund’s deathbed scene not only stands as a reminder of the unity that once existed at Sainte-Croix (and could exist there again), but it also provided him with the opportunity to associate Radegund, Poitiers, and by extension, himself, with current French royalty. Likewise, Bradshaw uses the deathbed scene as a way to evoke an ideal past when Radegund’s community upheld the highest moral standards. Confronted with the disbandment of Radegund’s spiritual successors, he defends Radegund’s values, and by extension, his own, by speaking with Radegund’s voice to endorse Benedictine monasticism. Bradshaw’s reconstruction of Radegund as a virginal abbess had a lasting effect on Radegund’s English cult, preserving his image of her forever in the name of Jesus College. Both Bouchet and Bradshaw make Radegund relevant to their audience in terms of these institutional concerns, but also by “translating” her into their own pre-Reformation context.

---

<sup>39</sup> John N. King, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 46.

<sup>40</sup> J. Patrick Hornbeck II, *What is a Lollard? Dissent and Belief in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 95.

The sixteenth-century Radegund steadfastly believes in doctrine that was not fully established for decades after her death and endorses a broader Catholic orthodoxy, just as she maintained unity “without division” at Sainte-Croix while she lived.

***Exemplarity and Audience: Radegund as a Model for the Modern Woman***

While Bradshaw and Bouchet both transformed their sources in order to promote their own institutional concerns, they also transformed Radegund’s life (softening the contours of her rebellious and extreme behavior) in order to make her more appealing as a role model for both elite and non-elite women. Increasing literacy rates in the early sixteenth century meant that writers of devotional material now sought to appeal to a broader and more diverse audience. As Karen Winstead and Catherine Sanok show in their studies on female sanctity and exemplarity in late medieval England, lay women became increasingly visible participants in literary culture. Rewriting the lives of early Christian female martyrs was especially popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but hagiographers needed to adapt their subjects to better suit their expanding audience. This resulted in a new type of exemplarity that recreated the narratives of these female saints, “making virgin martyrs more like prosperous housewives.”<sup>41</sup> Both Bradshaw and Bouchet adjust their narratives of Radegund, who historically was neither virgin, nor martyr, nor demure housewife, to better fit this category. Bradshaw and Bouchet both address “all ladyes within christente” and “filles, femmes, pucelles a marier,” as those who would benefit from Radegund’s exemplary life. However, they both tailor this exemplarity to specific groups. While Bradshaw reconstructs Radegund as a virgin and an abbess, Bouchet takes the opposite route and imagines her as the perfect wife.

---

<sup>41</sup> Karen Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 11.

The way that Radegund was remembered in the sixteenth century was different from how her "identity" was first constructed by her sixth-century biographers. As I argued in Chapter 1, Fortunatus and Baudonivia recognized that elite women's performance of sanctity was dependent upon their sexual status as the ruler's wife. Early Christian saintly queens "practiced sainthood as a logical and self-conscious division of royal labor with their warrior husbands."<sup>42</sup> Radegund, along with women such as Melania the Elder, Paula and Eustochium, the Theodosian empress Flaccilla, Constantine's mother, Helena, and even Radegund's saintly mother-in-law, Clotild, fit into this category, where their position as wives comprised an integral part of their performance of sanctity. Their social status – in particular, physical markers of that social status, like fine clothing and jewels – posed a real obstacle to sainthood. The only way to achieve true nobility in the eyes of God was to reject their earthly nobility and to embrace its opposite. Typically, these women founded religious communities that they themselves entered after their husbands died. They renounced their wealth, practiced asceticism, dressed as servants, and humbled themselves in the service of others. The *vitae* of these women were typically written by male monks or clerics for a primarily ecclesiastical audience who identified with their *contemptus mundi*. Furthermore, while Fortunatus and Baudonivia certainly had their own personal agendas in writing, their texts were ultimately intended to make a case for Radegund's sanctity in the absence of official canonization procedure and to provide a model for those striving for sainthood.

About a thousand years later, we see a different picture of Radegund develop. Bouchet tones down Radegund's *contemptus mundi*. Rather, he highlights her exemplary behavior as queen and wife to show how a secular woman can live a more holy life *without*

---

<sup>42</sup> McNamara, "Imitatio Helenae," 52.

abandoning all the markers of her secular power. Bradshaw goes to the opposite extreme and insists upon Radegund's virginity, despite the fact that her sixth-century biographers positioned Radegund's sexual status as a wife as an important part of her performance of sanctity.

By the sixteenth century, Radegund's sanctity was fully accepted: the vast expansion of her cult attested to her popularity. Composed for an explicitly lay and female audience, the vernacular lives prepared by Bradshaw and Bouchet were not written to "prove" Radegund's sanctity, nor were they necessarily about how to become a saint. Rather, they reflected several intersecting literary trends that Bradshaw and Bouchet each interpreted according to their own personal circumstances to create an image of a Radegund that was simultaneously traditional and relevant.

Bradshaw and Bouchet each clearly envision their audiences. While Bouchet's primary audience is Claude and her courtly ladies, he also addresses diverse categories of women (girls, women about to marry, married women, widows, and nuns). He dedicated the *Histoire et cronique* to Queen Claude, writing that he presents his text to her so that she can take pleasure in Radegund's praiseworthy lifestyle. He then adds that her young ladies in waiting (*vos damoiselles*) can take example from Radegund's very noble and virtuous deeds, suggesting that they imitate Radegund's virginal modesty and matrimonial fidelity, both as a saint and "bonne dame."<sup>43</sup> Bouchet's personal interest in appealing to Claude guides his reshaping of Radegund into a model with whom she and her noble ladies could all identify.

---

<sup>43</sup> « Et y pourro(n)t vos damoiselles prendre exe(m)ple & salutaire doctrine / voire par imitatio(n) de vie suyvir en plusieurs actes quant a pudicite virginalle / & fidelite matrimoniale si sainte & bo(n)ne dame.» Jean Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, Prologue, folio v. aa.

However, we can also see his appeal to a wider female audience in the “Exhortation.” Here Bouchet addresses women in general saying, “If you desire to know of her virtues, spend the effort in reading this book, then you will learn how she wanted to live.”<sup>44</sup> He then elaborates, explaining that this book can show its readers “the practice, mode, and way” to maintain themselves in “the holy state of marriage,” and “likewise [regarding] the state of widowhood, [if you wish to] see how this wise lady handled it and maintained it, please also read this book.”<sup>45</sup> Bouchet directs the “Lady nuns” to the end of the book where they “will see some profitable things for the observance of your religion, similarly, the marvelous pains, great torments, penitent abstinences, of which there is nearly a legion.”<sup>46</sup> Bouchet is able to make Radegund relevant to such a diverse group of women because her life can easily be divided into stages: virgin, wife/queen, nun. And these life stages are reflected in the organization of his book so that readers can, presumably, skip to the parts most relevant to their marital status and religious aspirations.

A close reading of Bouchet’s prologue suggests that he designed the *Histoire et cronique* as a guidebook for women of all different sexual statuses who were interested in living more virtuous lives by following an exemplar to which they could relate. We can see this intention very explicitly when Bouchet writes, “In adapting this history for the instruction of ladies [I added] some discussions of morality and remonstrances and many other little curious things, where you may sometimes content your spirits and which may

---

<sup>44</sup> “Si desirez de ses vertus savoir prenez labour de tout ce liure veoir lors congnoistrez comment a voulu vivre.” Jean Bouchet, *Histoire et cronique*, Exhortation aux lecteurs, page 3.

<sup>45</sup> “Quant a lestat de sacre mariage si desirez en congnoistre lusage mode et facon quis y convient garder et davantaige a lestat de vesuage voiez comment cest dame tant sage a sceu le faire et se y contregarder aussi vueillez ce liure regarder.” Jean Bouchet, *Histoire et cronique*, Exhortation aux lecteurs, page 3.

<sup>46</sup> “Devers sa fin dames religieuses vous y verez des choses fructueuses pour observer vostre religion: semblablement les peines merueilleuses tormens tresgrans abstinences peneuses dont il ya pres dune legion.” Jean Bouchet, *Histoire et cronique*, Exhortation aux lecteurs, page 4.

give you recreation profitable to the salvation of your soul, prosperity, and health of your person.”<sup>47</sup> Here, Bouchet clearly distinguishes his “history” of Radegund as an instructive resource for women, explaining how he supplemented the traditional story with didactic material chosen for his specific audience.

Like Bouchet, Bradshaw explicitly acknowledges his wider audience, but makes it clear that noblewomen are the readers he targets especially. Throughout the *Lyfe of Saynte Radegunde*, Bradshaw expresses his desire to write Radegund’s *lyfe historiall* for the benefit of the “common people” and presents Radegund as an example “unto all ladyes within christente.”<sup>48</sup> But more specifically, he directly addresses, “Swete worthy princesses borne of great rialte/ Duchesses countesses ladies euerychone” and reproaches their worldly appetites for fashionable clothes. He points out that Radegund refused all worldly dignity, imperial honor, together with “vayne vestures, garments, possessyons withall” when she entered the monastic life. He then concludes his exhortation to the audience with, “Wherfore noble ladies example ye may take/ At this holy quene all vice to forsake.”<sup>49</sup>

However, it is important to note here that Bradshaw is not calling on his audience of noble ladies to renounce their possessions and enter a monastery. Rather, the message is to “forsake all vice.” Similarly, Bouchet highlights Radegund’s (pre-marital) virginal modesty, matrimonial fidelity, and charity as the virtues to emulate. Radegund’s saintly lifestyle is praiseworthy as an instructive model for living in the secular world as a “bonne dame.” The early Latin lives of Radegund, on the other hand, were meant as more literal guides for

---

<sup>47</sup> “En decora(n)t l’histoire pour la doctrine des dames daucunes moralles sente(n)ces persuasions & remo(n)stra(n)ces / & de plusieurs aultres petites choses curieuses ou vous pourrez aucunefois co(n)tanter vostre trescler esprit & luy do(n)ner recreation p(ro)fitable pour le salut de vostre ame lincolumite p(ro)sperite & sante de vostre p(er)sonne.” Jean Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, Prologue, page 1.

<sup>48</sup> Henry Bradshaw, *Lyfe of saynt Radegunde*, folio 16.

<sup>49</sup> Henry Bradshaw, *Lyfe of saynt Radegunde*, folio 18.

women who wanted to follow in Radegund's footsteps. In the Merovingian era, it was common for widowed queens to give generously to the Church, found convents, and spend their remaining years in monastic retirement. While their withdrawal from court certainly had clear political benefits for the succeeding ruler and his family, it provided an avenue for these women to achieve saintly renown by following a prescribed path of holiness.

As we can see from Bradshaw and Bouchet's texts, patterns of gendered holiness were gradually adjusting to the changing audience demographic of devotional literature. Sherry Reames characterizes these shifting patterns in her introduction to the large source collection, *Middle English Legends of Women Saints*. She writes that "the Middle English tradition as a whole presents a series of different paradigms of female sanctity – from royal nuns and founders of institutions to beleaguered virgins to holy matrons and mothers – that move steadily closer to the ordinary life experiences of the laity."<sup>50</sup> While most scholarship on exemplarity tends to focus on the English model, we can see similar changes in French vernacular lives, too. As more people (and specifically, more women) than ever before engaged in private devotional reading, authors of new vernacular hagiography adapted the lives of early Christian female saints to make them more suitable models for a generally lay audience.

In *Her Life Historical*, Sanok addresses the apparent contradiction inherent in the idea that early Christian martyrs – many of whom professed vows of virginity, preached, rejected their families, subverted patriarchal authority, and died violent deaths for their faith – were

---

<sup>50</sup> Sherry L. Reames, *Middle English Legends of Women Saints* (Kalamazoo, Mich: Published for TEAMS in association with the University of Rochester by Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2003), 10.

explicitly used as models of comportment for married gentlewomen.<sup>51</sup> In *Virgin Martyrs*, Winstead explains some strategies for transforming elements of vernacular hagiography to better suit their audiences, stating that “In written legends as well as in the visual arts, *topoi* that once demonstrated the impotence of temporal power were reworked or abandoned”<sup>52</sup> and that fifteenth- and sixteenth-century hagiographers “were eager to emphasize ‘transferable’ qualities – courtesy, patience, diligence, humility, piety, charity – which would make the saints suitable models for laywomen as well as for consecrated virgins.”<sup>53</sup> Essentially, these updated lives of female saints present “refined gentlewomen rather than triumphant *viragos*,” thus making them appropriate and relatable to royal and elite women.<sup>54</sup>

As a queen who fled her royal husband to become a nun, Radegund might seem to be an odd choice of model for Claude or for any elite noblewoman. However, by exaggerating Radegund’s “transferable” qualities and minimizing her more extreme behavior, Bouchet in particular sets Radegund up as an exemplary queen and wife. Contrary to Fortunatus and Baudonivia’s *Lives*, Bouchet justifies Radegund’s retention of her queenly persona, stating that “in public, she appeared as queen and princess, but in secret, she did not play her role as mistress, rather she wanted to be smaller (*plus petite*) than everyone.” Radegund “knew how to comport herself as queen and princess,” but she also “maintained her humility.”<sup>55</sup> Bouchet describes and praises the extreme asceticism Radegund practices while at court, but offers

---

<sup>51</sup> Catherine Sanok, *Her Life Historical: Exemplarity and Female Saints' Lives in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 2.

<sup>52</sup> Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, 115.

<sup>53</sup> Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, 113.

<sup>54</sup> Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, 112.

<sup>55</sup> “En lieu public dune royne et princesse Mais au secret ne se monstroit maistresse Et vouloit estre entre tous plus petite.” Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, Exhortation aux lecteurs, page 4.

<sup>55</sup> “Elle savoit la maniere et moyen de converser comme royne et princesse... appartient en toute humilite.” Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, Exhortation aux lecteurs, page 3.



more appropriate alternatives for the modern noble lady. For example, when he recounts Radegund's charitable endeavors, he writes,

Queens and princesses, note this manner [of giving] and that liberality is the most apparent and profitable virtue you can have. This is just so in Saint Radegund's case, whose virtue proceeds from charity and piety, who avoids all pomp, games, dancing, hunting, and other less worthwhile pursuits. Rather, she provides for the needy, comforts the desolate, feeds the hungry, builds up the destitute, and enriches the poor.<sup>56</sup>

Not only Claude, but any elite woman can imitate Radegund in her daily life by diverting funds to charitable causes that would otherwise be spent on her own entertainment. Bouchet notes Radegund's other "transferable" behaviors that are clearly intended as suggestions for pious living at court that is not too demanding: Radegund paid her servants well and ensured that her entourage of young ladies never created any scandal. If through weakness or youth, any of them ever committed any faults, Radegund never corrected them in public or with anger, but took them aside privately and used loving words and reason to guide them away from youthful folly and occasion for misdeed. No one in her court ever blasphemed or played at cards, and flatterers and gossips were sent away.<sup>57</sup> None of these details appear in any of Radegund's earlier Latin *Lives*, which confirms Bouchet's intention of rewriting Radegund as a more approachable exemplar for the sixteenth-century noblewoman.

This approachableness continues in Book 2 where Bouchet presents Radegund as a dutiful wife in a loving relationship with her husband (despite the fact that he murdered her

---

<sup>56</sup> "Notez ceste facon de faire roynes & princesses et que liberalite est la plus apparente & profitable vertu qui puisse estre en vous, mesmement quant elle procede de charite & pitie, comme celle de sainte Radegonde, qui ne consumoit les biens en pompes, ieux, dances, excès, chasses, et autres choses peu profitables, mais a pourveoir les despourueux, conforter les desoles, alimenter les affames, adroisser les deuoyes, et enricher les indigens." Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, book 2, folio 30v.

<sup>57</sup> "Quant a ses damoiselles...les conduisoit si sagement et de si bonne sorte que scandalle nen sortit onques"; "Ses officieres et autres serviteurs estoient si tresbien entretenus et paies de leurs gages sans retardement que plaincte." Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, folio 29v.

entire family and took her as a spoil of war). Bouchet clearly indicates his intention of setting up Radegund's marriage as a model in his prologue by directly exhorting his audience, "You, girls and women, should follow and resemble [Radegund's way of life] just as much as you young women about to marry."<sup>58</sup>

While describing the events leading up to Radegund's wedding, he digresses into a theological aside about marriage and salvation. In Clothar's voice, Bouchet condemns those who maintain that married people cannot be saved, saying, "This heresy was abolished and damned by the universal church, which stated in canon law, that not only virgins and widows can be saved, but also married people by virtue of their faith."<sup>59</sup> He then presents a series of arguments in favor of the married state: God himself instituted marriage and to suggest that marriage is a sin is to imply that God is the author of that sin, which is blasphemy; The majority of holy people in biblical times were married; If marriage barred salvation, Jesus never would have attended the wedding in Galilee where he turned water into wine; The Gospel says, "Man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife and they will be two in one flesh."<sup>60</sup> This ringing endorsement of marriage ultimately convinces Radegund to abandon her desire to remain a virgin and to accept Clothar's hand in marriage. However, Bouchet adds, almost as an afterthought, that Radegund also agreed because Clothar might kill her if she refused, or he might take her by force and abuse her.<sup>61</sup> In Fortunatus' version,

---

<sup>58</sup> "Vous la devez filles et femme suyure et ressembler tant que serez pucelles a marier." Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, Exhortation aux lecteurs, page 3.

<sup>59</sup> "Laquelle heresie a este abolie et demanee par luniverselle eglise: qui dit par decret arreste, que non seulement les vierges continents & vesues peuent avoir salut, mais aussiles maries par droicte foy, et bonnes operations peuent meriter leternelle beatitude." Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, folio 24r.

<sup>60</sup> Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, folio 24v.

<sup>61</sup> "Recogitant aussi que si elle refusoit le roy (par autant quil estoit colere & merueilleux) la pourroit faire mourir & semblablement son frere ou leur pourroit faire dautres insupportables mauux voire la prendre par force et en abuser persuade de tells rensons y donna consentement et dist au roy." Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, folio 25r.

Radegund actually escaped at night with her companions once she learned the king wished to marry her. Fortunatus' Clothar does not make any theological arguments. Rather, when the escape failed, Radegund was brought back to Soissons where she finally became Clothar's wife and queen, however reluctantly. Here we can see Bouchet softening Radegund's rebellious behavior, showing instead that she was convinced (mostly) by a reasonable theological argument.

Bouchet then describes Radegund's model marriage, noting that she "obeyed the king her husband just as a prudent wife should behave towards her husband."<sup>62</sup> The situation was not completely without tension, however. Since Radegund truly believed herself to be Christ's spouse, she often excused herself from the marital bed to pray on the cold floor. However, she still fulfilled her wifely obligations. Bouchet qualifies this, explaining that, "She did not submit herself to him for carnal pleasure, but only as a remedy against his infirmity of sensuality so that he would not fall into sin," presumably by seeking out other women.<sup>63</sup> While she agreed to engage in licit encounters with Clothar, she refused to participate in any "corrupt or bestial carnality."<sup>64</sup> But she never rebuffed Clothar discourteously, rather she used "sweet and gracious words to divert him from these wicked aims."<sup>65</sup> Sharon Farmer notes in her article, "Persuasive Voices," that beginning as early as the eleventh century and continuing into the thirteenth, churchmen and theologians such as Thomas of Chobham actively promoted the image of "pious wives" who used persuasive

---

<sup>62</sup> "Sainte Radegonde obeit au roy son espoux tout ainsi que une prudent femme doit & est tenue faire a son mary." Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, folio 25v.

<sup>63</sup> "Car onques a luy ne se soubmist pour delectacion charnelle, Mais seulement pour luy co(m)plaire & da(m)ner remede alinfirmite de la sensualite et affin quil ne tu(m)bast en peche." Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, folio 26r.

<sup>64</sup> "charnalite corrupue et bestiale." Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, folio 26r.

<sup>65</sup> "Et sil vouloit vser des actes de mariage autrement que appoint comme aucuns inco(n)tine(ns) maris veulent faire sans rudiment y resister scavoit bien par douces et gracieuses paroles le diverter de ce mauvais propos." Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, folio 26r.

tactics to stimulate moral behavior in their husbands.<sup>66</sup> While Farmer's discussion centers mostly around the moral and spiritual potential of wives to persuade their husbands to support the Church financially, Bouchet's characterization of Radegund as a pious wife who strategically employed "sweet and gracious words" to persuade her husband to avoid sinful sexual behavior seems to have grown out of this tradition. Fortunatus only goes so far as to imply that Radegund performed her conjugal duties, but Bouchet has elaborated that brief mention into a very practical guide for his married female readers to similarly navigate the dangers and duties of marriage.

Bradshaw, on the other hand, presents a very different picture of Radegund's married life. Despite claims that "Euery creature in this present lyfe/ May take of the parfyt imitacion/ Both quene and princess lady and wife," Bradshaw insists that Radegund remained a virgin throughout her marriage.<sup>67</sup> There is no evidence in any previous *Lives* that Radegund maintained her virginity so Bradshaw's choice to reinvent her as a virgin is particularly interesting.

Returning to Reames' observation that early modern paradigms of female sanctity were moving "steadily closer to the ordinary life experiences of the laity," why would Bradshaw contradict all of his sources to rewrite Radegund as a virgin? Bradshaw's characterization of Radegund's sexless union with Clothar is more like the "chaste marriages" of the Middle Ages that Dyan Elliot discusses in *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock*. Elliot defines spiritual marriage as "chaste cohabitation in the context of licit marriage" and suggests that the ideal of chaste marriage was transmitted to the medieval laity primarily through hagiography. In particular, she cites the popularity of

---

<sup>66</sup> Sharon Farmer, "Persuasive Voices," 518.

<sup>67</sup> Bradshaw, *The lyfe of saynt Radegunde*, folio 29.

Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* (1261/1265), noting that his "arsenal of spiritual marriages is almost entirely dependent on late antique or very early medieval cults."<sup>68</sup> As Reames notes in *The Legenda Aurea: A Reexamination of Its Paradoxical History*, Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* featured numerous saints' lives that "flatly condemn sexual intercourse even within a lawful marriage," such as the life of Saint Agnes.<sup>69</sup> Caxton's popular English translation of the *Legenda Aurea* was first published in 1483 and very well could have inspired Bradshaw's detailed description of all the ways Radegund avoided consummating her marriage. At the very least, this seems to indicate that there were multiple hagiographical trends that existed simultaneously. Even as female saints were being rewritten as more approachable exemplars for laywomen, earlier medieval preferences for a more monastic type of celibate sanctity were still prevalent. Although we cannot definitively confirm Bradshaw's reasons for writing, if he directed his *Lyfe of Radegunde* towards the nuns of the dissolved priory or intended it as a defense of female Benedictine monasticism, this could explain his insistence on Radegund's virginity.

### ***The Miracle of the Oats: Radegund as a Model for All***

Bradshaw and Bouchet both address elite women in particular as those who would benefit from Radegund's exemplary life. However, their incorporation of miracles, relics, local cultic practices, folklore, and other elements of traditional hagiography demonstrates their interest in constructing Radegund as a model for all. Bradshaw and Bouchet's texts are the first two *Lives of Radegund* to include the apocryphal "Miracle des Avoines" (Miracle of the Oats) as an incorporated part of Radegund's history. As I discussed in Chapter 4, despite

---

<sup>68</sup> Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*, 4; 6.

<sup>69</sup> Sherry L. Reames, *The Legenda Aurea: A Reexamination of Its Paradoxical History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 206.

its omission from all of Radegund's early Latin *Lives*, this legend became so popular in the late Middle Ages that it inspired an official feast day at Poitiers in the fourteenth century.<sup>70</sup> The fact that this legend appears in both Bradshaw and Bouchet's *Lives* shows that this tradition, which began as a very localized phenomenon, quickly became a driving force in the spread of Radegund's cult. The popularity of the Miracle of the Oats and the rituals surrounding its commemoration incorporate the common people into Radegund's literary world as they never were before. Radegund retains her identity as an elite saint, but in the sixteenth century, Bradshaw and Bouchet fashion her into a saint who timelessly serves all people, from French queens and their ladies in waiting to English "clarkes" seeking promotion.

Like Bouchet, Bradshaw's *Lyfe* also discusses the custom of "offeryng of otes" at Radegund shrines. "By oblacion of otes," the "common people" receive all kinds of cures. Sight is restored to the blind, the lame regain the ability to walk, the dumb can speak again, maidens are able to retain their virginity, widows are defended from oppression, and "clarkes are exalted by her to promocion."<sup>71</sup> We may never come to a definitive conclusion about the origins of this fascinating tradition. Nonetheless, Bradshaw's inclusion of the legend, the custom of offering oats, and the miraculous cures implies a certain level of popularity for Radegund's cult in the early sixteenth century, since knowledge of this practice (and possibly the practice itself) had made its way over to England by the time Bradshaw was writing. The captivating and inclusive nature of the oat tradition, despite its departure from the "historical" life of Radegund, appealed to a wide group of devotees in both England and France. It also

---

<sup>70</sup> An episcopal ordnance from 1358 at Poitiers cites a feast of Radegund in February and a Feast of the Oats on the last day of February. Poitiers, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 26 (377), folio 1v: *Radegundis de advenis*. See also Favreau, "Le Culte de Sainte-Radegonde à Poitiers au Moyen Âge," 98.

<sup>71</sup> Bradshaw, *The lyfe of saynt Radegunde*, folio 27.

seems to be one of the main ways Radegund remained relevant. Bradshaw and Bouchet helped make the Miracle of the Oats an “official” part of Radegund’s story by writing it into their *Lives*, which could be responsible for the continuation of the custom in places like the village of La Genétouze where pilgrims celebrated the Miracle of the Oats in 2017.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to the Miracle of the Oats, both Bradshaw and Bouchet end their *Lives* with a list of miracles performed by Radegund before and after her death. Bradshaw translates only two miracles from the Latin sources about a servant who presumes to sit on Radegund’s chair and a governor whose sight is restored when he frees some prisoners. Bouchet includes an extensive list of miracles “from Radegund’s death up to the present, which were registered in her legendary.”<sup>73</sup> He records specific individuals by name from Poitiers and neighboring towns who made pilgrimages to Radegund’s tomb and received cures for their various ailments. Lastly, Bouchet recounts his own miracle: Since he had begun writing this work, he had suffered from two fevers and Radegund restored him to health.<sup>74</sup> Bouchet and his intellectual community would never have seen these miracles as unhistorical or superstitious. His explicit use of Fortunatus, Baudonivia, Hildebert, Vincent of Beauvais, and Antoninus of Florence as his sources for older miracles and the legendary from the church of Sainte-Radegonde in Poitiers for new miracles demonstrates careful attention to developing expectations for historical writing. It also seems clear that Bouchet’s

---

<sup>72</sup> Nicolas Pipelier, “La Genétouze. Sainte-Radegonde et le miracle des Avoines,” *Le Journal de Pays de la Loire*, August 19, 2017, [https://actu.fr/pays-de-la-loire/genetouze\\_85098/la-genetouze-sainte-radegonde-le-miracle-avoines\\_11535319.html](https://actu.fr/pays-de-la-loire/genetouze_85098/la-genetouze-sainte-radegonde-le-miracle-avoines_11535319.html)

<sup>73</sup> “Aucuns miracles faits en leglise ou repose le corps de saicte Radegonde a poitiers de puis son deces iusques apresent lesquels sont enregistres en son legendaire.” Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, book 4, folio 89r.

<sup>74</sup> “En touchant mes affiares iay tusiours trouve secours et consolation avec ladicte sainte mesment en deux maladies de fievres que iay eues puis le temps que ie commencay escrire cedit euvre.” Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, book 4, folio 96r.

work promotes his native Poitiers as a site of special importance, both as the site of Radegund's miracle-performing relics and as a site of historical memory.

***Print Culture, Literacy, and Humanism as Vehicles for Radegund's Cult***

Hagiographers in the sixteenth century were also responding to developments in technology and intellectual culture. Patronage networks had grown to incorporate printers whose own interest in the market for printed books influenced style and subject matter. Improved literacy rates and the sheer availability of books thanks to the development of the printing press contributed to an increasingly lay audience for devotional material. Set standards for writing and research were by no means fully established in the early sixteenth century, but Bradshaw and Bouchet's work demonstrates an awareness of the changing expectations for "historical" writing within the intellectual community. As a number of scholars have recently shown, beginning in the early fifteenth century in continental Europe and the late fifteenth century in England, writers, poets, translators, historians, and later, printers and booksellers increasingly applied humanist literary trends to hagiographical materials. They created what Joni Henry terms, the new hybrid genre of "humanist hagiography."<sup>75</sup> Bradshaw and Bouchet's *Lives* demonstrate a shared interest in the literary practices valued by humanist scholars, such as historical research, local history, source criticism, classicizing elements, and attention to rhetoric and style. They then integrated these practices with elements of traditional hagiography, including an interest in miracles, relics, local cultic practices, and folklore. While this practice marked them as members of the broader intellectual community, it also established their texts as sites of tradition and

---

<sup>75</sup> Joni Henry, "Humanist Hagiography in England 1480-1520," *Literature Compass* 10, no. 7 (2013): 535.



authority. This strategy made it possible for them to seamlessly promote their own interests using “Radegund’s” voice.

Scholars such as Alison Frazier, David Carlson, Joni Henry, and others who study the influence of humanism on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century hagiography all stress the continuity of these rewritings with their medieval counterparts. In her study on Italian hagiography, Frazier notes that Quattrocento hagiographers were just as concerned as their medieval predecessors with historical and rhetorical notions of truth. The influence of humanism here “is best described as an intensification and redirection of medieval concerns, not as a complete break with, or a series of challenges to, those concerns.”<sup>76</sup> The “changing historiographical and rhetorical context” and its extension into lay circles were the major innovations that set these texts apart from their antecedents.<sup>77</sup>

We can see evidence of this relationship most clearly in the ways Bradshaw and Bouchet demonstrate attention to method and in the way they incorporate a sense of source criticism into their work. Bouchet lays out his entire source base, asserting that his text is “entirely founded upon that which was written by” Gregory of Tours, Fortunatus, Baudonivia, Hildebert, Sigibert, Vincent of Beauvais, Landulph de Columna, Robert Gaguin, Antoninus of Florence, and “other historians who wrote about the said saint.”<sup>78</sup> It is important to note the even spread of Bouchet’s sources here which he lists in chronological order. First he cites the original Latin texts from Gregory, Fortunatus, and Baudonivia.

---

<sup>76</sup> Alison K Frazier, *Possible Lives: Authors and Saints in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 27.

<sup>77</sup> Frazier, *Possible Lives*, 19; 26.

<sup>78</sup> “me suis entierem(en)t fonde sur ce qui a este escript p(er) saint gregoire arcevesq(ue) de tours : qui fut celuy qui fait ses obseques et funerailles / p(er) saint Fortune evesq(ue) de poitiers qui fut gra(n)t amy & familier en dieu de lad’ sainte p(er) baudoyne sa servante. p(er) les croniq(ue)s sigiberti. annonii monachi vince(n)tii veluacen landulphi de columpna roberti gaguini et autres historièns qui ont escript de lad’ sainte.” Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, book 3, fol 69r.

Hildebert of Lavardin (c. 1055 – 1133),<sup>79</sup> Sigebert of Gembloux (1030 – 1112),<sup>80</sup> and Vincent of Beauvais (1184/1194 – c. 1264)<sup>81</sup> were all medieval ecclesiastical authors. Landulph de Columna (d. 1479),<sup>82</sup> Robert Gaguin (1433/34 – 1501),<sup>83</sup> and Antoninus of Florence (1389 – 1459)<sup>84</sup> were closer to Bouchet's own time and at least Gaguin and Antoninus demonstrated an interest in humanism.

Bouchet's *Histoire et cronicque* situates the life of Radegund within a broader chronology of "French" history, much like Antoninus and Vincent of Beauvais situate their saints' lives within "world history." As we will see in Chapters 6 and 7, this practice would accelerate in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries when French hagiographer/historians position Radegund as the hero of France's origin story and as proof of France's destiny to endure as a traditionally Catholic monarchical nation. In addition to Bouchet's interest in the larger historical context of Radegund's life, he also exhibits a great sensitivity to discovering "the truth" and frequently points out discrepancies in his sources. After weighing the merits of each, he explains which version of events he believes and why. For example, Bouchet notes that it is written elsewhere that Radegund remained a virgin after her marriage to Clothar. However, he argues "the [anonymous] writer does not cite his authority for that, and even though he is a modern jurist and historiographer, I do not believe it, because Saint Fortunatus, who was Radegund's familiar as I said before, wrote otherwise, and similarly master Vincent of Beauvais, Baudonivia, and many others did not hold that

---

<sup>79</sup> Bishop of Le Mans and later archbishop of Tours, author of letters, poems, sermons, treatises, as well as the lives of Hugh of Cluny and Radegund.

<sup>80</sup> Benedictine monk, composed a chronicle called *Chronicon sive Chronographia*.

<sup>81</sup> Dominican friar at the Cistercian monastery of Royaumont Abbey, known mostly for his "Great Mirror" (*Speculum Maius*).

<sup>82</sup> Canon at the church of Saint Hilary at Poitiers.

<sup>83</sup> French Humanist, religious reformer, composed the *Rerum Gallicarum annales*.

<sup>84</sup> Italian Dominican friar, archbishop of Florence, composed a history of the world called *Chronicon partibus tribus distincta ab initio mundi* which includes numerous saints' lives.

opinion.”<sup>85</sup> Here, Bouchet resolves this historical problem by turning to the sources. He is inclined to believe information asserted by multiple writers, especially if those writers personally knew Radegund, over a modern professional who did not practice his art according to Bouchet’s standards. This use of sources in the *Histoire et cronicque* is by no means unique among Bouchet’s work. Bouchet was an accomplished historian and his attention to source criticism here demonstrates an engagement with earlier and contemporary methods of historical writing.

Bradshaw only cites Antoninus and “the sequence of saynt Martyn” by name, while occasionally referring to “cronicles” and “the history” as sources for particular information. He does not discuss the broader historical context as Bouchet does, but his other work shows that he was fully capable of doing so.<sup>86</sup> Bradshaw likely did not have the resources (or the inclination) to compose such an in-depth history of this foreign saint as he did for his abbey’s patroness in the *Lyfe and History of Saynt Werburge*. Nonetheless, his attention to sources and the classical reference to Phoebus entering the sign of Scorpio in the first stanza of his prologue indicates his attention to humanist writing practices.<sup>87</sup>

Both Bradshaw and Bouchet ground their texts in tradition and authority, which makes it possible for them to use “Radegund’s” voice to promote their own interests and to appeal to the literary expectations of their audience. We have already seen how they used the deathbed scene and “Radegund’s” exhortations to address their sixteenth-century institutional

---

<sup>85</sup> “Il a este escript par quelcun que saicte Radegonde neut compaignee charnelle avecques le roy clotaire son mary mais l’escripvant ne alegue son aucteur iacoit ce quil soit modern iudiciaire et historiographe et ne le croy pas.” Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, book 2, fol 25v.

<sup>86</sup> Bradshaw’s longer and more popular *Life of St. Werburge* is also a vernacular translation from a Latin source and was printed in 1521 by Richard Pynson. Here, Bradshaw combines an extensive history of his abbey and the town of Chester with Werburge’s life and her family’s genealogy.

<sup>87</sup> “Whan the feruent heate of the somer season/ Was almost endyd by course of nature/ And Phebus entred y signe of Scoprio/ Passyng y equinoctial tha ye may be sure.” Bradshaw, *Lyfe of Saynt Radegunde*, Prologue, folio 3.

concerns. Returning to this scene and reading it against the earlier Latin accounts of Radegund's death, we can see how their particular additions and changes are in line with current literary trends. Specifically, the invention of a lingering illness, elaborate speeches, relatively subdued mourners gathered around the sickbed, and an emphasis on consolation and remembrance seem to be derived from the *ars moriendi* (the art of dying well). Furthermore, the testamentary nature of "Radegund's" deathbed speeches bears a strong resemblance to humanist rewritings of bishops' *vitae* as testamentary acts.

First, both Bradshaw and Bouchet set the scene by giving Radegund a debilitating illness that forces her to take to her bed. Bouchet adds details about Radegund refusing to take the "medicines and remedies" the nuns had prepared for her.<sup>88</sup> Bradshaw romanticizes the illness by describing her "daily increasing woe and punishment, how she endured languor, and how she sorely dreaded her life every day as the pains and passions doubled continuously."<sup>89</sup> This virtual martyrdom is quite different from how Radegund's death is reported by Baudonivia and Gregory of Tours, who both write that Radegund simply came to the end of her life. In fact, Baudonivia recounts how Radegund "never slackened in finishing her course," describing her life as "the long drawn-out martyrdom for the love of God," even up to the day she died.<sup>90</sup> It is useful here to return to Karen Winstead and Catherine Sanok's studies, which both discuss the relationship between exemplarity and the popularity of early Christian female martyr legends. It is possible that Bradshaw and Bouchet were dissatisfied

---

<sup>88</sup> Bouchet, *Histoire et cronique*, book 4, folio 81v.

<sup>89</sup> "Sickenes approched her and infirmite/ The messanger of deth and wordly seperacion/ Dayly increasyd with wo and penalyte/ Her body was brought to suche debilyte/ That she sore dred her lyfe euery day/ The panges and passions doubled always/ As she endured suche langore and sickenes/ She sent for her systers and all the couent..." Bradshaw, *Lyfe of Saynt Radegunde*, folio 23.

<sup>90</sup> "Usque ad diem transitus sui numquam minuit cursum implere; & quod cœpit, corde retinuit, quia non qui cœperit, sed qui perseveraverit usque in finem, ipse salvus erit. Ubi jam ad finem vitæ venit sanctum ejus corpusculum, longum trahens martyrium pro amore Domini." Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 21.35.

with the “white martyrdom” (i.e. martyrdom through asceticism) of Baudonivia’s Radegund. By transforming this into a painful and drawn-out illness, they could give her something more akin to a martyr’s death to make her conform better to the genre expectations of early Christian female martyr rewritings.

Secondly, as discussed earlier, both Bradshaw and Bouchet create an elaborate death bed speech for Radegund where she exhorts her community of nuns to follow her counsel and maintain particular virtues. Baudonivia’s Radegund remains silent and offers no speech or exhortations at her death, though there are many instances of direct speech (*oratio recta*) in other sections of her *vita*. Alison Frazier notes that the addition of the death bed speech was a common feature of humanists’ biographies of bishops in particular. As she explains,

The humanists' *vitae* play up the idealized sociopolitical role of the model bishop in one particularly striking way: by re-creating the scene of the deathbed speech as a testamentary act...the deathbed speech became, for many humanist authors, the bishop's literary testament, a moment of public instruction mixing the spiritual and temporal concerns.<sup>91</sup>

Frazier notes that issues treated in the death bed speech were specifically the concerns of medieval and Renaissance reformers, “residency, conscientious attention to *cura animarum* (care of souls), and the provision for the peace and well-being of the city through charity and justice.”<sup>92</sup> As discussed earlier, Bradshaw and Bouchet’s Radegund reminds her assembled community to observe their Rule and religious obligations, to remain worthy of receiving alms, and to live virtuously. Radegund was not a bishop, but Bradshaw and Bouchet’s choice to include a death bed scene in which she effectively follows the model of the bishop’s literary testament certainly demonstrates an awareness of this popular humanist convention.

---

<sup>91</sup> Frazier, *Possible Lives*, 32-33.

<sup>92</sup> Frazier, *Possible Lives*, 33.

Lastly, Bradshaw and Bouchet significantly minimize the mourners' expression of grief to create a more subdued emotional scene than the unrestrained lament of the nuns in Baudonivia's version. Bradshaw and Bouchet both describe how Radegund invites her sisters to "visit and console her and pay her great attentions."<sup>93</sup> Bradshaw's nuns hold up their hands to heaven and cry piteously that God is taking away their blessed abbess, though they ultimately accept their bereavement saying, "But against death, there is no remedy." Radegund offers them consolation also, declaring that they should be content with whatever God should visit upon them, whether it be pleasure or punishment.<sup>94</sup> Bouchet's Radegund similarly consoles her nuns and invites them to remember her, explaining that, "God did not wish to leave me any longer in such misery, and he wanted to call me to him. And for this reason, take courage, for you are no longer tied to my corporeal company. Pray each time that you will always be with me in spirit and memory."<sup>95</sup>

Baudonivia's Radegund does not offer any consolation or make a speech of any kind. Rather, her account emphasizes the visceral misery of the nuns who strike their breasts and cry out to God for taking away their "light." Baudonivia tells the story in first person, including herself in the scene as one of the mourners, "The tears flow, groans break forth from *our* innermost selves; but nothing can console *us*, while *we* mourn."<sup>96</sup> The nuns' clamor was so loud that it penetrated the heavens so that God and the angels heard. As Radegund's

---

<sup>93</sup> "co(n)gnoissant que sa maladie estoit le definement de sa vie te(m)porelle se fait savoir a labbesse et a toutes les religieuses qui la fure(n)t visiter et co(n)soller et feirent de grans diligences." Bouchet, *Histoire et cronique*, book 4, folio 81v.

<sup>94</sup> Bradshaw, *Lyfe of Saynt Radegunde*, folio 25.

<sup>95</sup> "dieu ne veult plus me laisser en ceste misere ains me veult appeller avec luy. Et a ceste cause prens conge de vous car plus ne vous tiendray co(m)paignee corporelle. Toutesfois vous prie que soiez tousiours avec moy spirituellement et par memoire." Bouchet, *Histoire et cronique*, book 4, folio 81v.

<sup>96</sup> "Fluunt lacrymæ, de imis medullis gemitus prorumpunt; sed in nullo consolationis locum inveniunt, dum plangimus... Beati omnes congregati, luctuose circa ejus thorum flentes, & ejulantes, pectora duris pugnis ferientes, voces ad cælum dabant, clamantes, & dicentes: Domine, ne permittas nos tam grave damnum pati; lumen nostrum recipis; nos cur in tenebris derelinquis?" Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 4.35.

body was carried in procession out of the convent for burial, the cloistered nuns stood upon the walls and “They lamented so loudly that their grief drowned out the psalms, rendering tears for psalms, groans for canticles, sighs for alleluias.”<sup>97</sup>

In the course of the late Middle Ages, excessive displays of grief like this were increasingly viewed as indecorous threats to civic stability that should be held in check by more discreet mourning rituals.<sup>98</sup> After the first wave of the Black Death (1348-50), preparing for death, repentance, dispensing of possessions, visiting the dying, burial rites, and commemorating the dead became subjects of special interest in art and literature.<sup>99</sup> The popular *ars moriendi* (the art of dying) tradition emphasized that there was a “good way” to die and prescribed appropriate behavior for the dying person and their mourners. The earliest English translations of the Latin *Tractatus de arte bene moriendi* date mostly from the third and fourth quarter of the fifteenth century. William Caxton published a printed version in 1490 called *The Art and Craft to Know Well to Die*, and in 1491 he published his own abridgment from a French translation, *The Craft for to Deye for the Helthe of Mannes Sowle (Ars moriendi)*.<sup>100</sup> Allison Levy has pointed out the performative quality of dying well within the *ars moriendi* tradition, stating that, “dying was a public occasion where the deathbed served as the center-stage of a moral theater for preparing the soul and for dealing with

---

<sup>97</sup> “Cum sub muro cum psallentio sanctum ejus corpus portaretur, quia instituerat, ut nulla vivens foris monasterii januam egrederetur, tota congregatio supra murum lamentans, ita ut planctus earum superaret ipsum psallentium, pro psalmo lacrymas, pro cantico mugitum, & gemitum pro Alleluya, reddebant.” Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 5.24,

<sup>98</sup> See for example, Carol Lansing, *Passion and Order: Restraint of Grief in the Medieval Italian Communes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018). This study explores the legislation banning public displays of grief at funerals in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italian communes of Orvieto, Perugia, and Bologna. Previously customary displays of emotion came to be considered as disruptive to civic order. See also Mia Korpiola and Anu Lahtinen, *Cultures of Death and Dying in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, 2015), 3.

<sup>99</sup> Amy Appleford, *Learning to Die in London, 1380-1540* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 2.

<sup>100</sup> Appleford, *Learning to Die in London*, 142.

practical matters of caring for the body, finalizing financial and domestic arrangements and obtaining instructions for the funeral and burial”<sup>101</sup> Bradshaw and Bouchet’s invented deathbed scene has all the theatricality that might be expected in a “good death,” while simultaneously rendering Baudonivia’s raw and emotional account more appropriate within the context of sixteenth-century humanist culture. But most importantly, the substance of Radegund’s deathbed exhortations to her spiritual descendants served to augment her spiritual authority to that normally only exercised by a bishop.

### ***Conclusion***

The fact that the first printed vernacular *Lives of Radegund* were published within a decade of each other is no mere coincidence. By the sixteenth century, Radegund had long ceased to be a saint only for the nuns of Sainte-Croix and the canons of the Church of Sainte-Radegonde in Poitiers. The early proliferation of churches, abbeys, priories, chapels, fountains, stones, and caves dedicated to Radegund in France, Germany, and England had always made her intercessory powers accessible to the common people. But it was not until Bradshaw and Bouchet’s printed *Lives* that we truly see Radegund’s identity constructed as a saint for all.

Rising literacy rates in the sixteenth century, especially among lay women, meant that authors had to consider a wider and more diverse audience who were interested in a more personal type of piety through private devotional reading. Bradshaw and Bouchet both address elite women in particular as those who would benefit from Radegund’s exemplary life. However, they each tailor this exemplarity to specific groups. As a defender of Benedictine monasticism, Bradshaw reconstructs Radegund as a virginal abbess, while

---

<sup>101</sup> Allison M. Levy, *Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2003), 42.



Bouchet imagines her as the model “bonne dame” and perfect wife. Both authors strike a careful balance between continuity and innovation by conforming their writing to humanist conventions while simultaneously preserving the authority derived from traditional hagiography. This signaled their membership in the broader intellectual community while also establishing their texts as sites of tradition and authority where they could promote their own institutional concerns using “Radegund’s” voice. Bradshaw and Bouchet made Radegund relevant not only by creating vernacular “translations” of her *Lives*, but also by “translating” her into their own pre-Reformation context. Available to a wider public audience than ever before, their texts thus became new vehicles for the expansion of Radegund’s cult in the sixteenth century and would go on to influence how Radegund was rewritten in the coming centuries.

## **Introduction to Chapters 6 and 7**

### **The Cult of Radegund Before and After the French Revolution**

The following two chapters present a comprehensive comparison of the state of Radegund's cult during some of the most turbulent moments of France's Early Modern and Modern history: The Wars of Religion (1562-1598), the Huguenot rebellions of the 1620s, the French Revolution (1789-1799), and its complicated aftermath (1800-1900). These events had a devastating effect on the cult of Radegund – and on the cult of the saints in general. Radegund's churches, chapels, relics, and art, were vandalized or destroyed in the city of Poitiers and in many of the smaller towns and villages throughout France where she was venerated. But these moments of upheaval also resulted in a dedicated revival of Radegund's cult that produced new identities for Radegund that were distinct from how she was conceived of in previous periods. Radegund was imbued with new political and gendered meanings that reflected the needs and concerns of French people living in a revolutionary climate.

The attacks by French Protestants in the sixteenth century and by revolutionaries in the eighteenth century targeted Radegund's cult sites as symbols of Catholic corruption and superstition. In both cases, this destruction was also part of a larger revolt against royal authority. The Wars of Religion (1562-1598) cannot be simply reduced to interconfessional civil war between the clearly defined groups of Protestants and Catholics. While religious difference was an integral aspect of the conflict, political and social crises also provided the impetus for the outbreak of violence.<sup>1</sup> As the head of the Gallican Church, the French King

---

<sup>1</sup> Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 51.

was hailed as the *Rex christianissimus* and was bound by his coronation oath to defend the Church, protect the clergy and canon law, and expel heretics from the kingdom.<sup>2</sup> The monarchy was therefore inextricably joined to the Catholic Church so that the king's "power and authority were defined and clarified by the very theology that Protestantism so sharply criticized."<sup>3</sup> Huguenot political rhetoric became increasingly anti-royalist and Catholics viewed their theology as a fundamental threat to the authority of the sacral monarchy that would overturn the social order.<sup>4</sup> Ideas about popular sovereignty and suggestions that the king received his authority from "the people" were promoted in Protestant circles, alienating Catholic nobles and pushing reconciliation between the warring factions further out of reach.<sup>5</sup> Many of the edicts promulgated by the Crown in the second half of the sixteenth century therefore targeted sedition and rebellion as much as heresy.<sup>6</sup> In 1620, the Huguenots rose up against Louis XIII's re-establishment of Catholic rights and his movement to suppress Protestant participation in a Catholics-only parliament. Tensions escalated and the Huguenots fought three civil wars against the French Crown in the space of a decade. It is therefore unsurprising that seventeenth-century *Lives of Radegund* reimagined the Huguenot's desecration of Radegund's tomb as a heroic martyrdom and framed the attack on her relics as an attack on the rightful monarchy itself.

A century-and-a-half later, the revolutionaries of the 1790s abolished the Ancien Régime and executed Louis XVI for the monarchy's failure to mitigate increasing social and economic inequalities. Disdain for the monarchy often went hand-in-hand with a rejection of

---

<sup>2</sup> Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, 7; 9.

<sup>3</sup> Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, 25.

<sup>4</sup> Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, 25.

<sup>5</sup> Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, 76.

<sup>6</sup> Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, 29.

Catholicism, which was perceived as a bastion of royal power and hypocrisy. Revolutionaries perceived both the Church and the monarchy as an oppressive obstacle to Progress.<sup>7</sup> While the short-lived constitutional monarchy (1789–1792) shifted the balance of power from these institutions to the State, the First Republic (1792–1799) fully removed their conservative influence. A tentative peace between the Church and the State was reached under Napoleon’s First Empire (1804–1814). After Napoleon’s defeat, Louis XVIII, brother of the executed Louis XVI, was installed as king under the Bourbon Restoration (1814–1830). Charles X succeeded Louis XVIII and sought to restore some of the power that the Church had enjoyed under the Ancien Régime. The conservative Bourbon rule was replaced by Louis-Philippe d'Orléans, the self-styled “King of the French” as opposed to “King of France,” under the July Monarchy (1830–1848), which divided royal supporters into Orléanists, supporters of Louis-Philippe d'Orléans, and legitimists, an ultra-Catholic faction that rejected Louis-Philippe’s claim to the throne and recognized only Charles X’s direct heir as the rightful king. The 1848 Revolution that overtook all of Europe swept away the July Monarchy and inaugurated the Second Republic (1848-1852). There was a great revival of Catholicism and renewed veneration of saints during the Restoration and the Second Empire (1852-1870) when Louis-Napoleon supported the Church.<sup>8</sup> The Third Republic was established in 1870 after France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. Despite this regime’s commitment to many of the secular ideals of the French Revolution, it nonetheless saw a marked revival of traditional Catholic practices, especially the popular interest in saints and pilgrimages to their

---

<sup>7</sup> J. P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided : Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 7.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Emery, “Introduction,” in *Medieval Saints in Late Nineteenth Century French Culture: Eight Essays*, eds. Elizabeth Emery and Laurie Postlewaite (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004), 2.

shrines.<sup>9</sup> But this Catholic Revival was by no means ubiquitous. By the 1870s, “Catholicism had become the largest front in a Franco-French war” as anti-clerical republicans and conservative Catholics found themselves divided on almost every political, social, and cultural issue.<sup>10</sup> It was during this period of the Third Republic when royalists still hoped for a new Bourbon restoration that Radegund was politicized most aggressively.

As both Catholic saint and French queen, Radegund became an obvious target for Huguenots and revolutionaries alike. However, in both cases this anti-Catholic sentiment was balanced almost equally with Catholic revival. Devotees recognized Radegund’s symbolic potential and accentuated those attributes that supported their political and theological positions. Her identity as a French queen became her paramount attribute from the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries as authors and artists framed her sainthood in terms of France’s history as a Catholic kingdom. The cult of Radegund not only survived the physical destruction of many of her cult sites and the dissolution of her Poitiers foundations, but it actually experienced an intense resurgence in the face of concerted efforts at suppression. The interlacing themes of destruction and revival that characterized these periods led to new identities for Radegund that reflected the pressing needs and concerns of French communities. The destruction of Radegund’s cult sites produced stories of Catholic heroism when devotees rescued buildings, art, and relics from destruction. Reports of new miracles circulated after vandals were suddenly inspired to save the objects they originally sought to destroy or when Radegund’s intervention saved the town of Poitiers from military assaults. These stories became part of the ever-expanding canon of Radegund lore which enhanced the devotion of the faithful and were relished as markers of Catholic triumph.

---

<sup>9</sup> Emery, *Medieval Saints in Late Nineteenth Century French Culture*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Daughton, *An Empire Divided*, 7.

Between 1600 and 1900, more new Radegund-related media was produced and circulated than in all previous periods combined. The seventeenth century saw the production of at least four new *Lives of Radegund* and the grandest Radegundian artistic programs at Sainte-Croix since the twelfth century. These otherwise traditional devotional pieces were unique in the long trajectory of Radegund's cult in that they were consistently framed as reactionary – they emphasized the desperate urge for the renewal of Catholic faith, weaponizing Radegund's cult against the looming threats of Protestantism or Republicanism. After the Revolution, Radegund maintained her role as the subject of traditional devotional art, several Catholic *histoires*, and continued in her function as patroness of Poitiers. But she also appeared in more modest, easily circulated and easily accessible media that reflected the new developments in communication technology: newspapers, the mass-produced holy card, souvenir pamphlets, published accounts of speeches and processions, and even a secular civic monument and anti-clerical novel. While the Radegund tradition had always been appropriated by individuals and communities to promote their particular agendas, this was the first time that she wasn't explicitly used to embody the Church's values as a model for the ideal Christian life.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, Radegund – as a saint and as a historical figure – became more politically charged than ever. Both Catholics and non-Catholics took a special interest in Radegund as the French nation looked to its medieval past for a shared historical narrative that could provide a sense of unity in fragmented times.<sup>11</sup> France's demoralizing defeat in the Franco-Prussian War was a significant turning point that prompted

---

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Emery and Laura Morowitz. *Consuming the Past: The Medieval Revival in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003), 4.

a reexamination of history as a way to redefine French identity in the face of loss.<sup>12</sup> Nostalgia for an imagined past Golden Age generated an appreciation for Radegund and her times by those on both sides of the politico-religious divide. From Royalist to Republican, the French saw Radegund – and the medievalism they imagined her to represent – as the substance of a shared heritage and a source of national identity. Most scholarship that focuses on this period fails to recognize how relevant medieval history truly was to the construction of Modern France. The long history of France is still part of French consciousness regardless of political or religious affiliation, demonstrating Radegund’s power to transcend such divides.

What singles out Radegund’s cult from the many others affected by these periods of social, political, and religious upheaval are the distinctive political and gendered connotations that underlay the ways the destruction and revival of her cult were articulated in text, art, and memory. Following each cycle, civil war and revolution polarized Radegund’s political and gendered meanings in new and unexpected ways as attitudes towards the monarchy, Catholicism, and “French tradition” coalesced. Based on the examination of legal sources, such as damage inventories; rituals, including processions, pilgrimages, and statue-crowning ceremonies; institutional developments, like the establishment of confraternities, the rebuilding of chapels and churches, and the art and texts associated with them; the production of new hagiographical traditions; and evidence of Radegund’s global presence at sites of colonial evangelization, these two chapters interrogate how and why Radegund was used to build new civic, confessional, and national identities.

---

<sup>12</sup> Emery, *Consuming the Past*, 143.

## Chapter 6

### **Soldier of Christ and Model for Women's Tridentine Spirituality:**

#### **Radegund at the Intersection of Hagiography, Memory, and History in Post-Reformation France**

The year 1562 was a year of mourning for the city of Poitiers. The Gascons, after having marked their passage by ruins without number, arrived at Poitiers, which was one of the main theaters of their nefarious exploits. They rushed upon the Church of Sainte-Radegonde with such a fury that the name of "wild beasts" doesn't even do them justice. No story could be as eloquent as the inventory drawn up after the Gascons' rampage and that of the Huguenots of Tours who completed their work of devastation...<sup>1</sup>

For L'Abbé Emile Briand, the author of the 1898 *Histoire de Sainte-Radegonde* and curate of her church in Poitiers, the irrevocable losses and indignities suffered by his patroness at the hands of the Huguenots was clearly still fresh three centuries later. To better articulate and censure their crimes, Briand includes a complete transcript of the inventory of damages compiled by the chapter canons in his history, as well as a *monitoire* recorded by a Poitevin civic official.<sup>2</sup> The *monitoire*, auspiciously filed on the eve of Radegund's feast day, led to the retrieval of "a good number of precious things," but the meticulous application of hammer and torch ensured that much of what was lost on May 27, 1562 was lost forever.<sup>3</sup> A similar destruction descended on Radegund's cult sites throughout France - and the cult sites of many other Catholic saints - which intensified two centuries later during the French Revolution. But in the aftermath of all this material loss, a renewed faith in Saint Radegund rose from the

---

<sup>1</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 290.

<sup>2</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 293.

<sup>3</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 298.



ashes each time, serving as a focal point for the complex process of communal memory-making and identity formation that took place over the subsequent centuries.

This chapter explores the pattern of destruction and revival that characterized the cult of Radegund in France from the arrival of the Wars of Religion in Poitiers in 1562 through the last new *Life of Radegund* composed before the French Revolution in 1686. While iconoclasm and religious violence have been popular topics in historical scholarship for centuries, there has been far less scholarly attention devoted to the complex process of rebuilding and remembering iconoclastic events. Eric Nelson coined the term “relic landscape,” which “refers both to the places where relics regularly resided and the set of real and conceived spaces and landscapes that relics helped to articulate through rituals, processions, translations and other activities.”<sup>4</sup> Nelson’s exploration of the renewal and evolution of the relic landscape in Tours, Blois, and the Vendôme demonstrates the great value of studying “the material and spatial aspects of relic veneration” which can “provide windows into aspects of religious life that are otherwise absent from the historical record.”<sup>5</sup> In Radegund’s case, the new meanings assigned to the destruction and revival of her cult sites by contemporaries give us insights into expectations for elite women’s spirituality, ideas about sainthood and queenship, and the expression of communal interests and preoccupations through reinterpretations of Radegund’s identity. In particular, I investigate how the Catholics of Poitiers used the Radegund tradition to reconstruct a “counter-memory” of events after the vandalism of the Church of Sainte-Radegonde in 1562, the Siege of Poitiers in 1569, and the victory against the Protestant publican party of Jean de la Haye in 1574. We

---

<sup>4</sup> Eric Nelson, *The Legacy of Iconoclasm: Religious War and the Relic Landscape of Tours, Blois and Vendôme, 1550-1750* (St. Andrews: Centre for French History and Culture of the University of St. Andrews, 2013), 5.

<sup>5</sup> Nelson, *The Legacy of Iconoclasm*, 11.

will then see how the Wars of Religion were interpreted outside of Poitiers by analyzing new Radegundian art and texts produced for restored chapels and shrines dedicated to Radegund at Chinon and l'Espinay-Sainte-Radegonde in the area of Châteaudun.

The greatest revitalization of Radegund's cult coincided with the Council of Trent (1545–63), which sought to reform the Gallican Church and to reaffirm traditional practices and beliefs integral to Catholic identity: purgatory, the seven sacraments, the importance of works, transubstantiation, indulgences, pilgrimage, veneration of the saints, and the cult of relics.<sup>6</sup> The promotion of Radegund's cult became integrated with Tridentine reforms in Poitiers when "la grande réformatrice," Abbess Charlotte-Flandrine de Nassau of Sainte-Croix, spent the four decades of her abbacy commissioning new Radegundian art and text to support her reform programs.<sup>7</sup> The French Catholic secret society of the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement was particularly active in Poitiers in the 1640s and its members were responsible for the establishment of the Confraternity of the Tomb of Sainte-Radegonde and for the reinstatement of certain devotional practices at the Abbey of Sainte-Croix surrounding the veneration of Radegund's relic of the True Cross. Two other Confraternities of Saint Radegund were established in the small villages of l'Espinay-Sainte-Radegonde and Marigny a few years later. Either the king or the local seigneur acted as the head of the confraternities and participated in the meetings and feast-day rituals. The Poitiers chapter was disbanded during the French Revolution but was revived again in 1817. The resurgence of Radegund's cult outside of Poitiers was often spearheaded by wealthy local patrons who stepped in to finance the rebuilding of chapels and churches, promoted local Radegund

---

<sup>6</sup> Fabrice Vigier, "Une politique du pèlerinage? Les sanctuaires catholiques du diocèse de Poitiers au XVIIe siècle," (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014), <http://books.openedition.org/pur/65072>

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Marccadé, "L'Age classique," in *Histoire de Sainte-Croix de Poitiers: Quatorze siècles de vie monastique*, ed. Yvonne Labande-Mailfert (Poitiers: Société des antiquaires de l'Ouest, 1986), 338.

pilgrimages, and produced their own Radegundian art and texts to accompany them. Royal support for Radegund's cult also intensified, especially thanks to the patronage of the Queen Mother Anne of Austria and her son, King Louis XIV.

In the previous chapter, I showed how Radegund was strategically molded into a symbol of secular power and royal legitimacy by the sixteenth century. The increasing association of Catholicism with conservative sentiments made it easy for her to become a symbol for the Catholic cause against the “pretended reformers” (i.e. French Protestants, also known as Huguenots) in the seventeenth century as tensions between Protestants and Catholics continued to simmer. Three post-Reformation *Lives of Radegund* written by Etienne Moquot (1621), Joseph Dumonteil (1627), and Jean Filleau (1643) all frame their biographies around the Huguenot threat and set Radegund up as the embodiment of French, royal, Catholic tradition. These *Lives* depict Radegund as a soldier of Christ who fought against heresy in her own time just as her spiritual descendants were fighting against Protestantism now. They also explicitly characterize the destruction of Catholic institutions and objects as an attack on the monarchy. These *Lives of Radegund* are hagiography-as-history where the authors – whether lay or clerical – use the latest trends in historical scholarship to situate Radegund's biography in the larger history of a Catholic France ruled by a great lineage of French Catholic royalty. Their work all shares the same emphasis on the fundamental interconnectivity between Radegund's royalty and Catholic orthodoxy, woven into a narrative that made Radegund relevant for a post-Reformation audience. Despite the early twentieth-century historian, René Aigrain's, rather dismissive assertion that “they are

often interesting, but do not present anything new,” even a cursory reading of these three original works reveals a truly novel interpretation of Radegund.<sup>8</sup>

The previous chapter also discussed how Radegund was reinterpreted as a model for elite laywomen in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. I related how both Jean Bouchet and Henry Bradshaw rewrote, toned down, and emphasized different aspects of Radegund’s *Life* to make her more appealing as a role model for the modern sixteenth-century woman. They tailored their work to different female groups distinguished by sexual status: Bradshaw the monk reconstructed Radegund as a virgin and an abbess, while Bouchet the bourgeois *procureur* imagined her as the perfect wife and pious queen. As I show in this chapter, the three new vernacular post-Reformation *Lives* of Radegund composed in the seventeenth century continue this trend, but the distinctions are even more polarized. Like Bradshaw, Dumonteil, the Jesuit priest, insists that Radegund remained a virgin throughout her marriage, while Filleau, the Poitevin law professor, follows Bouchet’s lead and presents Radegund as a shining example of a dutiful wife and queen. But where Bradshaw merely titles Radegund as a virgin, Dumonteil invents new scenes where Clothar proposes that they “live in marriage like brother and sister,” formulates a convoluted argument “proving” Radegund’s virginity, and praises the superiority of virginity to married life in a rambling theological digression.<sup>9</sup> Embracing the opposite extreme, Filleau deliberately avoids descriptions of the cloister in favor of the palace because, “although full of brilliance,” the cloister could only ever appear to his elite female readers “as admirable and not imitable.” And so, a century after Bradshaw and Bouchet, Dumonteil and Filleau’s polarized characterizations of Radegund allow us to see a shift in the expectations for elite women’s

---

<sup>8</sup> Aigrain, *Sainte Radegonde*, ix.

<sup>9</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire De La Vie Incomparable de sainte Radegonde*, 28.

spirituality in the palace and in the cloister: these two theatres for female sanctity no longer appear to have the same possibility for overlap in the seventeenth century as they did in the sixteenth.

***The Reformation on Radegund's Doorstep: Protestants in Poitiers***

Sonnet 15

Under the false pretext of their vain opinions;  
Orleans, Tours, and Blois share in the sorrow  
Of which my poor City laments.  
It is not Byzantium, Spain, or Rome,  
It is not Scotland, England, or Germany  
Who have sacked us and caused us so much suffering.  
It is the French mutineers who have done the damage,  
Not fearing to injure a young and just King,  
After having polluted everything that is holy.<sup>10</sup>

- *Madame Madeleine des Roches of Poitiers, 1562.*

Chapter 4 discussed how the city of Poitiers cultivated a special loyalty to the French Crown in the fifteenth century by welcoming Charles VII after his flight from Paris and becoming his new seat of power during the Hundred Years' War. That relationship was reified – among other strategies – through the melding of religious and historical traditions in new textual and artistic reinterpretations of Radegund that promoted her association with the Valois as a saintly ancestor and patroness. The Wars of Religion (1562-1598) tried this loyalty in the sixteenth century by temporarily pitting Poitevins against each other and their monarch in a grueling civil war. Unlike some French cities that became truly polarized with competing Protestant and Catholic communities, Poitiers saw, in the fifth religious war (1574-1576), “ the development of a politically influential group of militant Catholics and the

---

<sup>10</sup> Madeleine des Roches, a Poitievain humanist poet and center of Poitiers' literary circle from 1570-1587, composed this sonnet just after the sack of Poitiers in 1562. Madeleine Roches and Catherine Roches, *From Mother and Daughter: Poems, Dialogues, and Letters of Les Dames des Roches*, ed. and trans. Anne R. Larsen (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 71.

articulation of an ultra-Catholic identity for the city at large.”<sup>11</sup> Many complex elements contributed to this process of confessional identity-formation, but one important avenue was the use of Radegund, Poitiers’ royal patroness, to reconstruct a “counter-memory of events.”<sup>12</sup>

The first seeds of Reformed belief were planted in Poitiers when John Calvin visited the city in 1534. His ideas spread among intellectuals in the university and judicial spheres, who made up a significant and influential portion of Poitiers’ civic body.<sup>13</sup> By the 1550s, the Reformed community in Poitiers had a considerable presence and, in 1555, it established one of the first Protestant churches in France.<sup>14</sup> In an admirable show of cooperation in the years leading up to the war, Catholics and Huguenots agreed that members of both religions would appoint their own guards at the city gates. The turning point occurred in April of 1562 when Catholic guards obstructed the entry of a Protestant nobleman. Events spiraled out of control and the Protestants opened the Tranchée gate to a group of Huguenot troops encamped outside. One month later, the Huguenots had firm control of Poitiers. Reformed university students established a guard and made a show of force by parading in the streets. Lancelot du Bouchet, sieur de Sainte-Gemme, was sent by general Louis de Bourbon, Prince of Condé, to act as Poitiers’ governor. Condé seized the keys to the city gates, confiscated arms from the Catholic population, and allowed for the pillaging of Church resources. Gascon troops under the command of the seigneur de Grammont stopped in Poitiers en route to Orleans and perpetrated acts of iconoclasm on the city’s churches.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Hilary Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community: Politics and Civic Culture in Sixteenth-Century Poitiers* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004) 154.

<sup>12</sup> Hilary Bernstein, “The Reformed Terreur Panique of 1562: Debating Miracles and Memory in Seventeenth-Century Le Mans,” *French History* 34, no. 4 (2020): 8.

<sup>13</sup> Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community*, 7; 154.

<sup>14</sup> Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community*, 154.

<sup>15</sup> Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community*, 156.

A few months later, a Catholic army commanded by the duc de Villars and the maréchal de Saint-Andre clashed with the Protestant troops who had established command over the city. Poitiers' receveur general, Francois Pineau, who still maintained control of the chateau, directed canon fire towards the Protestants and helped the royal Catholic army retake the city. However, in the process of liberating the city, these Catholic troops also liberated just about everything of value that had escaped the Protestant vandals. This ironic turn of events by Poitiers' Catholic saviors caused more damage to the city than the Protestants had. However, Hilary Bernstein's analysis of how Poitiers' history was reinterpreted by ultra-Catholic writers shows that, "as time passed, the story became confused, and inhabitants were sure that the violence had been perpetrated by the Protestants."<sup>16</sup> This trend of creating counter-memories that favored an ideal Catholic interpretation occurred throughout France during the Wars of Religion. However, we are particularly interested in the role that Radegund played in this process after three significant events: the vandalism of the Church of Sainte-Radegonde in 1562, the Siege of Poitiers in 1569, and the victory against the Protestant publican party of Jean de la Haye in 1574.

***Destruction, Memory, & Revival: Radegund's Divine Intervention in 1562, 1569, and 1574***

History and memory are by no means static. As Hilary Bernstein elaborates in *Between Crown and Community* specifically in regard to Poitiers, "not only did the past affect the present, but the present also exerted influence over the past," which "underwent constant revision and adjustment to suit the circumstances of debate." There is a limit to this adaptability, however, and that limit lies "within the confines of a particular tradition."<sup>17</sup> We

---

<sup>16</sup> Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community*, 157.

<sup>17</sup> Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community*, 165-166.

can observe this process in action as Radegund's cult took on new meaning for Protestants and Catholics alike in Poitiers during the 1560s-70s. In this case, "the particular tradition" was the centuries-old story of Poitiers' loyalty to the Valois kings and Radegund's royal patronage of this historically Catholic city.

When Grammont's Orleans-bound Gascons, together with a group of Huguenots from Tours, ransacked the Church of Saint Radegund on May 27, 1562, a seemingly unexpected miracle occurred that helped reorient the memory of this destructive event into a narrative of Catholic triumph and heroism. When Radegund's tomb was smashed open, her skeleton was revealed in all its glory, complete with silver crown, crimson burial shroud, and ring, which struck everyone present with wonder.<sup>18</sup> While one party of Huguenots burned books, titles, contracts, and other documents concerning the church's holdings and revenue in the nave, a group of divinely inspired "good Christians" heroically saved Radegund's relics from the fires and brought them to the seigneurs of the Church who later had a new reliquary built for them.<sup>19</sup> This account appears in the canon's inventory of damages, demonstrating that the reorientation process was already underway in the immediate legal aftermath of the vandalism. While the inventory highlighted the incredible loss of Sainte-Radegonde's treasure, relics, furniture, and art, it also communicated the canons' sense of perseverance and unshakable faith in their titular saint. Three centuries later, L'Abbé Eschoyez recounted how, "a young girl had the courage to retrieve from the cinders a piece of Radegund's skull and arm bone, which she faithfully delivered to the abbess of Sainte-Croix."<sup>20</sup> The author of

---

<sup>18</sup> The last time Radegund's tomb was opened since her death was in 1412 when Jean de Berry sought to remove one of her rings for his Sainte Chapelle in Bourges. The presence of these items was listed by the Poitevin historian, Jean Bouchet, in his *Annales d'Aquitaine* and in *Histoire et cronique*, book 4, fol. 89.

<sup>19</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 294.

<sup>20</sup> L'Abbé Charles Eschoyez, "Lettre de Mgr L'Evêque de Poitiers à M. L'Abbé Eschoyez au sujet de l'œuvre de la construction d'une chapelle dans le monastère de Sainte-Croix," in *Origines de l'abbaye royale de Sainte-Croix* (Poitiers: Henri Oudin, Imprimeur-Libraire, 1865), xiii.



a seventeenth-century *Life of Radegund*, Jean Filleau, similarly lauded the role of “divine intervention” when these same Huguenots attempted to destroy a large painting that hung in the church’s choir. The faces of the figures, and especially the visage of Saint Radegund, were miraculously preserved even though the rest of the work was vandalized.<sup>21</sup> Stories of saintly intervention like this were not uncommon and were an integral part of both Protestant and Catholic histories of the Wars of Religion. As Bernstein argues in her study of a similar phenomenon in the nearby city of Le Mans, observers on both sides were quick to attach their own interpretations to these iconoclastic events, so that “the memory and meaning of the French Wars of Religion were both actively cultivated and highly contested as they were occurring and after the fact.”<sup>22</sup>

The 1560-70s were a time of great instability in Poitiers, which came to a head in the summer of 1569 when the Huguenot leader, Gaspard de Coligny, laid siege to the city for seven weeks.<sup>23</sup> Coligny ended the siege when he realized that he could not break through the city’s defenses. His army was then defeated at the Battle of Moncontour a few days later, marking a significant turning point for Poitiers.<sup>24</sup> Catholic Poitevins celebrated another victory when they successfully resisted Jean de la Haye’s attempt to unite with the Poitevin Protestants and seize the town during Pentecost a few years later in 1574.<sup>25</sup> Both the withdrawal of Coligny’s forces and the defiance against la Haye were remembered more as

---

<sup>21</sup> Jean Filleau, *La preuve historique des Litanies de la grande reyne de France sainte Radegonde, contenant par abrégé les actions miraculeuses de sa vie, tirées des Historienes Francois* (Poitiers : 1643), 157.

<sup>22</sup> Bernstein, “The Reformed Terreur Panique of 1562,” 2.

<sup>23</sup> Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community*, 158.

<sup>24</sup> Antoine Coutelle, “Espace urbain et commémoration à Poitiers au XVIIe siècle: la procession générale en mémoire du siège levé par l’admiral devant ceste ville,” *Terres marines: Études en hommage à Dominique Guillemet*, ed. F. Chavaud and J. Péret (Rennes, 2005), 207-212.

<sup>25</sup> Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community*, 179.

the result of divine providence when they were commemorated in a religious procession that intentionally referenced the miraculous end of an English siege from 1202.

In *Patroness of Paris*, a study of the cult of Sainte Geneviève, Moshe Sluhovsky discusses the important role that religious processions played in medieval and early modern civic communities, noting that “they drew the society together, connected the divine guardians with their followers, and reaffirmed the special relations of patronage and protection that unified the city and its heavenly advocate.”<sup>26</sup> But processions could also mark divisions and reveal rivalries because “they excluded some members of the urban community from the benevolent protection of the divine protector while granting other members a special degree of closeness to the saint.”<sup>27</sup> For example, a Eucharistic procession in Paris in 1562 celebrated the lifting of the edict of St. Germain and expulsion of its Protestant population. This procession was intended by its Catholic organizers to purify the city of heresy and its exclusionary theme was underscored when a Huguenot passerby was assassinated as the procession moved through the Cemetery of the Innocents.<sup>28</sup>

The procession in Poitiers had a similar exclusionary effect. An Easter Monday procession had been conducted annually in Poitiers for centuries to commemorate the thirteenth-century Miracle of the Keys which was repurposed for use against Protestant enemies in the sixteenth century.<sup>29</sup> According to the Poitevin historian and solicitor, Jean Bouchet, when Poitiers was under siege by the English in 1202, the appearance of the Virgin Mary, Saint Hilary, and Saint Radegund atop the city gates miraculously created a panic

---

<sup>26</sup> Sluhovsky, *Patroness of Paris*, 66.

<sup>27</sup> Sluhovsky, *Patroness of Paris*, 69.

<sup>28</sup> Sluhovsky, *Patroness of Paris*, 117.

<sup>29</sup> Bernstein confirms that the commemorative procession was carried out at least since the early fifteenth century. It may have been performed since the miracle first occurred in the early thirteenth century, but since the first recorded procession only appeared in 1416, it is unclear whether it was performed earlier. Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community*, 175.

among the English troops outside the walls who began slaughtering each other and fled.<sup>30</sup> As the story goes, the mayor's treacherous clerk had been conspiring to steal the keys to the city gates to welcome in the English troops. But the clerk was disappointed in his efforts by a miraculous theft of the keys by none other than a statue of the Virgin Mary at the church of Notre-Dame-la-Grande, who was found the next morning with the keys in her hand.<sup>31</sup> Despite its many historical inconsistencies, memory of this miracle inspired annual processions whose celebration, Bernstein argues, served to reinforce Poitiers' civic identity as traditionally loyal to the French crown.<sup>32</sup>

However, Radegund's remembered role in the Miracle of the Keys and in the victories of 1569 and 1574 suggests that a more complex interpretation is warranted here. After 1569, we can see how language used to describe the 1202 Miracle of the Keys was repurposed for use in these other instances of threat to Poitiers' security and traditional civic identity. In discussing the procession, the senior *échevin*, Jean Palustre, explained that "it is the praiseworthy custom...that we make a tour of the walls of Poitiers and a general visitation to each of the churches, following the example of the Easter Monday procession, to celebrate having been delivered from the enemy and the siege of this town in the year 1569, which was raised by miracle."<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the year after la Haye's defeat, this same procession was conducted followed by a sermon expressing the town's gratitude to the Virgin Mary, Saint Hilary, and Saint Radegund as "patrons and defenders of the town" noting

---

<sup>30</sup> Jean Bouchet, *Les annales d'Aquitaine: Faicts et gestes en sommaire des roys de France et d'Angleterre, pays de Naples & de Milan*, vol. 2, (Abraham Mounin Imprimeur & Libraire, 1557), fol. 90-91., 159-161.

<sup>31</sup> Philip Benedict discusses similar miracles involving keys and the Virgin in Chartres and Verdun in his article, "Divided Memories? Historical Calendars, Commemorative Processions and the Recollection of the Wars of Religion During the Ancien Régime," *French history* 22, no. 4 (2008): 381-405.

<sup>32</sup> Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community*, 166.

<sup>33</sup> Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community*, 179; Archives communales de Poitiers, Reg. 47, 96-97 (31 Aug, 1587).

that la Haye's "conspiracy was miraculously discovered and revealed through God's grace, allowing it to be prevented and resisted."<sup>34</sup> The *échevin* and the preacher publicly interpreted the events of 1569 and 1574 in terms of the thirteenth-century tradition of their patron saints' intervention. Reference to deliverance from the enemy, miraculous thwarting of a conspiracy against the town, and a siege raised by miracle served to connect the present to the past. The only difference was that here the role of the enemy threatening the city was transferred from the English to the Huguenots in post-1569 processions. So far, there is nothing unusual about this trajectory. Philip Benedict notes ten French cities where annual processions around the city walls, followed by sermons, were used to commemorate thwarted Huguenot attacks.<sup>35</sup>

The complexity arises from the fact that Radegund was *not* included in the version of the miracle that was inserted into Poitiers' municipal statute book in 1463.<sup>36</sup> Bouchet's 1524 *Annales d'Aquitaine* is the first text to include Radegund among Poitiers' saintly defenders of 1202 and, apparently, it was Bouchet's version that Poitevins remembered in the sixteenth century as we can see from the preacher's gratitude to Radegund, in addition to the Virgin and Hilary. So even though the town's municipal government "rarely acknowledged that the town's past extended beyond the thirteenth century," Radegund's role as a royal patron saint was clearly intertwined with conceptions of Poitiers' civic identity as historically loyal to the Crown and as traditionally Catholic.<sup>37</sup>

The Huguenots clearly also recognized the political and religious associations between the celebration of the Miracle of the Keys and Radegund, which was undoubtedly

---

<sup>34</sup> Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community*, 179; Archives communales de Poitiers, Reg. 42, 199-204 (30 May 1575).

<sup>35</sup> In addition to Poitiers, Castellane, Toulouse, Cordes, Aurillac, Mauriac, Le Puy, Poitiers, Chartres, Besançon and Verdun. Philip Benedict, "Divided Memories?," 391.

<sup>36</sup> Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community*, 165; Médiathèque municipale de Poitiers, MS 51, 221.

<sup>37</sup> Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community*, 167.

part of their oral rather than textual civic tradition. During the 1552 attack, a group of Protestants sought out the statue of the key-stealing Virgin from Notre-Dame-la-Grande (which had been preemptively hidden) and burned it with a crucifix from the church of Saint Hilary and an image of Saint Radegund as a deliberate rejection of these saints' role in the cultivation of Poitiers' identity as a traditionally Catholic city.<sup>38</sup> During the 1569 procession, the Huguenot population that still remained in Poitiers felt directly attacked by the procession's exclusionary implications that cast them as enemies in their own town. They voiced their anger by attempting to assassinate the preacher during his sermon of gratitude to Radegund, Hilary, and the Virgin for their protection.<sup>39</sup> And so, as the new connotations of the Miracle of the Keys procession in the 1570s shows, the Catholic population conflated victories against the Huguenots with Poitiers' religious and historical traditions in a complex process of counter-memory-making. The Wars of Religion created opportunities for Radegund to continue her tradition of intervening on behalf of Poitevins in military need even if she wasn't part of the "official" version in the municipal statute book. However, in the sixteenth century only some Poitevins merited Radegund's protection as she played a new role in helping militant Catholics reinforce their vision of a decidedly Catholic and loyal identity for Poitiers.

Many other chapels and churches dedicated to Radegund met a similar fate as Poitiers' Church of Sainte-Radegonde, including Sainte-Radegonde par Baignes, Sainte-Radegonde de Boussay, the Chappelle de Sainte-Radegonde de Chinon, and Sainte-Radegonde de Pis (Gers). As we will see in the next section, in approximately one hundred

---

<sup>38</sup> Théodore de Bèze, *Histoire ecclésiastique des églises réformées au royaume de France* (Paris: Libraire Fischbacher, 1883-89), 2:705; Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community*, 178.

<sup>39</sup> Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community*, 178; Archives communales de Poitiers, Reg. 36, 124-27 (28 Mar. 1559).

years they would all benefit from local enthusiasm inspired by the Catholic Revival. Many of Radegund's churches and chapels would not only be rebuilt, but would be adorned with new art from new patronage, as well.

### ***100 years later: The Revival of Radegund's Cult***

The Edict of Nantes, issued in 1598 by King Henry IV of France, is traditionally viewed as marking “the end” of the Wars of Religion. It stipulated, “first, that the memory of everything which has occurred between one side and the other shall remain extinct and dormant as though they had never happened.”<sup>40</sup> However, as Barbara Diefendorf shows in her article, “The Scars of Religious War in Histories of French Cities (1600-1750),” the Edict's language here was really intended to prevent either side from taking legal action over wartime damages and did little, if anything, to stem the tide of bad feeling. For some Catholics writing even centuries later, the outrages perpetrated in 1562 would never be “extinct” and, in fact, took center stage in their conception of a firmly Catholic identity for their communities.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the policies of Louis XIII and XIV ensured that interconfessional conflict would continue between Catholics and Protestants for most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1617, Louis XIII reestablished Catholic rights in the Huguenot-controlled city of Béarn and blocked Protestants from sitting in parliament. This sparked a Huguenot revolt against royal authority in the southwest which ballooned into three separate largescale rebellions from 1620-1629. While the Peace of Alais in 1629 ensured Protestants the religious freedoms promised by the Edict of Nantes, they suffered major political, territorial, and military losses that severely weakened their position. Louis

---

<sup>40</sup> J. Parsons, “The Edict of Nantes with its secret articles and brevets,” *The Edict of Nantes: Five Essays and a New Translation*, ed. Richard L. Goodbar (Bloomington, Minn.: The National Huguenot Society, 1998): 41-70.

<sup>41</sup> Barbara Diefendorf, “The Scars of Religious War in Histories of French Cities (1600-1750),” *French History* 34, no. 4 (2020): 453.

XIV embarked on an even more rigorous path of persecution than his predecessor and revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685, which generated a new era of hostility between Catholics and Protestants that would last until the eve of the French Revolution in 1787 when Louis the XVI issued the Edict of Toleration.<sup>42</sup> This nearly continuous interconfessional conflict between Catholics and Protestants kept the Huguenot threat alive and looming for ultra-Catholics. For some Catholics writing in the aftermath of the Wars of Religion, Radegund became a symbol for their vision of a Catholic royalist France against the ever-present Protestant threat. As Nelson has shown, the production of written accounts from the Wars of Religion was often delayed until at least the second half of the seventeenth century. In the interim, communities circulated oral traditions and engaged in commemorative rituals and art that typically did not make their way into the historical record.<sup>43</sup> This trend applies to the case of Radegund, whose first post-Reformation biographies did not appear until the first half of the seventeenth century. However, Radegund's case proved quite different from other saints due to her historic identity as a Merovingian queen-saint and the ways this identity was reinterpreted.

Historians have traditionally referred to the restructuring of the Catholic Church in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries as the Counter-Reformation. However, recent scholarship has rejected this label due to its implications that these developments were purely reactionary. Terms such as the Catholic Revival or Renewal, Catholic Reformation, the refashioning of the Catholic faith or Church, and Early Modern Catholicism more accurately

---

<sup>42</sup> Caroline Ford, "Violence and the Sacred in Nineteenth-Century France," *French historical studies* 21, no. 1 (1998): 104.

<sup>43</sup> Nelson, *The Legacy of Iconoclasm*, 93.

describe these changes whose roots antedated the Protestant Reformation.<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, the revival of Radegund's cult during this period was framed in reactionary terms in almost every instance. Whether they were rebuilding vandalized chapels, establishing confraternities, advocating pilgrimages, or composing new *Lives*, Radegund's devotees all described their intentions as specifically necessitated by the Protestant threat. Perhaps unlike the general non-reactionary revival of Catholic practices and other saints' cults that occurred during the Catholic Reformation, the old and new meanings attributed to Saint Radegund coalesced during this period to heighten her symbolic potential as a defender of ancient Catholic tradition against heresy and as a representative of a rightful French Catholic monarchy.

This study of the revival of Radegund's cult in the seventeenth century breaks new ground on a number of fronts. Only in the last decade or so have scholars turned their attention towards remembering the French Wars of Religion from the perspective of religious communities, rather than in terms of civic or urban culture.<sup>45</sup> While in-depth studies on the cult of the saints and "lived religion" in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are scant, with most scholarship focusing on Italy, far fewer studies exist for the seventeenth century. This is difficult to reconcile because we have proportionately more hagiographic sources for this period than we do for the Middle Ages. Changing standards for scholarship among seventeenth-century intellectual communities, higher expectations for scientific or theological proofs, and Protestant critiques motivated Catholic reformers to promote the

---

<sup>44</sup> Jenni Kuuliala, Rose-Marie Peake, and Päivi Räisänen-Schröder, "Hagiography and Lived Religion," *Lived Religion and Everyday Life in Early Modern Hagiographic Material*, eds. Jenni Kuuliala, Rose-Marie Peake, and Räisänen Päivi. Palgrave Studies in the History of Experience (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 5.

<sup>45</sup> Eric Nelson, "Remembering the Martyrdom of Saint Francis of Paolo," *History and memory* 26, no. 2 (2014): 79.



integrity of the cult of the saints in new ways and on a grander scale. The increasingly pervasive use of the printing press made the distribution of *vitae*, spiritual biographies, and iconography more widespread than ever and lead to an explosion of new canonizations. As the authors of *Lived Religion and Everyday Life in Early Modern Hagiographic Material* argue, “In fact, if measured by the amount of Catholic devotional material produced and the revival of monasticism, the Early Modern period up to the mid-eighteenth century can be regarded as the heyday of Catholic culture.”<sup>46</sup> The fact that four new biographies of Radegund, two of which exceeded 700 pages, were produced during this period within the span of twenty years demonstrates this revival of interest in the cult of the saints, and Radegund in particular.

As I show in the following sections, the versions of Radegund that emerged in the Post-Reformation era reflect the pressing concerns of her devotees. Writing within two decades of each other, Etienne Moquot, Joseph Dumonteil, and Jean Filleau all reinterpreted Radegund within the context of the Protestant threat, explaining that these conditions created a special need for updated material on this beloved saint. Their Radegund is distinctly presented as the personification of French, royal, Catholic tradition. All three texts contain elaborate scientific “proofs” of miracles and theological apologies of the doctrine that inspired Radegund’s life choices. The Jesuit authors, Moquot and Dumonteil, unsurprisingly reinvent Radegund as a soldier of Christ who fought against heresy in her own time just as her spiritual descendants were fighting against Protestantism now.<sup>47</sup> By magnifying a brief encounter with a group of pagan Franks narrated by one of her sixth-century biographers,

---

<sup>46</sup> Kuuliala, “Hagiography and Lived Religion,” 4.

<sup>47</sup> Although often associated with the Jesuits, the term “soldier of Christ” (*miles Christi*) antedates Ignatius of Loyola by a millennium and a half. Its first appearance can be traced to the letters of Paul, for example, Eph. 6:12, 2 Tim. 2:3, and 2 Tim. 4:7.

they make Radegund's battle against heresy a central theme of their work. All three relish opportunities to recall incidents of Huguenot vandalism from the previous century which they weave into narratives of Catholic triumph. They also devote large sections to Radegund's exemplary exercise of her royal duties as queen of France and explicitly frame the destruction of Catholic institutions and objects as an attack on the monarchy. Both Jesuit texts were commissioned by Abbess Charlotte-Flandrine de Nassau of Sainte-Croix whose own special interests in Tridentine reform measures and restoring the royal abbey to its sixteenth-century splendor are also reflected. Filleau's Radegund specifically targets elite laywomen and reflects new trends in lay devotional practices. As a member of the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, I argue that Filleau appropriated Radegund as a vehicle to support his own anti-Protestant, post-Tridentine, pro-royalist position.

***Post-Reformation Lives of Radegund:  
Hagiography, Memory, and History in Support of a French Catholic Monarchy***

For three Catholic writers of the first half of the seventeenth century, Radegund became an important tool for bolstering Catholic tradition in the face of continued threat from "pretended reformers": The Jesuit priest, Etienne Moquot, published *La vie de Sainte Radegonde jadis royne de France et fondatrice du royal monastere de Sainte-Croix de Poitiers* in 1621. Joseph Dumonteil, also a Jesuit priest and professor at the College of Rodez, published the *Histoire de la vie incomparable de sainte Radegonde* in 1627. Jean Filleau, law professor at the University of Poitiers, king's *avocat*, and *conseiller d'Etat*, published *La preuve historique des Litanies de la grande reyne de France sainte Radegonde, contenant par abrégé les actions miraculeuses de sa vie, tirées des Historiens François* in 1643.

While Filleau seems to have produced his new *Life of Radegund* on his own initiative, Abbess Charlotte-Flandrine de Nasseau of Sainte-Croix (1603-1640) spearheaded the efforts of the Jesuit authors, Dumonteil and Moquot. As Coudanne argues, “Flandrine’s zeal assuredly contributed to a renaissance in Poitiers of the cult of saint Radegund, who had become relatively forgotten after the profanation of her tomb.”<sup>48</sup> Upon her ascension to the abbacy in 1603, Flandrine embarked on an ambitious plan to revitalize the abbey and she used the memory of Radegund to do it. She was instrumental in bringing Tridentine reform to Sainte-Croix, which had been inconsistently enforced over the last half-century. Envisioning herself as a new Radegund, Flandrine sought to return Sainte-Croix’s spiritual life to its sixth-century glory days. She prioritized asceticism, communal life, enclosure, preaching, and education. Sharing Radegund’s passion for relic-collecting, she sought out new relics to supplement the abbey’s treasury and had costly new reliquaries made by celebrated artisans. After the church of Sainte-Radegonde was pillaged in 1562, the abbey temporarily received the remains of Radegund’s body from the canons and Flandrine paid the best Parisian masters 800 ecus to sculpt a new bust-reliquary for Radegund’s skull. Flandrine utilized her family connections and invested her extensive personal wealth to ensure the success of Sainte-Croix. Her parents were Prince William the Silent of Orange and Charlotte de Bourbon, whose connections to the House of Bourbon in France helped Flandrine secure new royal protections, privileges, and funding throughout her forty years as Sainte-Croix’s abbess. She revitalized the abbey by repairing damages sustained by the wars of the previous century and used her well-developed negotiating skills to reclaim civic spaces to expand the abbey’s grounds. She also poured her own money into extravagant artistic endeavors that

---

<sup>48</sup> Louise Coudanne, “Le temps de réformes,” in *Histoire de Sainte-Croix de Poitiers : Quatorze siècles de vie monastique*, ed. Yvonne Labande-Mailfert (Poitiers: Société des antiquaires de l’Ouest, 1986), 286.

recalled events from Radegund's life. Flandrine's commitment to Tridentine reform and her close association with the Society of Jesus led her to prioritize education at Sainte-Croix. She ordered the production of numerous manuscripts and printed books to aid in the spiritual and educational development of her community.<sup>49</sup>

The most important of these were the two new *Lives of Radegund* that she commissioned from Moquot and Dumonteil that united the Tridentine Church's call for religious education with the particular scholarly methodology and militancy of the Jesuits who composed them. But why commission two *Lives*? According to Coudanne, these two versions were the result of "political intrigue and rivalry" within the Society of Jesus. Flandrine first encountered Dumonteil when he visited Radegund's tomb as a pilgrim in 1613 and he promised to compose and print a new *Life* of her patroness. However, due to some mysterious "sinister accidents," publication was delayed and Flandrine decided to approach Moquot in 1618 to compose his own version. Moquot completed his text in 1621, but someone seems to have intervened to prevent Moquot's name from appearing on his published work which resulted in confusion over the book's origins centuries later.<sup>50</sup> Despite

---

<sup>49</sup> Coudanne, "Le temps de réformes," 285.

<sup>50</sup> Coudanne, "Le temps de réformes," 286. The mystery surrounding the removal of Moquot's name from his published book is only partly illuminated by Sister Claire de Fabry de Rochefort, a nun for 70 years (1587-1657) at Sainte-Croix who began a *Journal des Abbeses* under Abbess Flandrine's direction. In her entry for February 15, 1621, Claire writes of a disagreement between Moquot and Charles Pidoux, who was the author of Moquot's avant-propos, Sire of Chaillou, and Lieutenant General of the seneschal of Ciuray. She does not explain the nature of this disagreement, but notes that Pidoux was angered upon learning that Dumonteil had also written a *Life* of Radegund, and for some reason caused Moquot's name to be removed from his book. Claire explains that she felt the need to mention this because she herself worked very closely with Moquot and provided him with manuscripts from the abbey for his research. Although the whole story of what actually transpired seems lost to history, the best explanation based on what documentary evidence has survived (and assuming the evidence provided by Claire is correct), is that provided by Coudanne in her capacity as an expert in this area. My reading of Pidoux's avant-propos suggests that he was unconditionally devoted to the past and present kings of France. As an additional explanation, perhaps Pidoux may have been angered by Moquot's negative assessment of Clothar, whom he called "bloody, avaricious, ambitious, dissolute, completely earthly-minded, and without piety" (38). Thanks in part to the book, *De Rege et Regis Institutione*, written in 1559 by the Spanish Jesuit, Juan de Mariana, who advocated tyrannicide under extreme circumstances, the Jesuits

whatever conflict transpired, Flandrine eventually received both books with effusive dedications to “the most-high princess and virtuous Lady, Madame Sister Charlotte-Flandrine de Nassau, very worthy Abbess and all the religious of the royal monastery of Sainte Croix of Poitiers, daughters of Saint Radegund.”<sup>51</sup> Moquot and Dumonteil’s didactic goals explain, in part, the generous lengths of their texts which span over 700 pages. Jean Filleau’s shorter version at 200 pages is dedicated to Monseigneur Henry-Loys Chasteigner de La Roche-Pozay, councilor of the king and bishop of Poitiers. Filleau’s occupations as a law professor and royal official likely accounts for his more secular audience of “queens and princesses,” while Dumonteil and Moquot target religious communities.

According to Moquot’s dedication, Flandrine commissioned this updated *Life* specifically as a guide for her nuns at Sainte-Croix because she “wanted to see [Radegund’s] life written with more care and diligence than that which we have from Bouchet.”<sup>52</sup> Jean Bouchet’s version was written in 1517 for the benefit of nuns and laywomen, but mainly addressed women who wanted to live holier lives outside the convent. Bouchet also seems a little too medieval for these seventeenth-century authors who both champion the superiority of their modernized historical methods. Dumonteil explains that he was also motivated by the shocking lack of knowledge about Radegund he discovered when visiting the Priory of Saint Radegund in Rodez. The nuns “had nothing to say about the life of their holy mother” and also requested him to compose a *Life* for them.<sup>53</sup> The standard practice of reading Radegund’s *Life* aloud during refectory readings and feast day liturgies would have ensured

---

became associated with anti-monarchical ideologies and were even believed to be responsible for the assassination of Henri IV of France. Therefore, Moquot’s disparagement of a king of France may have been the source of Pidoux’s alleged *dammatio memoriae*. See the transcription of Sister Claire’s entry in “Journal des Abbesses de Sainte-Croix de Poitiers,” ed. P. de Monsabert, *Revue Mabillon* 5 (1909): 158.

<sup>51</sup> Moquot, *La vie de Sainte Radegonde*.

<sup>52</sup> Moquot, *La vie de Sainte Radegonde*, “Avant-propos,” page 8.

<sup>53</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire de la vie incomparable de sainte Radegonde*.

that the nuns knew the basic details of Radegund's history. So Dumonteil likely means here that the nuns had nothing *respectable* to say by *contemporary* standards. The impetus of the rewriting was to bring Radegund up-to-date for the seventeenth century – a pattern that emerges from every period in which we see “new Radegunds” crafted through art and text.

It is important to note here that all three of these new *Lives of Radegund* predate or are perfectly contemporary with the publication of the first volume of the *Acta Sanctorum* (1643) by the Bollandists. Like two of our three Radegund authors, the Bollandists were also Jesuits whose self-stated mission was to use scientific history to find the “truth” about Catholic saints. The Société des Bollandistes published heavily researched critical editions of saints' lives in volumes according to the month of the saints' feast day and their work is recognized as instrumental in the preservation of writings dedicated to Catholic saints.<sup>54</sup> The didactic quality, incredible length, and carefully cited *Lives of Radegund* by Moquot, Dumonteil, and (to a lesser extent) Filleau are very much in line with the aims of the Bollandistes. However, the innovations and embellishments that allow our Radegund authors to situate her tradition within the political and religious concerns of their own era make them unique precursors to the Bollandists who prioritized “authenticity” by following the original medieval manuscripts for their *Lives*.

The most significant new feature of Radegund's seventeenth-century image was her reinvention as a martyr. Radegund's sixth-century hagiographer, Fortunatus, made every effort to associate her with martyrdom by arguing that “Anyone who spoke of all that the most holy woman had fervently accomplished in fasting, services, humility, charity, suffering

---

<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth Emery, “Introduction,” *Medieval Saints in Late Nineteenth Century French Culture: Eight Essays*, eds. Elizabeth Emery and Laurie Postlewait (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004), 4.

and torment, proclaimed her both confessor and martyr.”<sup>55</sup> In her youth, she conversed with other children “about her desire to be a martyr if the chance came in her time,” and engaged in extreme self-mortification “so that she might be a martyr though it was not an age of persecution.”<sup>56</sup> Dumonteil argues that the Huguenot’s burning of Radegund’s relics in Poitiers in 1562 finally gave her the real martyrdom she always wanted but was never able to achieve in life.<sup>57</sup> This kind of belated martyrdom was not unusual during the Protestant Reformation. Eric Nelson discusses a similar incident that occurred in the nearby city of Tours in his article, “Remembering the Martyrdom of Saint Francis of Paolo: History, Memory and Minim Identity in Seventeenth-Century France.” Here, Nelson analyzes seventeenth-century histories composed by three Minim scholars about the martyrdom that Francis of Paolo’s relics suffered at the hands of the Huguenots when they attacked a Minim monastery attached to the estate of the royal chateau at Plessis-lèz-Tours. In addition to employing the critical and analytical approaches that defined historical scholarship trends in the sixteenth through seventeenth centuries, these scholars also relied on interviews with members of the Minim community.<sup>58</sup> Even though none of them had been eyewitnesses to

---

<sup>55</sup> “Quid autem Sanctissima jejunii, obsequii, humilitatis, caritatis, laboris & cruciatus frequenter indepta sit, si quis cuncta percurreret, ipsam prædicaret tam confessorem quam martyrem.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.

<sup>56</sup> “...frequenter loquens cum parvulis, si conferret sors temporis, martyr fieri cupiens.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.2; “Hinc discedentibus reliquis, trepidantibus membris animus armatur ad pœnam, tractans quia non essent persecutionis tempora, ut fieret martyr.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 3.22.

<sup>57</sup> “And you holy queen, the lily (lys) and the rose of Religion and royal sanctity of France, who desired in your early age to endure martyrdom, who by an excess of love martyred yourself with ardent tears, you have found the infernal Vulcans who, one thousand years or so after your death, threw into the flames your holy body which the peace of the church did not permit you to suffer.” Dumonteil, *Histoire de la vie incomparable de sainte Radegonde*, 374-375. It is also important here to note that the lily and the rose both had double meanings. Ever since the Early Christian period, the lily has been used as a symbol of virginity and the rose as a symbol of martyrdom. See, for example, Jerome’s *Letter 54* that discusses “virgin’s lilies and martyr’s roses.” There are additional examples of this floral typology specifically associated with Radegund in Fortunatus’ poems and in Gregory of Tours’ description of Radegund’s funeral.

<sup>58</sup> Nelson, “Remembering the Martyrdom of Saint Francis of Paolo,” 86-87.

the events that occurred 60 years before and the documents produced during the 1560s only referred to the cremation of Francis' relics as an act of physical destruction, the friars nonetheless had a well-developed oral tradition about their patron's martyrdom by the seventeenth century. As Nelson argues, "Through time, the Minims came to terms with, and even celebrated, the events of 1562 by integrating the cremation of Francis's remains into his life story, interpreting the event as God's wish to honor him with the laurel of martyrdom."<sup>59</sup>

Dumonteil similarly interprets the martyrdom of Radegund's relics as the divinely inspired fulfillment of her destiny, concluding that the "tricks and cruelties" of the "pretended reformers" would only strengthen her glory and honor when the ashes of all the saints who were burned would be drawn together and restored at the last judgment.<sup>60</sup> And, just like the Minim scholars, Dumonteil conducted a thorough investigation of the 1562 attack and even managed to find eyewitnesses. However, one feature of Radegund's belated martyrdom makes her case unique: an attack on Radegund's relics was an attack on the French monarchy. Dumonteil singles out Radegund's desecration from a long list of other saints who were martyred (including Francis of Paolo) as the one "that touches the heart most closely." This is because it was "not zeal for their Pretended Religion" that drove these particular Huguenots to commit their deeds of "sacred and royal spoliation," but "Satan's hatred towards these precious Treasures and towards Royalty."<sup>61</sup> Here, Dumonteil suggests that Radegund's status as a sainted queen made her a double target for anti-monarchists who saw her not just as a Catholic saint, but as a symbol of the French Crown. Dumonteil continues with additional proof by citing a long list of secular royal tombs that were similarly

---

<sup>59</sup> Nelson, "Remembering the Martyrdom of Saint Francis of Paolo," 78.

<sup>60</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire de la vie incomparable de sainte Radegonde*, 371.

<sup>61</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire de la vie incomparable de sainte Radegonde*, 371.



desecrated.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, he characterizes the perpetrators as inhuman and anti-French regicides, using an exclamation point to deride “the barbarism of subjects against the holy body of their saintly queen!”<sup>63</sup>

All three authors build connections between Radegund’s royal identity and the French Crown when they use her as a vehicle to promote Catholic orthodoxy. This connection is most obvious in Filleau’s dedicatory remarks to the bishop of Poitiers, Monseigneur Henry-Loys Chasteigner de La Rochepezay, which serve to ground his entire work in the fight against heresy. He begins by praising the bishop’s “generous heart, which has always loved the Fleurs de Lys, and which has guarded them with a fidelity so inviolable on the most important occasions.” Filleau compares Rochepezay to Saint Hilary, “the scourge of the Arians,” for his “courageous resistance” against the Protestants and suggests that the bishop can only have a tender affection for this work because it has as its subject “the miraculous actions of the greatest and saintliest queen of all, whom for twelve centuries we have seen ruling over the French people.”<sup>64</sup> Filleau’s admiration of Rochepezay is unsurprising, considering the bishop’s history of militant Catholic leadership, belligerent opposition of Protestantism, and support of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament in Poitiers, of which Filleau was a member. The bishop assumed the functions of the governor of Poitiers in 1614 and helped maintain order and obedience to the king during a political struggle between supporters of the Prince of Condé and supporters of the queen mother, Marie de Médicis.<sup>65</sup> As the eighteenth-century author of *Une Histoire du Poitou* relates, the bishop enjoyed his

---

<sup>62</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire de la vie incomparable de sainte Radegonde*, 375.

<sup>63</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire de la vie incomparable de sainte Radegonde*, 371.

<sup>64</sup> Filleau, *La Preuve historique*, 5.

<sup>65</sup> Jeffrey K. Sawyer, *Printed Poison: Pamphlet Propaganda, Faction Politics, and the Public Sphere in Early Seventeenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 73.

<http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft7f59p1db/>

wartime role and appearing “donned in a cuirass and with a pike in his hand, assumed command of the troops,” refused to admit Condé through the city gates.<sup>66</sup> Filleau’s membership in the French Catholic secret society of the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement explains his particular style of anti-Protestant militancy and his passionate support for the Gallican monarchy. Originally founded in Paris in 1630, the group received royal support from Louis XIII and by 1660 had chapters in sixty-four towns and cities throughout France, composed of mostly elite lay and clerical members.<sup>67</sup> While the objectives of the Company are difficult to pinpoint due to its clandestine operations, members worked to promote moral and theological reforms in the church and French Catholic society in general, combat the existence of Protestantism, and create new religious orders and confraternities.<sup>68</sup> Thanks to recruitment efforts among the leading nobles and officials of France, the Company has been described as “the only institution with political effectiveness” in the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>69</sup> Throughout Filleau’s text, he draws on Radegund’s well-established association with royal authority, while at the same time refashioning her as a bastion of French Catholicism and tradition.

The Jesuit priest, Dumonteil, recognizes Radegund as “the first of our queen-saint-nuns” (*la premiere de nos Reynes Sainte Religieuse*) and has an entire chapter dedicated to “The true prototype of the royal sanctity and holy royalty of France in the example of the blessed queen saint Radegund, with a list of kings, queens, princes, and princesses of the royal blood of France, who were saints or who had a reputation for sanctity.”<sup>70</sup> The other

---

<sup>66</sup> Thibaudeau, *L'Histoire du Poitou*, Tome III, 191.

<sup>67</sup> Joseph Bergin, *The Politics of Religion in Early Modern France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 105-106.

<sup>68</sup> Bergin, *The Politics of Religion*, 107.

<sup>69</sup> Bergin, *The Politics of Religion*, 108.

<sup>70</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire de la vie incomparable de sainte Radegonde*, Heading for chapter 33, 581.

Jesuit, Moquot, takes the association between Radegund and the current monarchy a step further by claiming that the French acquired the custom of praying for their king specifically from Radegund, who had originally taught the practice to her nuns.<sup>71</sup> A patriotic digression then ensues about how the Crown of France has never been worn by a heretic, unlike kingdoms of the orient and the empire of Germany. This is because of the uniquely Catholic nature of France whose sainted kings, queens, princes, and princesses fill the martyrologies with holy exemplars.<sup>72</sup> Like Dumonteil, Moquot then situates Radegund within a long list of French royal saints who have continued her legacy. His list concludes with Queen Claude, wife of Francois I and daughter of Louis XII of France and Anne of Brittany. Claude was never sainted, but Moquot includes a quotation from Jean Bouchet's *Life of Radegund* (1517) praising Claude's qualities as a pious queen and progenitor of many subsequent good kings.<sup>73</sup>

These seventeenth-century *Lives* also use the Radegund tradition to reinforce their vision of Catholic orthodoxy and the battle against heresy more broadly. Dumonteil's dedication addresses Abbess Flandrine as a new Radegund and takes the form of a detailed comparison between the two women's upbringings, accomplishments, and characters.

Directly addressing Flandrine, he writes,

And may your humility pardon me if I say today that a living Saint Radegund authorized the life of a deceased Saint Radegund...I see you both so parallel...you through your virtues are the true daughter of Saint Radegund, and the life of Saint Radegund represents her virtues in the image of yours.<sup>74</sup>

Dumonteil then reframes Radegund's life as a battle against heresy, both to create a more seamless comparison between the two women and to make Radegund relevant to the

---

<sup>71</sup> Moquot, *La vie de Sainte Radegonde*, 407.

<sup>72</sup> Moquot, *La vie de Sainte Radegonde*, 408-409

<sup>73</sup> Moquot, *La vie de Sainte Radegonde*, 409-422. It is worth noting here that Bouchet dedicated his *Life of Radegund* to Queen Claude.

<sup>74</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire De La Vie Incomparable De Sainte Radegonde*, dedication.

concerns of seventeenth-century French Catholics. He notes how Flandrine was plucked by God from the “foundries of heresy” in the Netherlands just as He delivered Radegund from “great perdition leaving almost all of her relatives enveloped in the shadows of infidelity while he guided her into France to enter into the journey of salvation.”<sup>75</sup> Flandrine’s Protestant father, Prince William of Orange, died when Flandrine was just a child and her Catholic maternal grandfather, Louis de Bourbon, Duke of Montpensier and Prince of the Blood, obtained letters from King Henri III requiring her Protestant guardian in the Netherlands to surrender Flandrine to her aunt, Jeanne de Bourbon, who was then abbess of Sainte-Croix. Flandrine thrived at Sainte-Croix, converted to Catholicism, and was promoted to abbess at the death of her aunt.<sup>76</sup> Dumonteil addresses the abbess directly, stating,

I know that, in imitating saint Radegund, it breaks your heart to see your relatives wander from the true Church, I know how many vows and holy sacrifices you have offered to return them...God recalled some of your relatives back from the error of faith, and they enrolled with you and they combat under the glorious standard of the Holy Cross following in the footsteps of Saint Radegund.<sup>77</sup>

Here we can see Dumonteil’s Jesuit reincarnation of Radegund as a soldier of Christ whose orthodox example lives on in Flandrine, her spiritual descendent. Moquot similarly positions his *La vie de Sainte Radegonde* as an important tool in itself for reinforcing Catholic orthodoxy. He argues that his text won’t just impact the monastery of Sainte-Croix, but “all will take part in it,” because, “the community of the faithful, seeing the use of all the points of Christianity which are used in this time, will be strengthened in their belief and render thanks unto God for returning to the Church where so many saints serve His Divine Majesty

---

<sup>75</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire De La Vie Incomparable De Sainte Radegonde*, dedication.

<sup>76</sup> Coudanne, “Le temps de réformes,”272.

<sup>77</sup> Coudanne, “Le temps de réformes,”272.

and achieve Paradise by doing good.”<sup>78</sup> Dumonteil’s “use of all the points of Christianity which are used in this time,” refers to the strategy he shares with Moquot and Filleau of embellishing Radegund’s life with extensive theological apologies. All three texts were certified by doctors of theology who confirmed that these *Lives* contained nothing contrary to approved Catholic doctrine, “rather on the contrary [it is in line with] holy doctrine, history, learned and good research, for the honor of the Church and the kingdom of France.”<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore, all three authors explain that “the necessity of the times” [for which, we can read, “the continued Protestant threat”] makes their extended versions of Radegund’s *Life* crucial “to confound the enemies of the saints” and “to convince the incredulous by numerous authorities and diverse historians.”<sup>80</sup> Dumonteil scoffs that “the Lutherans or Huguenots say that the saints do not have the virtue to perform miracles; they lie, for I have seen with my own eyes that the virtue of Madame Saint Radegund produces miracles.” He then recounts a miracle from his own city of Rodez about a man with paralyzed arms who was restored to full mobility after making a pilgrimage to Radegund’s tomb in Poitiers.<sup>81</sup> Moquot similarly anticipates Protestant disbelief in miracles and rejection of traditional Catholic rituals. His response to those disbelievers is a series of proofs demonstrating the authenticity of the Pas-Dieu, a flagstone in Radegund’s cell imprinted with the footprint of Christ when he appeared to her in a vision. In addition to presenting the religious and historical traditions surrounding the Pas-Dieu, his final evidence is that he himself saw the footprint on December 16, 1619 at 12:30 in the afternoon, “accompanied by a good architect

---

<sup>78</sup> Moquot, *La vie de Sainte Radegonde*, dedication.

<sup>79</sup> Moquot, *La vie de Sainte Radegonde*, approbation.

<sup>80</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire De La Vie Incomparable De Sainte Radegonde*, Advertssement au devot Lecteur ; Filleau, *La Preuve Historique*, 60.

<sup>81</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire De La Vie Incomparable De Sainte Radegonde*, 351-352.

versed in the matter of stones.”<sup>82</sup> As Bernstein has shown in her study of Le Mans, “arguments about the past were also connected to disagreements regarding the proper forms of Catholic devotion as they were developing in the seventeenth century.”<sup>83</sup> For these authors, Radegund’s life, miracles, and the holy vestiges she left behind all became vehicles for sustaining their commitment to a Catholic France in defiance of Protestants whom they perceived as threatening outsiders.

Filleau, Dumonteil, and Moquot all believed that the texts they produced about Radegund were much more than traditional hagiographies. Rather, they saw themselves as historians first and foremost. They situated Radegund in the history of her own time, but also in the history of contemporary events. Early Christian writers, such as Gregory of Tours, located the affairs of their generation within a broader History of Salvation, which began with the Creation of the World, proceeded through biblical times, the centuries of paganism and conversion, and ended with the Last Judgement. Our post-Reformation authors reorient hagiography-as-history so that it all hinges on the Protestant threat and Radegund’s royal legacy. Dumonteil explicitly states this intent in his *Message to the Readers*, where he explains, “this is not a simple narrative or translation, but a history - verified, explained, and applied.”<sup>84</sup> Their writing goes beyond the portrayal of a saintly model worthy of imitation, bringing Radegund to life as a heroine whose own history is still continuing for the benefit of orthodox Catholics.

Just as Dumonteil reinterprets the 1562 attack as a celebration of Radegund’s martyrdom and a triumph of Catholicism, Filleau engages in a similar counter-memory

---

<sup>82</sup> Moquot, *La vie de Sainte Radegonde*, 405-406.

<sup>83</sup> Hilary Bernstein, “The Reformed Terreur Panique of 1562,” 478.

<sup>84</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire De La Vie Incomparable De Sainte Radegonde*, Advertissement au devot Lecteur.

making strategy as he retells the story of the 1569 siege of Poitiers in a chapter entitled, “The Defender of Our Besieged Town.”<sup>85</sup> This chapter establishes a historical and spiritual connection between all the occasions that Radegund protected Poitiers from external threats. “It is not without good cause,” Filleau argues, “that Poitiers is under the protection and safeguarding of this powerful queen of France.” Beginning with the English siege of 1202, Filleau prefers Bouchet’s version over the account in Poitiers’ municipal statute book, and even further embellishes it to center on Radegund, who was only assisted by the Virgin and Hilary. Filleau’s account of the 1569 siege clearly positions Radegund as the hero. When the army of 50,000 Calvinists commanded by Admiral de Coligny breached the city walls, they made the unfortunate mistake of choosing a point that was right next to the church of Sainte-Radegonde. The Poitevin soldiers won the day because “they were fortified with an extraordinary courage from the church of Saint Radegund after having offered their life in the defense of the faith to this generous princess and very powerful protector of the town of Poitiers.” The siege was then auspiciously lifted on September 7, the feast day of Saint Cloüaud (Clodoald, also known as Saint Cloud), whom Filleau clarifies was Radegund’s nephew. According to Filleau, these are clear proofs for why Radegund is still praised by Poitevins “as Patron and Liberator of the city.”<sup>86</sup> But, he argues, Radegund’s divine intervention on behalf of Charles VII when she helped him secure Normandy in 1450 is why she is recognized as the patron saint of the entire kingdom.<sup>87</sup> Here, Filleau follows Bouchet’s lead in bolstering Poitiers’ history of royal connections and particular loyalty to the Valois.

---

<sup>85</sup> Filleau, *La Preuve Historique*, 109.

<sup>86</sup> Filleau, *La Preuve Historique*, 110.

<sup>87</sup> Filleau, *La Preuve Historique*, 111.

His account frames this tradition of Radegund's patronage as continuous, but particularly significant within the context of the Protestant threat.

Charles Pidoux, Lieutenant General of the seneschal of Ciuray and author of the avant-propos for Moquot's *Life of Radegund*, connects Radegund to the broader history of a Catholic France by asserting the importance of studying French saints – but especially the royal saints. In fact, he proposes that a scholar from each province of France should conduct this research and that they should all collaborate on a single volume, “which will serve as an example to our kings and princes, to instill fear in the enemies of this State, and for the safety of all the good French people, so that they maintain their duty towards their sovereigns when they see them so cherished by heaven.”<sup>88</sup> Here, Pidoux's sentiments that such “a discourse is greatly desired for the public good of religion and the State” accords with the aims of all three authors who used Radegund as a vehicle for their commitment to a Catholic France and monarchy.

### ***Radegund as a Model for Women***

Previous chapters have shown how Radegund's biographers capitalized on her versatile identity first established by Fortunatus and Baudonivia in the sixth century to reinvent her as an exemplar for various groups of women. Hildebert was the first to adapt Radegund's identity to showcase the feminine qualities that supported his vision of women's role in the hierarchy of the reformed Church. Next, we saw how the expansion of her cult outside of Poitiers led to an increasingly secular appeal when she became King Charles VII's special patron and her divine intervention ensured the recapture of Normandy for the kingdom of France. Jean Bouchet emphasized Radegund's service to the French Crown and

---

<sup>88</sup> Moquot, *La vie de Sainte Radegonde*, Avant-Propos.



promoted her royal legacy as the holy ancestor of the Valois. He situated Radegund within the broader history of France and reimagined her as a model wife and queen for royal and elite laywomen. But this trend toward a more secular emphasis did not seem to influence Henry Bradshaw in England who preferred to highlight Radegund's monastic identity by rewriting her as an abbess and a virgin. A century after Bradshaw and Bouchet, Radegund's three post-Reformation biographers created even more polarized identities for this early Christian saint which seems to reflect a shift in the expectations for elite women's spirituality in the palace and in the cloister during the seventeenth century.

Dumonteil, Moquot, and Filleau continue the trend that began in the twelfth century of appropriating the Radegund tradition to promote their own ideas about the proper social and spiritual behavior of elite French women. Dumonteil became the first French author to abandon tradition and insist on Radegund's perpetual virginity for his audience of Sainte-Croix nuns, while Filleau avoids the cloister entirely as he guides his audience of ladies, princesses, and queens through Radegund's exemplary exercise of her duties as ruler and wife. At least for Dumonteil and Filleau, these two theatres for female sanctity – the cloister and the court – no longer appear to have the same possibility for overlap in the seventeenth century as they did in the sixteenth. The two Jesuit authors, Moquot and Dumonteil, modify historical details of Radegund's life and incorporate elaborate scholarly explanations to address some of the most pressing theological issues for women of their time. They updated Radegund for a post-Reformation audience by engaging with topics such as the Tridentine reforms, enclosure, marriage, virginity, consent, charity, lay and monastic devotional practices, and education.

Dumonteil explains that he rewrote the *Life of Radegund* at the request of Abbess Flandrine, who was dissatisfied with Bouchet's life which was "more so a simple and ancient chronicle of the reign of Clothar, like it says in the title, and not a life of a saint, proper for this time." This is why "Madame of Sainte-Croix desired with all her religious daughters to have a life of their holy mother composed properly for their usage *a la facon des modernes*."<sup>89</sup> Flandrine's characterization of Bouchet's *Life of Radegund* is odd, considering that Bouchet clearly centers his text on Radegund and situates her life within the broader history of Francia/France just as Moquot and Dumonteil do. Nonetheless, this rationale allows us to conclude that Dumonteil believed he was rewriting a suitably modern version of *Radegund* that conformed to contemporary standards for women's religious life. Flandrine's characterization of this most recent *Life of Radegund* also implies a need – even an urgency – for a new *Radegundian* text that engages with the post-Reformation/post-Tridentine milieu of women's spirituality.

### Marriage vs. Virginité

The distinct ways that our seventeenth-century authors deal with the subject of *Radegund's* marriage and her behavior as a wife provide us with glimpses into the fraught theological divisions over the ideals of married women's spirituality in the religious climate of the post-Tridentine Church.

Like Henry Bradshaw, Dumonteil, the Jesuit priest, insists that *Radegund* remained a virgin throughout her marriage. However, his creative embellishments go far beyond Bradshaw's efforts, which are essentially limited to naming *Radegund* as a virgin in his book's title and in various chapter headings. Rather, Dumonteil completely reimagines the

---

<sup>89</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire De La Vie Incomparable De Sainte Radegonde*, Advertissement au devot Lecteur.

relatively brief description of Radegund and Clothar's marriage from the sixth-century versions into an elaborate thirty-three-page account with extensive first-person dialogue between the couple. As a comparison, the longest medieval manuscript of Fortunatus' *Life of Radegund* (BMP 250) is only forty-four pages and much of that document is taken up by its thirty-one half and full-page illustrations. Fortunatus' text emphasizes Radegund's lack of consent to her marriage as he dryly portrays the events surrounding her union with Clothar in a few brief sentences: after her attempted escape from Athies the night before her wedding, Clothar brought her to Soissons where they were married despite Radegund's objections and her previous vows to her "celestial spouse". Dumonteil, on the other hand, portrays Clothar as a sensitive and caring suitor who professes his love to Radegund in lengthy speeches. He courts Radegund, making professions of love such as, "I have loved you since your infancy, I treated you like my own daughter with the hope that someday you would be my wife," and he assures her that she can continue her ascetic and charitable activities after they wed.<sup>90</sup> Radegund's two-page response is polite, complementary, grateful, and more reminiscent of a courtly romance than of the historical forced marriage of a war captive to her family's murderer. Finally persuaded by Clothar's arguments many pages later, Radegund expresses her desire to not only become Clothar's spouse, but his humble servant, stating, "you're like a father to me and I must obey you as a daughter." In the following chapter titled, "If she stayed a virgin in marriage by permission of her husband," Dumonteil expands his discussion of virginity's theological preeminence, stating that even though the Church does not celebrate Radegund as a virgin, he firmly believes "the contrary." What follows is a convoluted argument based on questionable logic, ending in the conclusion, "I therefore did

---

<sup>90</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire De La Vie Incomparable De Sainte Radegonde*, 23-24.

not invent that Saint Radegonde remained a virgin in her marriage.”<sup>91</sup> For Dumonteil, the next best thing to cloistering oneself as a virgin, is a chaste marriage that allows for the practice of monastic values in the secular world.

Although there was never unanimous agreement among early medieval theologians, professed virginity had theological preference in the sixth century during Radegund’s life and the lives of her first biographers. Even so, Radegund was never originally constructed as a virgin because her sexual status as the king’s wife was a significant aspect of the Early Christian saintly-queen model, as I note in Chapter 1. But in the post-Reformation era, the tradition that virginity or a celibate marriage was morally superior now served to set Catholicism apart from Protestantism. In fact, the recognition of virginity as the preferred state was reaffirmed at the Council of Trent and became an important aspect of Catholic identity after the Reformation.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, we should view Dumonteil’s reimagined encounter between Clothar and Radegund within this context, since Dumonteil’s identity as a Catholic priest writing for a community of professed virgins does not go far enough to explain the magnitude of his changes and additions. His decision to rewrite Clothar and Radegund’s union as a chaste marriage seems to reflect a desire on Dumonteil’s part to incorporate the Tridentine Church’s affirmation of the Catholic tradition of professed virginity.

---

<sup>91</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire De La Vie Incomparable De Sainte Radegonde*, 37. The quintessential example of a “Jesuitical” argument. See the Oxford English Dictionary definition, “deceitful, dissembling; practising equivocation, prevarication, or mental reservation of truth. Often used in sense ‘hair-splitting’, keenly analytical.” The first documented use of “Jesuitical” in this way occurred in 1602. *Oxford English Dictionary*, OED online, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), s.v. “Jesuitical, adj,” <https://www-oed-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/view/Entry/101154?redirectedFrom=jesuitical#eid>

<sup>92</sup> Ulrike Strasser, “Aut Muritus Aut Maritus? Women’s Lives in Counter-Reformation Munich (1579-1651),” (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1997), 4.

In addition to endorsing virginity as the ideal, the Council of Trent also reaffirmed the sacramentality of marriage, which was denied by Protestants. This seems to inform “Clothar’s” first argument in favor of their marriage in Dumonteil’s text, “I know well that the state of virginity is raised to perfection, but would you wish to condemn marriage, like certain heretics do? Can we not be saved with the grace of God?”<sup>93</sup> Acknowledgement of the sacramental nature of marriage served to distinguish Catholic orthodoxy from the continual threat of Protestant heresy.<sup>94</sup> As a sacrament, marriage could be a path to salvation much in the same way that professed virginity was. This would explain Dumonteil’s inclusion of a two-page theological defense of the state of marriage in Clothar’s voice, which ends with Clothar’s promise to Radegund that she can remain a virgin if she wishes and that “they will live in marriage like brother and sister.”<sup>95</sup> This theory also explains Dumonteil’s convoluted efforts to promote both marriage and virginity simultaneously and attests to the great chasm that seemed to exist then in the minds of the clergy between the two approved arenas for elite women’s spirituality: the court and the convent.

### Consent

The Council of Trent also affirmed the necessity of consent for legitimate marriage, an issue that has remained an important theological topic since the days of the early Christian Church Fathers. Chapter 1 explored this issue within the context of sixth-century Francia and ultimately argued that Fortunatus strategically emphasized Radegund’s repeated *lack* of consent to her marriage with Clothar to justify the otherwise reprehensible act of deserting her still-living husband to become a deaconess. Dumonteil, on the other hand, reimagines the

---

<sup>93</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire De La Vie Incomparable De Sainte Radegonde*, 27.

<sup>94</sup> Strasser, “Aut Muritus Aut Maritus?” 5.

<sup>95</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire De La Vie Incomparable De Sainte Radegonde*, 28.

sixth-century Radegund's forced marriage as something she willingly – and even happily – agreed to. Dumonteil's Clothar expresses endearing concern for Radegund's wishes in his proposal, saying, "I do not pretend to force your will by fear to consent, which should be free. But if you have a good heart, my great friend, reciprocate my desire and I will render you one of the happiest queens in all the land and your brother will be king of Thuringia."<sup>96</sup> Even the sixteenth century Jean Bouchet, whose *Life of Radegund* was the first adaptation to create a rather romantic dialogue surrounding the couple's marriage, does not go so far as to entirely remove the element of force from Clothar's proposal. In Bouchet's version, Clothar wins Radegund over with a theological argument supporting the benefits of marriage, but the underlying threat that Clothar might kill her and her brother if she refuses him, or that he might take her by force and abuse her, is still very present in Bouchet's text.<sup>97</sup> Dumonteil's choice to rewrite this scene to depict the more courtly Clothar's interest in Radegund's consent and to suggest that he would restore her brother's rights as heir to the throne of Thuringia represents a drastic change with clear theological significance for a post-Tridentine audience.

As Silvia Evangelisti shows in her study of women's marriage and monasticism in Early Modern Italy, the Council of Trent sought to bypass secular power by positioning the Church as the exclusive authority in questions of marriage. As she explains,

Interestingly, the ecclesiastical notion of consensual marriage, based on individual choice, stood in sharp contrast to the well-established practice of marriage as a means of pursuing family interests. This contrast is important for our understanding of marriage, as it suggests that we should look at the

---

<sup>96</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire De La Vie Incomparable De Sainte Radegonde*, 28.

<sup>97</sup> "Recogitant aussi que si elle refusoit le roy (par autant quil estoit colere & merueilleux) la pourroit faire mourir & semblablement son frere ou leur pourroit faire dautres insupportables mauux voire la prendre par force et en abuser persuade de tells rensens y donna consentement et dist au roy." Bouchet, *Histoire et cronicque*, fol. 25r.

church's doctrine as a break with a notion of marriage as a tool of family strategies and parental authority.<sup>98</sup>

The Tridentine decrees all sought to bolster Catholic orthodoxy in the face of the Protestant threat. By insisting that all marriages be consensual and officiated publicly in a church by a priest before witnesses, the Church could claim exclusive authority over both secular and unorthodox paths to matrimony.<sup>99</sup>

### Enclosure

Within two years of Abbess Flandrine's ascension to the abbacy in 1605, she set out to strictly enforce enclosure at Sainte-Croix as part of her Tridentine reform program. She limited the nuns' contact with visitors and forbade entry into the monastery to all secular guests. Unlike many of her predecessors, Flandrine herself observed her own rules and only made forays into the secular world under the most exceptional circumstances.<sup>100</sup> Dumonteil emphasizes Flandrine's commitment to enclosure and strict observation of the Benedictine Rule in his Chapter 8, which expands Fortunatus' details of Radegund's entrance into Sainte-Croix. Dumonteil explains that Radegund was able to "unite herself more closely with the Celestial King enclosed in the cloister" than she could at the palace and that she was able to enjoy "the repose of holy contemplation of her beloved Jesus, heart to heart...in solitude by closing the door to all worldly communication."<sup>101</sup> He then traces the history of the Benedictine Rule's introduction into France, praising Flandrine for her efforts to publish a printed version in 1612 in addition to her role in "bring[ing] and demonstrate[ing] each day

---

<sup>98</sup> Silvia Evangelisti, "Wives, Widows, and Brides of Christ: Marriage and the Convent in the Historiography of Early Modern Italy," *The Historical Journal* 43, no. 1 (March 2000), 235.

<sup>99</sup> Evangelisti, "Wives, Widows, and Brides of Christ," 235.

<sup>100</sup> Coudanne, "Le temps de réformes," 278.

<sup>101</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire De La Vie Incomparable De Sainte Radegonde*, 127; 132-133.

the new luster of perfect reformation at this holy house.”<sup>102</sup> Enclosure, especially for women’s monastic communities, has always been a pressing topic for the Church. But in post-Reformation France, enforcing claustration was viewed as a more urgent necessity. The Tridentine Church was particularly concerned with ensuring that monastic communities were morally irreproachable and operating along unquestionably orthodox lines in response to both Protestant and Catholic critics.<sup>103</sup> But despite this priority, several scholars of post-Reformation women’s spirituality such as Silvia Evangelisti, Jennifer Hillman, Kathryn Norberg, and Alison Weber, have demonstrated that theory did not match practice: the Tridentine enclosure dictum was unevenly enforced and convent walls were actually still quite “permeable.”<sup>104</sup> In particular, Hillman and Evangelisti point towards the survival of nuns’ economic, social, and cultural links with family and friends outside the convent walls.<sup>105</sup> As already noted above, Flandrine was a perfect example of how this permeability worked. She promoted strict claustration for herself and her congregation even as she strategically used her familial connections to fund improvements to Sainte-Croix and negotiated with her Poitevin neighbors to expand the convent’s civic domains. And so we can view Dumonteil’s praise of Flandrine’s reforms via the Radegund tradition as a reflection of mainstream trends in women’s spirituality, though not necessarily a reflection of practice on the ground.

---

<sup>102</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire De La Vie Incomparable De Sainte Radegonde*, 130.

<sup>103</sup> Kathryn Norberg, "The Counter Reformation and Women: Religious and Lay," *Catholicism in Early Modern History: A Guide to Research*, ed. John W. O'Malley (St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1988), 134.

<sup>104</sup> Evangelisti, "Wives, Widows, and Brides of Christ," 244-245; Jennifer Hillman, "Lay Female Devotional Lives in the Counter Reformation," in *Church History and Religious Culture* 97, no. 3/4, (2017), 371;

<sup>104</sup> Norberg, "The Counter Reformation and Women, 139; Alison Weber, "Devout Laywomen in the Early Modern Catholic World: The Historiographic Challenge," in *Devout Laywomen in the Early Modern Catholic World*, ed. Alison Weber (Routledge: 2016), 5.

<sup>105</sup> Hillman, "Lay Female Devotional Lives in the Counter Reformation," 371; Evangelisti, "Wives, Widows, and Brides of Christ, 244-245.



Filleau's approach to the themes of marriage and monastic seclusion could not be more different from Dumonteil's. Unlike any previous Radegund biographers, Filleau strategically omits descriptions of Radegund's cloistered life at Sainte-Croix, anticipating that his audience of laywomen would be uninterested in reading about a way of life so different from their own,

It is not into the Cloister that I call the queens, to consider and imitate Radegund there: her life, although full of brilliance, could only appear to them as admirable and not imitable: I invite them into the Louvres and into the Palaces, which are their usual habitat, among the grandeur that accompanies them, to consider there Saint Radegund sitting on the same throne they occupy, who once honored the same royal bed, which is inferior to those they now enjoy, surrounded by so many courtiers and such a long succession of nobility...I want to represent her to their royal majesties in the quality of queen, and in the enjoyment of the same honors, so they might find in her a prototype of virtues, the veritable exemplar of an accomplished queen, and endowed with the most rare qualities, which have ever appeared on the brow of a sovereign majesty.<sup>106</sup>

Filleau then proceeds to give his queenly audience a virtual tour of Radegund's life, updated for the modern lady. He "conducts" them to the Salle Royale to observe Radegund's austerity amidst feasting, to the conjugal couch to witness Radegund's exemplary behavior as the wife of the king, and then on to the treasury so that the earthly queens can see how Radegund managed her money. Nowhere in his text does Filleau suggest that Radegund remained a virgin after her marriage to Clothar as Dumonteil does. Rather, his "tour" of the palace exposes "the secrets of the conjugal couch," and,

in drawing back the chaste curtains, which surround this pure dove, we see through the darkness this beautiful and august princess, who rises like an aurora before the sun, who leaves her licit marriage bed in the middle of the night to enter into a cabinet where she secretly fulfills her desire to render her duties to the spouse of her soul.<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> Filleau, *La Preuve Historique*, 47.

<sup>107</sup> Filleau, *La Preuve Historique*, 52.

He then provides a clarifying quote in Latin from Hildebert's twelfth-century *Life of Radegund*,

But if you wish to know how she bore her marital cares, she gratified her husband in such a way that she did not displease the Creator. Her home [was] ignorant of shame and disgrace, her bedroom/marriage [was] a workshop of modesty.<sup>108</sup>

Here, Filleau's choice to add Hildebert's helpful explanation of how Radegund performed her duties to both her earthly and heavenly spouses allows him to tailor his text to his audience of married elite women whose social position would require their compliance in the production of heirs. But unlike Hildebert's convoluted and lengthy description of how and why Radegund consummated her marriage, Filleau's portrayal of Radegund's sexuality is straightforward: She was chaste, but no virgin.

Even though Filleau's work is clearly hagiographical, his interest in presenting Saint Radegund as a model for elite laywomen seeking to live more piously extends into the realm of performing the hallowed role of housewife more effectively, as well. This is why he expands his discussion of Radegund's married life beyond Fortunatus and Hildebert's focus on the marriage bed, asceticism at court, charity to the poor, and other pious activities within the palace to include a few other activities that the seventeenth-century married elite woman would appreciate. In particular, Filleau explains how Radegund's skills in overseeing the kingdom's finances were "just as admirable" as her religious observances.<sup>109</sup> Merry Wiesner-Hanks suggests that the standards for wifely excellence had changed by the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries which could account for Filleau's rather practical observations of

---

<sup>108</sup> "Quod si ea, quæ cura maritum gerebant, nosse desideras, ita morigerata est conjugi, ne displiceret Creatori. Thalami ejus officina pudoris, & ignarum turpitudinis ac flagitii domicilium." Hildebert, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 10.

<sup>109</sup> Filleau, *La Preuve Historique*, 53.

Radegund's management skills here. She argues that, "Now the ideal wife was not simply one who showed religious virtues such as piety and modesty, but also economic ones such as order, industriousness, and thrift."<sup>110</sup> Wiesner-Hanks also notes that the new genre of marriage manuals became popular at this time which may have influenced Filleau's decision to add these new details about Radegund's married life that were never included before.<sup>111</sup>

In fact, Filleau delves into the non-theological aspects of marriage in a way that no previous Radegund author has done. He addresses his readership, asserting that "if they are attached by the sacred bond of marriage," they can "have recourse to Radegund's example" of how to "soften by a voluntary acquiescence to the rigor of their condition, and surmount the efforts of an annoying fate (*ennuyeuse fortune*), where the best days of their flourishing years are ravaged by the humors of an irritating (*fâcheux*) spouse."<sup>112</sup> Unlike Hildebert who wove instances of Clothar's brutality into advice for pious wives to persuade their husbands to make charitable bequests to the poor and the Church, Filleau rather humanely sympathizes with the emotional toll marriage can take on women. His message to them is all about withstanding an unpleasant husband's behavior by using Radegund's preferred strategies to manage her angry husband: when Clothar insulted her with injurious words before the court, she "attacked his heart with her silence, lowering her eyes to the floor, by which strategy she knew how to manage him dexterously."<sup>113</sup> A calm voice and natural grace were her most powerful marital tools, though perhaps not the most effective by today's standards. After all, Filleau continues, the blessed Francois de Sales once said that marriage is like martyrdom,

---

<sup>110</sup> Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 80.

<sup>111</sup> Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 76.

<sup>112</sup> Filleau, *La Preuve Historique*, 48.

<sup>113</sup> Filleau, *La Preuve Historique*, 48.

and for ruling married women, “the crown, which distinguishes them from the rest of mankind,” prevents them from dispensing with the many importunities of their marriages.<sup>114</sup>

Filleau’s stylistic choices seem well-adapted to his audience. His writing is concise; he takes on the role of a tour guide rather than a teacher, priest, or theologian; and he repeatedly addresses his audience directly to solicit their attention or to convince them that what they’re reading is both worthwhile and applicable to their situations. For example, he reassures his audience several times that they won’t have to read about convent life, “I promised the Ladies, in the beginning of this chapter, to only show Radegund in the divertissements of the Court, so that by her example they can learn to contain themselves in these delights, and to avoid the dangerous charms of glory and vanity.”<sup>115</sup> A few pages later after he finishes his tour of the palace he writes,

I stop my thoughts in the Palace of king Clothar, and am not obliged to carry them into the cloister of Sainte-Croix, in which the life of saint Radegund, appears to me inimitable for queens, who are still crowned, and who unlike her have not changed their condition by a religious retreat... I propose these excellent actions to queens and princesses, [I wish] to make them realize that they can consider Radegund’s virtues as imitable, although in a condition far removed from that which occupies them in this century.<sup>116</sup>

Here Filleau expresses a desire to close the gap between seventeenth- and sixth-century ideals of Christian queenship. Even though many royal and elite women entered convents in the seventeenth century, Filleau recognizes that the path from court to cloister was not as common or straightforward and that the expectations for this group of women did not include the same kind of religious rigor that was popular in the Middle Ages. The trend of separating imitable qualities for religious and laywomen began with Bouchet. Even though he

---

<sup>114</sup> Filleau, *La Preuve Historique*, 48.

<sup>115</sup> Filleau, *La Preuve Historique*, 49.

<sup>116</sup> Filleau, *La Preuve Historique*, 53.

prioritized his secular audience, Bouchet also directly addressed his text to nuns and did not hesitate to describe the fine points of monastic life. Of course, these seventeenth-century *Lives* do overlap in many instances as they describe Radegund's noteworthy virtues, pious devotions, and miracles. But the significance of Filleau's decision to emphasize Radegund's secular life while omitting many traditional details about her activities at Sainte-Croix relished by the Jesuit authors sets his work apart and demonstrates a widening gap in expectations for lay and religious women. Diefendorf illuminates these strategies of exclusion and inclusion in her analysis of the seventeenth-century pious biography of Barbe Acarie, founder of the Discalced Carmelite Order in France, arguing,

Biographers inevitably shaped their subject's life to fit an idealized pattern of female behavior intended to serve as a model for contemporary women. While selectively emphasizing those aspects of a woman's behavior that reinforced traditional gender roles, most authors tended to pass quickly over aspects of their subject's life that deviated from or contradicted traditional norms.<sup>117</sup>

We have seen these strategies employed by every Radegund biographer without exception. However, Filleau's cases of omission and Dumonteil's elaborate inventions go above and beyond Diefendorf's characterization of seventeenth-century biographers of pious women.

So how should we interpret the increased polarization between these two theatres of female sanctity – the royal court and the cloister – as reflected by the drastic differences in Filleau and Dumonteil's reinterpretation of Radegund? I would argue that these authors renegotiated Radegund's role as an exemplar in response to emerging trends in post-Reformation women's spirituality. For decades, scholars of the Catholic Reformation have studied the lives of Early Modern women in terms of the maxim, *aut maritus aut murus*. The phrase literally translates to “either a husband or a wall” which implies a strict dichotomy (or

---

<sup>117</sup> Barbara Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 21.

incompatibility) between marriage and the religious life. Negotiating Radegund's identity as wife and saint is a theme that consistently appears in the *Vita Radegundis*' many adaptations. But in the seventeenth century, theologians and churchmen approached women's path(s) to salvation in a new way and in response to new concerns. *Aut maritus aut murus* was promulgated at the Council of Trent as a resolution to at least three problems facing the state of women's spirituality in post-Reformation Europe.

Firstly, it complemented the Tridentine priority of reaffirming the Catholic tradition of professed virginity and the sacramental nature of marriage, which were both rejected by Protestants. Secondly, the Council of Trent crafted *aut maritus aut murus* as a response to Protestant challenges to traditional Catholic monasticism which was critiqued as being (at best) lax and (at worst) morally bankrupt. It "re-endowed the virginal state with divine grace and reclaimed the cloister as sacred space."<sup>118</sup>

Thirdly, the Council sought to mitigate the rise of women's lay devotional orders, also referred to as the third status, the third unofficial vocation, the neutral state, and the third course. It is noteworthy that these monikers all reflect the idea that now both marriage and professed virginity as a cloistered nun were the only two acceptable paths to salvation, with the uncloistered lay devotional life as an unauthorized option. As Hillman notes in her study of Counter-Reformation *vitae* of laywomen, "the new diversity of devotional lives outside of the cloister and the renewed charitable activism of lay women arguably grew out of the processes of Catholic spiritual renewal which crystallized in the century following the emergence of Protestantism."<sup>119</sup> Diefendorf argues that by the 1630s, "a preference for

---

<sup>118</sup> Strasser, "Aut Muritus Aut Maritus?" 4.

<sup>119</sup> Hillman, "Lay Female Devotional Lives in the Counter Reformation," 370.

charitable service came to supplant penitential asceticism as the dominant spiritual mode.”<sup>120</sup> This charitable service was something that could most effectively be performed outside the convent walls and appealed to laywomen who were married, unmarried, and widowed. Ironically, many of the new lay orders that operated schools, hospitals, and soup kitchens were inspired by the Council’s own call to improve religious education for both the laity and the clergy.<sup>121</sup> On the one hand, Church officials saw women as “potential allies” and “agents for Catholic reform,” but on the other hand, the surge of lay devotional orders “had the real or imagined potential to subvert male authority.”<sup>122</sup> Beginning in the sixteenth century, women’s lay confraternities and congregations throughout Europe such as the Beatas, Recogidas, Beguines, Bizzoche, Emparedadas, Mantelle, Pinzochere, Spiritual virgins, Tertiaries, the Company of Divine Love, and the Daughters of Charity were viewed as problematic and morally suspect because they often operated outside of male ecclesiastical oversight, members often did not follow any established Rule, and they performed their charitable activities outside the protective walls of an institution – much like Radegund herself when she engaged in her pre-Sainte-Croix charitable activities.<sup>123</sup> There is nothing surprising about these objections and concerns, since they were faced by the semi-monastic Beguines as early as the thirteenth century.<sup>124</sup> But they demonstrate that a highly significant aspect of the sixteenth-seventeenth century Catholic Reform was a revival of medieval objections to third orders and to uncloistered female religious movements. The promulgation of *aut maritus aut murus* sent a message to these women that if they “could not seek

---

<sup>120</sup> Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity*, 8.

<sup>121</sup> Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity*, 8.

<sup>122</sup> Weber, “Devout Laywomen in the Early Modern Catholic World,” 5-6.

<sup>123</sup> Thomas Worcester, “Neither Married nor Cloistered: Blessed Isabelle in Catholic Reformation France,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 30, no. 2 (Summer, 1999): 457.

<sup>124</sup> Tanya Stabler Miller, *The Beguines of Medieval Paris: Gender, Patronage, and Spiritual Authority* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 19.

honorable refuge behind the shielding murus--- the Council indeed decreed married life as the only other, divinely ordained existence.”<sup>125</sup> Marriage was therefore elevated by the Church, both in the reaffirmation of its sacramentality to distinguish it from Protestant heresy, and as a way to limit women’s participation in third orders by pushing them towards the moral safety of either marriage or a cloistered religious life.<sup>126</sup>

We can see this novel elevation of marriage as a choice on par with convent life in Dumonteil’s text. In the voice of Radegund, he explains, “everyone is free to enclose themselves (*se contenir*) or to marry...which is why I humbly beg your Royal mercy to forgive me if I do not obey you in this, permit me to live and die in enclosure (*continence*) in a monastery.”<sup>127</sup> Here, Radegund indicates that there are only two options available to her. As first described by Fortunatus, Radegund spent the first half of her life engaging in charitable activities outside the palace, much like the work done by the sixteenth- and seventeenth- century lay devotional congregations. She established hospitals at her royal villas where she worked without the supervision of priest or husband and went out to attend lepers. Dumonteil hesitates to praise this unsanctioned piety, arguing that, “She exercised all the works of mercy explained above before she cloistered herself without being subject to any rule or religious observation since she was veiled, this very grand perfection *still lacking* in her heroic virtues.”<sup>128</sup> Despite Radegund’s heroism in providing essential medical care to the local poor, which is arguably one of the most noteworthy attributes of Radegund’s sainthood, Dumonteil believes that Radegund reached saintly perfection only once enclosed at Sainte-Croix.

---

<sup>125</sup> Strasser, "Aut Muritus Aut Maritus?" 5.

<sup>126</sup> Strasser, "Aut Muritus Aut Maritus?" 5.

<sup>127</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire De La Vie Incomparable de sainte Radegonde*, 26.

<sup>128</sup> Dumonteil, *Histoire De La Vie Incomparable de sainte Radegonde*, 126.



And so, according to Dumonteil's worldview, women like Radegund could be valuable allies to the Tridentine Church, as long as their participation was limited to the work they could do from inside the walls of home or convent.

### ***Confraternities and Rebuilding***

In addition to Flandrine's efforts and the new *vitae* of Moquot, Dumonteil, and Filleau, another important way that Radegund's cult was revived after the Wars of Religion was through the foundation of confraternities and the rebuilding of vandalized churches and chapels. The physical reconstruction of buildings created opportunities for the production of new art and texts, as well as the re-establishment of pilgrimages that were curtailed during the war. These textual, artistic, and cultic innovations give us some interesting insights into the lived religion of rural communities in seventeenth-century France. But most importantly, they allow us to see how Radegund's meanings were adapted for different agendas and geographic locations within the post-reformation context.

Iconoclasm has long been a popular topic in historical scholarship.<sup>129</sup> But reconstruction – in a way, the natural result of iconoclasm – has received relatively little attention. Eric Nelson's monograph, *The Legacy of Iconoclasm: Religious War and the Relic Landscape of Tours, Blois and Vendôme 1550-1750*, is one of the only in-depth studies of the destruction and revival of French cult sites that explores the intersection of lived religion and the memory of the Religious Wars by investigating rebuilding activities. Nelson uses Saint

---

<sup>129</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth Century France," *Past and Present* 59 (1973), 53-91; Denis Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu: la violence au temps des troubles de religion vers 1525-vers 1610* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1990); Philip Benedict, *Rouen During the Wars of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Barbara Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Lee Palmer Wandel, *Voracious Idols and Violent Hands: Iconoclasm in Reformation Zurich, Strasbourg and Basel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Sergiusz Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts: the Protestant Image Question in Western and Eastern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1993).

Martin's basilica in Tours, the Benedictine abbeys of Marmoutier outside of Tours, and Saint Lomer in Blois as case studies to understand the broader meanings of relic veneration within a post-Wars of Religion context. Nelson's examination of these cult sites shows the resiliency of the "relic landscape" in the face of iconoclasm, as outpourings of gifts from rich and poor, clerical and lay, donors made it possible to replace reliquaries and rebuild shrines, sometimes on a grander scale than before.<sup>130</sup> Ultimately, Nelson argues that the Catholic Reformation had only a "modest impact" on the "renewing and evolving relic landscape."<sup>131</sup> The Council of Trent (1545–63) affirmed traditional relic veneration, but prescribed greater Church oversight to ensure the regulation and orthodoxy of cultic practices. The greatest impact to the relic landscape came in the form of new religious communities which drove the spread of relics across the world.<sup>132</sup> For example, Nelson highlights the Jesuits' role in distributing relics of early Christian martyrs from the Roman catacombs after they were rediscovered in 1578. We have already seen how the Jesuits, Moquot and Dumonteil, were also at the forefront of rewriting Radegund in ways that integrated "traditional" details of her life with memories of the Wars of Religion and relevant socio-political concerns. By focusing on instances of revival for Radegund's cult sites in particular, we can see how different communities selected and emphasized certain aspects of the Radegund tradition that were dependent on the authors' individual needs, communal interests, and geographical location.

In 1645, the Confraternity of the Tomb of Saint Radegund was established at the church of Sainte-Radegonde in Poitiers. Innocent X issued a papal bull granting members

---

<sup>130</sup> Nelson, *The Legacy of Iconoclasm*, 57; 69.

<sup>131</sup> Nelson, *The Legacy of Iconoclasm*, 88.

<sup>132</sup> Nelson, *The Legacy of Iconoclasm*, 91.

plenary indulgences associated with Radegund's many feast days. Members could also receive an indulgence of 60 days for performing various pious duties: assisting in ceremonies at the church of Sainte-Radegonde or at confraternity meetings, reconciling with enemies, assisting in burials and processions, reciting specific prayers, converting friends who strayed from the faith, teaching the catechism, and performing acts of piety and charity.<sup>133</sup>

Emile Briand retrospectively describes the great enthusiasm for joining this confraternity in his 1898 text, writing that "if the people were *happy* to enroll in the Confraternity of the Tomb, the princes of the House of France were *honored* to join it." In 1649, Anne of Austria, then regent of France during the minority of her son, Louis XIV, wrote letters to our Radegund biographer, Jean Filleau (who was serving as counselor and *advocat* to the king in Poitiers), and to the bishop of Poitiers requesting admittance into the confraternity for herself, Louis XIV, and her brother-in-law, Gaston d'Orleans.<sup>134</sup> Anne's special devotion to Radegund was augmented a decade later in 1658 when twenty-year-old Louis XIV recovered from a serious illness thanks to Radegund's intervention. In recognition of this miracle, Anne had a silver lamp installed in Radegund's tomb "to burn day and night." She also set up an endowment for two annual masses "to be celebrated in perpetuity in this royal church on June 29 and July 14," ordered that the king's *advocat* attend on the king's behalf (likely referring to Filleau and his successors), and installed a large marble *ex voto* in Radegund's tomb commemorating the miracle and listing the details of Anne's donations. She also commissioned a statue of Radegund from Nicolas Legendre which still stands in the

---

<sup>133</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 256.

<sup>134</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 256.

crypt of Sainte-Radegonde today. This marble statue depicts Radegund crowned, holding a fleur-de-lys scepter, and wearing a fleur-de-lys embroidered cloak.<sup>135</sup>

It is highly significant that Legendre used Anne as a model for the facial features of his Radegund statue.<sup>136</sup> Since Anne corresponded with Filleau, it is very probable that she read his *La preuve historique des Litanies de la grande reine de France sainte Radegonde*. As previously mentioned, Filleau's text was specifically directed towards elite women at court, which accounts for its considerably shorter length and lighter tone when compared with Dumonteil's and Moquot's *Lives*. Filleau's version of Saint Radegund as an exemplar for royal and elite laywomen clearly made a deep impression on Anne who seems to have literally visualized herself as a new Radegund in Legendre's sculpture. She further solidified the connections between Radegund and the royal family of France by claiming Sainte-Radegonde as a "royal church" in her *ex voto* and by having her initials, an intertwined A and L surmounted by a crown, carved in bas relief on the choir wall. As I already discussed in the previous section, Filleau takes great pains to reimagine Radegund for an audience of women just like Anne who may have sought to embrace aspects of Radegund's life at court, but had no intention of joining a monastic community.

Outside of Poitiers, local wealthy elites financed reconstruction projects and led the way in promoting Radegund's local cults. For example, Pierre de Girard, Seigneur of the Château de l'Espinay-Sainte-Radegonde in the area of Châteaudun, rebuilt a twelfth-century

---

<sup>135</sup> See also L'Abbe Alfred Largeault, "Etat des vases sacré, ornements, linges, livres, etc. de l'église collégiale de Sainte-Radegonde de Poitiers 1791," *Revue d'archéologie poitevine* 7 (Juillet 1898), Poitiers : H. Oudine : 200.

<sup>136</sup> Robert Favreau and Marie-Thérèse Camus, *Églises de Poitiers: parcours et visites* (Poitiers: Association Gilbert de la Porrée, 2006), 46. Also confirmed by a catalogue entry in Jean-Pierre Andrault, *Poitiers à l'âge baroque, 1594-1652: une capitale de province et son corps de ville*, Volume 1 (Poitiers : Société des antiquaires de l'Ouest, 2003), 273.

chapel on his estate that was burned down by Huguenots in 1568.<sup>137</sup> According to the *Bulletins de la Société Dunoise*, the chapel was originally dedicated to Saint Thomas.<sup>138</sup> An earlier seigneur donated its rights and revenues to the nearby Abbey of La Madeleine de Châteaudun in 1217. It was under their jurisdiction until Pierre de Girard reincorporated the chapel in 1591 as a private oratory after a legal battle that spanned 60 years and multiple seigneurs.<sup>139</sup>

About a century later in 1645, his successor, Vincent Barthélémy, promoted a local pilgrimage to this chapel by establishing a Confraternity of Saint Radegund there, which was modeled on the one that had recently been set up in Poitiers. He then wrote a new life of Radegund in 1686 for the Confraternity's use titled, *Panégyrique de Ste Radegonde, autrefois Reine de France & de Turinge*. Much like our three other seventeenth-century Radegund biographers – Dumonteil, Moquot, and Filleau – Barthélémy grounds his *Panégyrique* with themes of Radegund's royal connection to France's past and present monarchs. While he does not directly mention the Protestant threat or Huguenot attacks of the previous century, Barthélémy does underscore the concept of conversion: He hopes that his humble work will result in a *Régeneré*, or rejuvenation, of faith and he creates new elaborate scenes describing Radegund's own conversion from paganism to Christianity. This gives him the opportunity to restate all the basic tenants of Catholicism by listing everything Radegund would have learned from her instructors during her conversion process.<sup>140</sup>

---

<sup>137</sup> A. Bellenger et H. de Gastel, "Quelques Notes sur Sainte-Radegonde," in *Bulletins de la Société Dunoise : Archéologie, Histoire, Sciences et Arts* (1885-1887), Vol. 5 (Chateaudun : Libraire Louis Poullier, Rue d'Angoulême, 1888), 151.

<sup>138</sup> It is unclear exactly when this occurred.

<sup>139</sup> Bellenger, "Quelques Notes sur Sainte-Radegonde," 149-151.

<sup>140</sup> Vincent Barthélémy, *Panégyrique de Ste Radegonde, autrefois Reine de France & de Turinge, contenant sa vie & ses miracles* (Paris : Chez Charles Fosset, 1686), 26-38.

The most significant aspect of Barthélémy's work for understanding the development of Radegund's cult outside of Poitiers is his strategy of building on local traditions about Radegund's (questionably) historic travels to bolster his chapel's popularity. Within the first few pages of his introduction, he establishes the fact that there are many places outside of Poitiers "where the memory of this great and holy queen is venerated."<sup>141</sup> He invents or expands details of Radegund's travels to include sites never mentioned by her original biographers and builds up to his thesis that,

It is not only at the tomb of this great and holy queen that God wishes us to witness the virtues of his saints, for the Divine Bounty extends into the places where there have been altars erected for her, where oratories were made for her, such as the Bourg of Athies, Missy-sur-Aixne, Monceaux-pres-le-Plessis-en-Gastinois, at the palace of the king in Soissons...and *at the house of Lanerius in the county of Dunois, today named Lespinay and has as its name "Sainte-Radegonde"* where is found the odor of her perfumes, that is to say, of the miracles that God performs by her merits after her death. Having arrived, the people in a crowd bless the memory of such a great and holy princess and request her intercession from God... those who are animated by true faith pray there, as everyone knows, and it is noted in the Provinces where all these places of devotion are situated.<sup>142</sup>

Here, Barthélémy has added his estate to a list composed of places Radegund visited according to her sixth-century hagiographers (Athies and Soissons) and places that had developed community traditions by the late Middle Ages that Radegund had passed through (Missy-sur-Aixne and Monceaux-pres-le-Plessis-en-Gastinois).

His reference to "the house of Lanerius" is Barthélémy's own estate. He goes on to recount the ancient origins of his chapel and how his sixth-century predecessor offered hospitality to Radegund during her flight from Clothar and the episode of the Miracle of the Oats,

---

<sup>141</sup> Barthélémy, *Panégyrique de Ste Radegonde*, 12.

<sup>142</sup> Barthélémy, *Panégyrique de Ste Radegonde*, 105.

There is an ancient tradition in the county of Dunois, that this house once belonged to a Gentleman named Lanerius, officer of the royal house, who offered it to our saint, and that she accepted, that she found him a God-fearing man. She built an oratory there, just like the one she had built at the Chateau in Athies, and at the king's palace at Soissons, where she went with her followers at certain hours to pray.<sup>143</sup>

By listing L'Espinay-Sainte-Radegonde among these other well-known pilgrimage sites, Barthélémy is suggesting that his chapel possesses the same (or greater) antiquity, which would have been equated with authenticity. But also, by virtue of his stewardship of "Lanerius' house," he himself as current owner of the estate has an association with Radegund that contributes to his chapel's reputation as a desirable pilgrimage destination.

According to the statutes of Barthélémy's confraternity, the Seigneurs de l'Espinay-Sainte-Radegonde would always be "the first *confrères*, masters, and perpetual administrators in chief." Noble or, most commonly, royal, leadership was typical for confraternities.<sup>144</sup> Barthélémy was not an aristocrat, nor did he inherit l'Espinay. Described as an *avocat* and *bourgeois* of Paris, he purchased the estate in 1653.<sup>145</sup> Not being nobly born himself, he clearly desired to cultivate an appearance of nobility and may have seen the promotion of his chapel as a means to that end. Barthélémy's *Panegyrique* highlights his estate's ancient association with Radegund as the chapel's original founder and with his predecessor, Lanerius the gentleman, as the first noble benefactor whose hospitality inspired Radegund's decision to build an oratory on his estate.

Barthélémy was also an amateur artist and designed an engraving of his chapel that accompanied the *Panegyrique* to further entice pilgrims. Here, Radegund is represented between two palms in an oval frame, holding a cross and the abbess' crozier, with the royal

---

<sup>143</sup> Barthélémy, *Panegyrique de Ste Radegonde*, 55.

<sup>144</sup> Bellenger, "Quelques Notes sur Sainte-Radegonde," 180.

<sup>145</sup> Bellenger, "Quelques Notes sur Sainte-Radegonde," 152.

attributes of crown and fleur-de-lis scepter at her feet. She stands before Barthélémy's chapel, welcoming in three pilgrims, with views of the chateau grounds, and the l'Espinay coat of arms displayed conspicuously in the foreground. Accounts like this show how Radegund's perceived associations with nobility and Catholic tradition produced an increasingly secular appeal that attracted patrons with noble pretensions, like Barthélémy.

While countless other chapels and churches dedicated to Radegund were destroyed and subsequently rebuilt, I will only add here the story of the reconstruction of the Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde at Chinon because it was accompanied by a significant artistic production. This cave-chapel is situated among other cave-dwellings atop the rocky cliffs that overlook the medieval chateau de Chinon. The cave's history dates back to the second and third centuries when the natural underground spring at the back of the chapel was a site of pagan worship. It was Christianized in the sixth century by the Breton hermit, Jean the Recluse, who inhabited the cave and was interred in a sarcophagus there after his death. As related in Baudonivia's sixth-century *Life of Radegund*, Radegund sought Jean's advice when she suspected Clothar's intention to reclaim her as his wife after he had initially allowed her to depart the palace for the religious life. A chapel dedicated to Radegund in memory of her visit was established there in the twelfth century and a more spacious nave was added onto the mouth of the cave to accommodate pilgrims.<sup>146</sup>

The chapel was vandalized and destroyed in 1563 by the Huguenots who disinterred Jean's remains and scattered them into the wind.<sup>147</sup> Almost exactly one century later in 1643, the same year Jean Filleau published *La preuve historique des Litanies de la grande reyne de*

---

<sup>146</sup> Brochure, Ville de Chinon, "Laissez-vous conter La Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde," distributed August 2017.

<sup>147</sup> Marie-Eve Scheffer, "Chinon, la chapelle Sainte-Radegonde," (Conseil général d'Indre-Loire, 2010), 1 ; Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 447.



*France sainte Radegonde*, the chapel was restored by canon Louis Breton, the head of the Collège Royal de Chinon and chaplain of the chapelle Sainte-Radegonde.<sup>148</sup> He funded the production of six frescoes depicting scenes from the life of Radegund and Jean the Recluse. These frescoes, together with Breton's inscription commemorating his restoration efforts, were discovered in the late eighteenth century when the chapel was purchased and rebuilt again. The six paintings were very badly restored but have been identified by the local historical society: Envoys from Clothar deliver a letter to Radegund authorizing her to practice the religious life, Radegund is consecrated as a deaconess by Bishop Médard of Noyon, Radegund founds her monastery in Poitiers, the Miracle of the Oats, Saint Jean posthumously causes his beloved laurel tree to begin growing again ten years after his successor had turned it into a bench, and Radegund's servants bring her royal cloak to Jean as a gift in return for his advice.

Little is known about Canon Breton aside from the basic facts of his position at the college and his role in the restoration of the chapel. Nonetheless, his patronage of the chapel and the themes he chose for the frescoes suggest that he was specifically acting to bolster the Catholic position on a local level. The Collège de Chinon, founded initially as a school administered by the canonical chapter of Saint-Mexme in 1142, became a royal college in 1576 when it received a charter from King Henri III authorizing the purchase of a new house in the city for the instruction of young boys.<sup>149</sup> Breton became the head of the Collège in 1636 and, according to a document dated to 1623, the curriculum consisted of "five classes in the humanities, one class in philosophy, and one in theology."<sup>150</sup> The Collège, and Breton

---

<sup>148</sup> Ernest Henry Tourlet, *Histoire du collège de Chinon* (Chinon : Imprimerie Delaunay-Dehaies, 1904), 30-31.

<sup>149</sup> Tourlet, *Histoire du collège de Chinon*, 16.

<sup>150</sup> Tourlet, *Histoire du collège de Chinon*, 28-29.

himself either directly or indirectly, would have played an important role in the promotion of Catholic orthodoxy in the city by instructing its young inhabitants in church-approved doctrine. We can therefore view Breton's artistic program for the chapel as corresponding to this larger mission by reinforcing Chinon's Catholic cultic traditions. The frescoes featuring Radegund all emphasize the theme of official approval or confirmation. The scene in which Radegund receives a letter from Clothar's envoys authorizing her to practice her chosen style of religious life signifies royal confirmation of her decision. Receipt of such a letter is not part of Radegund's hagiographical traditions, meaning that Breton's decision to represent it here is significant and sets the tone for the remaining scenes. Showing Radegund's ordination by Bishop Médard demonstrates that she received episcopal confirmation, while her foundation of Sainte-Croix in the next panel highlights her own confirmation of her inclination, and possibly that of her husband, the king, who funded its construction. The inclusion of the Miracle of the Oats is unsurprising, considering its increasing popularity in the Early Modern period, but taken together with the other paintings, it was likely chosen to signal God's approval of Radegund's flight from court to cloister. The remaining two panels featuring Jean the Recluse reflect Breton's efforts to integrate a local holy figure into the larger cult of Radegund. Portraying Jean's receipt of Radegund's royal cloak after he advised her about her flight from Clothar serves to lend this local holy man's approval to Radegund's mission. And lastly, the depiction of Jean's laurel tree miracle obviously highlights Jean's holiness, but also connects his cult more meaningfully to Radegund's. Baudonivia's sixth-century *Life of Radegund* describes how Radegund miraculously resuscitated a dying laurel tree that she had transplanted to her cell. Moquot's *La vie de Sainte Radegonde* (1621) also relates this miracle, stating that the convent still cultivates clippings of this same laurel tree

because it “maintains the memory and virtue of its servant [i.e. Radegund].” He then deliberately connects Radegund’s laurel tree miracle to that performed by Jean of Chinon, which is “no less admirable,” noting that Jean “served the good queen very well.”<sup>151</sup> The fresco serves to integrate these two traditions and equates Jean and Radegund’s holiness as Catholic saints.

Breton’s role in enhancing Radegund’s local cult both narratively and topographically cannot be separated from the Catholic Reformation context. Seventeenth-century Catholicism emphasized the defense of foundational doctrine and practices, including the special status of the clergy and monasticism, the cult of the saints, the veneration of relics, belief in miracles, and pilgrimage, which were vociferously attacked by Protestants. In restoring the chapel, Breton was also affirming Catholic cultic tradition, the episcopacy, royal support of Catholicism, and the core approaches to spirituality that Protestants firmly rejected.

### ***Conclusion***

The Radegund(s) that emerge in the writings, art, and rituals of the sixteenth through seventeenth centuries are unique in a number of ways. Firstly, the trauma of sixteenth-century religious violence created a new role for Radegund, whose cult was recognized by both sides of the Wars of Religion as fundamentally intertwined with a conservative vision of France as a traditionally Catholic monarchy. In this capacity, she became an important part of Catholic Poitevin identity as they came to terms with and remembered the ways violence touched their community. To return to Hilary Bernstein’s apt quote, “not only did the past affect the present, but the present also exerted influence over the past.” In this way, Radegund’s identity shaped – and was in turn shaped by – sixteenth-century inter-

---

<sup>151</sup> Moquot, *La vie de Sainte Radegonde*, 481.

confessional conflict. We saw this most clearly in the seventeenth-century *Lives of Radegund* where an attack on this beloved queen-saint was perceived as an attack on the Catholic monarchy. But we also saw its effects on the relic landscape of the Kingdom of France as individuals and communities rebuilt and revitalized cult sites in ways that engaged with contemporary religious, social, and political ideals. The carefully constructed laments for destroyed devotional objects at Poitiers, the new frescos for the Chapelle-Sainte-Radegonde de Chinon, the Confraternity of the Tomb of Saint Radegund statutes, the royal patronage of Anne of Austria, the promotion of Vincent Barthélémy's pilgrimage to his chapel at l'Espinay-Sainte-Radegonde and his accompanying *Panégyrique*, and the many other ways that Radegund's cult was rebuilt from the ashes of iconoclasm helped establish her enduring identity as a decidedly *French* and *royal* saint.

Secondly, we see a new emphasis on the spiritual dichotomy of nun versus wife in Radegund's seventeenth-century *Lives*. Radegund's post-Reformation biographers drew on select aspects of her life and character to promote their own ideas about the proper social and spiritual behavior of elite French women, thereby continuing the trend that began in the twelfth century with Hildebert's first Radegund adaptation. Unlike in the Middle Ages when elite married laywomen were celebrated for their rigorous – even monastic – piety at the palace, expectations for women's spirituality in the seventeenth century were moving away from this kind of overlap between court and convent. The writers and devotees discussed in this chapter demonstrated that there was an urgent need for updated versions of Radegund that engaged with contemporary religious concerns, such as the Tridentine reforms, enclosure, marriage, virginity, consent, charity, lay and monastic devotional practices, and education. Catholics sought to redefine their traditional beliefs in opposition to Protestant

heresy and Radegund – now a quintessential French dynastic saint – was an effective vehicle for promoting their theological initiatives.

Thirdly, the seventeenth-century Jesuit *Lives of Radegund* fit the model established by the Société des Bollandistes of defending the Catholic faith with scientific historical scholarship. However, Radegund's case deviates from the Bollandists' project because Moquot, Filleau, and Dumonteil's particular agendas required them to produce original compositions. Rather than trying to establish the authentic truths about Radegund's life, they followed in the footsteps of Hildebert, Bradshaw, and Bouchet who all sought to rewrite Radegund to showcase their interpretations of the ideal expectations for women's behavior and spirituality updated for a contemporary audience.

## Chapter 7

### **Royalist, Republican, and Colonizer:**

#### ***La Mission Civilisatrice, Nationalism, and French Identities From the Revolution to World War I***

In the spring of 2014, Monseigneur Abagna Mossa, bishop of Owando, Congo, and the Congolese minister of culture, Jean Claude Gakosso, gathered amidst civil and military authorities in the parish of Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption in the town of Oyo to celebrate the erection of a new monument. After cutting the symbolic ribbon to inaugurate a statue of "Sainte-Radegonde de Tsambitso," the directeur général of patrimony and archives for the Republic of the Congo, Samuel Kidiba, delivered a speech in which he recognized this statue commemorating the 1899 French Mission de Sainte-Radegonde to Tsambitso as the "crystallization of the past, of history and of the imagination of the past."<sup>1</sup> Kidiba stated that this monument, like others set up in places of evangelization in the Congo, was a symbolic extension of the Holy Land and represented the place "from which our people entered modern history...demonstrat[ing] to future generations that Tsambitso, Loango, and Louzolo really existed."<sup>2</sup> But whose "history" is Kidiba referring to here and how has Radegund – with all her complex meanings – shaped, and in turn, been shaped by that history?

Radegund was the titular saint of France's first evangelical mission to the northern Congo, which was led by Monseigneur Prospère Augouard, a Poitiers native, in 1899.<sup>3</sup> He established at least five mission sites over the thirty-six years he spent as a missionary in

---

<sup>1</sup> Bruno Okokana, "Patrimoine historique national : le ministre de la Culture et des Arts, Jean Claude Gakosso, inaugure le monument Sainte Radegonde d'Oyo," *Les Dépêches de Brazzaville*, June 2, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Okokana, "Patrimoine historique national."

<sup>3</sup> Okokana, "Patrimoine historique national."

Africa.<sup>4</sup> The Mission Sainte-Radegonde de l'Alima was located about 500 km down-river from Brazzaville in a place referred to alternatively as Tsambitso, Mbochin, Oubanghi, and Alima by *Les Missions Catholiques*, the premier periodical documenting the activities of French missionaries around the turn of the twentieth century, and Augouard himself in his biographical works, *Dernier voyage dans l'Oubanghi et l'Alima* (1899) and *36 années au Congo* (1910).<sup>5</sup> The Mission Sainte-Radegonde was completely destroyed by lightning seven years after its foundation in 1906. But despite its short life, this site of French evangelization dedicated to Radegund had a lasting impact on the people of the region whose remembrance of this French queen-saint prompted the erection of a statue in her honor over a century later.

There are numerous postcards with photographs depicting scenes of daily life around the mission chapel and buildings. One presents the school of Mission Sainte-Radegonde presided over by the Révérend Père Marc Pédron. The scene is unmistakably staged, with a young Congolese boy touching a pointing stick to an image of Adam and Eve eating from the snake-wrapped Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden. Numerous other images from the History of Salvation are tacked to the bamboo walls of Sainte-Radegonde's chapel. We can just make out the Crucifixion above, Saint Joseph holding the Christ Child on the right, and to the left is an indistinct representation of the Last Judgement or possibly Christ in Majesty. Other educational materials have been arranged to compliment the young catechists' lesson. On the far left, the numbers one through ten appear just below

---

<sup>4</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*, Vol. 15, ed. Charles George Herbermann et al. (Encyclopedia Press, 1913), s.v. "Ubanghi," 115.

<sup>5</sup> Mgr. Prospère Augouard, *36 années au Congo* (Poitiers : Société française d'imprimerie et de librairie : en vente au profit de la Mission du Haut-Congo français chez M. l'abbé Augouard, 1914), entry no. 304, Brazzaville, October 15, "Incendie de la Mission Sainte-Radegonde," 237.

what might be a barometer or some other scientific instrument. The viewer witnesses this display of French civilization at work over the heads of a crowd of shirtless boys seated attentively below the watchful gaze of Father Pédrón. His deliberate pose, with one elbow resting casually on the knee of a high-stepping left leg, evokes an air of indisputable authority. Clad from head to foot in white garb, the looming Father forms a sharp contrast to the dark skin of his charges. The conspicuous lack of female presence is balanced by the mission's female titular saint, effectively veiling the more "masculine" side of colonialism marked by the violence and military presence of the lay French conquerors. The unmistakable message proclaimed by this image, titled "La Classe de R.P. Pédrón," is that the superiority of French culture – encompassing religion, science, history, education, etc. – justifies *la mission civilisatrice* ("the civilizing mission").

The association between Radegund and French civilization here is not a coincidence, but the new product of a carefully developed persona centuries in the making that coalesced at the intersection of some of the worst crises in France's recent history. This chapter examines the cult of Radegund in the aftermath of the French Revolution, a time when French culture seemed irreparably divided on every front – a situation apt for the production of multiple and often contradictory identities for this Frankish queen-saint. Still reeling from the violence of the 1790s that toppled the Ancien Régime, the country continued to face social and political instability over the next century from the recurring shifts of power as France transitioned between different forms of monarchy and republic. This period of conflict and uncertainty is often characterized as the culture wars, where "two Frances—one religious, one republican— coexisted in the same country, under the same law, but



subscribed to significantly different values.”<sup>6</sup> The “religious” and the “republican” were further factionalized into numerous interest groups, often irreconcilably divided over what constituted “Frenchness” and what it meant to be French. The traumatic military defeat in the Franco-Prussian War (1871), anxiety over the historically low birth rate, and a tuberculosis epidemic that claimed between one-fifth and one-fourth of the population plunged the French nation further into a mood of dangerous uncertainty. Fears that a once glorious France was slipping into a period of decline and proposed solutions for turning the tide pervaded political and religious discourse. The campaign for women’s rights was in full swing, though insistence on women’s “natural” place within a male-dominated hierarchy impeded their legal and social advancements again and again. Numerous scholars of late nineteenth-century France observe a general fixation on France’s history during this period and a particular interest in defining French identity both at home and abroad within the context of an increasingly global presence. Radegund’s distinctive ability to embody multiple meanings simultaneously resulted in a surge of popularity in her cult during the nineteenth century as individuals and communities sought new ways to define and express their worldviews. Radegund’s own multi-faceted nature made it possible for royalist and republican alike to harness her symbolic potential in their scramble to redefine French identity and France’s place in history.

The Radegund(s) of the long nineteenth century are all in some way a product of the urgent desire to articulate a new myth of the French nation. Firstly, as the patroness of France’s first mission to the Northern Congo, Radegund’s identity as an instrument of French civilization was mutually constructed both at home and abroad. Just as the colonial project

---

<sup>6</sup> J. P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided : Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 8.

forced France to define Frenchness in relation to the rest of the world, it also shaped Radegund's identity in similarly oppositional terms. She was reimagined by both Catholics and republicans in textual and visual culture as a quintessentially French hero who helped guide ancient Francia out of pagan degeneracy by dispensing superior education and pure apostolic morality from the intellectual haven of her monastery. The work of Catholic missionaries was crucial to the colonial project, despite the "uncomfortable symbiosis" that existed between missionaries and an adamantly secular anticlerical republican government.<sup>7</sup> But even for republicans, colonial France had to be Catholic, and Radegund's new identity as the great civilizer of a barbarian Gaul made her the perfect symbol for the justification of colonial France as the great civilizer of the world. Within this context, Radegund became a part of the new French narrative of superiority that was used to justify imperial expansion. This fixation on Radegund as a civilizing influence was coupled with the revival of her long-forgotten historical role as a medical caregiver (as opposed to a miraculous healer) to a population of morally dangerous poor. In this capacity, her image was used to sponsor charitable donations for a children's tuberculosis hospital in Tours and to recruit nurses for service in Algeria. In both of these cases, Radegund's more secular identity as a healer of the poor and promoter of hygiene was reconceived for the new needs and expectations at the turn of the twentieth century.

Secondly, Radegund became an important symbol for conservative royalists to express their opposition to republicanism and secularization. The previous three centuries of new *Lives* that built up Radegund's identity as a specifically *French* and *royal* saint contributed to her great appeal among monarchists. Members of the legitimist faction, who

---

<sup>7</sup> Daughton, *An Empire Divided*, 16.

supported the ascension of a king from the senior line of the Bourbon dynasty, crafted new interpretations of the Radegund tradition to promote their vision of a restored Catholic monarchy. Even though the realization of this goal seemed less and less likely after the fall of the Second Empire and the foundation of the Third Republic (est. 1870), royalists were reluctant to give up the fight. Emphasizing this Frankish saint's royalty took on a more volatile meaning than ever before during this period. The coronation of Radegund's statue in Poitiers – and the ensuing riot – was the most divisive use of Radegund to date. An important part of the legitimist strategy was to situate Radegund within an origin-narrative of French civilization – a strategy that was also fundamentally intertwined with the contemporary rhetoric of France's colonial project. The legitimist Radegund was creatively rewritten as God's instrument of civilization in Gaul to support their argument that the French nation was always meant to be a Catholic monarchy. But this version of Radegund was not limited to a strictly political context. The nineteenth-century royalist iterations of Radegund also carried important gendered implications. Beginning in the 1820s, we see a new and unexpected reinvention of Radegund as a mother-figure. Despite her historical identity as a captive bride who never became a biological mother and left her still-living husband to found a monastic community, Radegund became the patron saint of a new Catholic confraternity for married French mothers. She was also publicly styled as "Mère de la Patrie" ("Mother of the Fatherland") by a legitimist bishop who defined her practice of sanctity as suffering the birthing pains of the French nation, further entwining her identity with the origin-narrative of French civilization. In both of these instances, we see an intensification of Radegund's femininity that coincided with two significant trends in expectations for women's gendered behavior: the move towards a patriotic and even nationalistic construction of motherhood;

and the curtailment of the expanded legal standing married women had achieved at the start of the Revolution.

Lastly, despite Radegund's powerful association with various conservative political, social, and religious agendas, she was simultaneously appropriated by the French republican government who sought to recreate her as a symbol of republican nationalism. Highlighting Radegund's Frenchness while minimizing her royalty, she was promoted in monumental art as the epitome of the pure Christianity of a literary and artistic golden age before the Ancien Régime's corrupt influence. The republican interpretation of Radegund as a desacralized object of French patrimony fractured the Catholic monopoly on her use and made her "safe" for republican France. In addition, the famed anticlerical French writer, Anatole France, composed his own *Life of Radegund* as a cautionary tale about the brutality of kings. Anatole France's Radegund – who heroically preferred her "asylum of virtue" to "a blood-stained throne" – is entirely outshone by her villainous royal husband. Presented as the long-suffering victim of Clothar's injustice, Anatole France's Radegund roars out a prophesy (or a curse) dooming the corrupt king to the effects of divine vengeance for his crimes.

As she was mobilized as a symbol by both sides of the culture wars, Radegund lost much of her original medieval meaning as a saintly exemplar. Radegund's early medieval piety and grueling asceticism was even less imitable for the post-Revolutionary French than it was in the seventeenth century when Jean Filleau made a point of stopping his tale of Radegund at the convent doors. As she quietly settled into the realm of antiquity and symbolism towards the *fin de siècle*, her numerous identities – whether republican or conservative, secular or Catholic – reflected the myth the French were telling themselves and

the rest of the world: Its history, education, and cultural achievements made France an undeniably superior nation that merited a central position on the global stage.

This chapter explores these three innovative and occasionally conflicting “Radegunds” – the colonial, the royalist, and the republican – by comparing a new set of texts, art, and ritual practices including revolutionary miracle accounts, several new hagiographical works, panegyrics, postcards, sermons, processions and statue-crowning ceremonies, newspaper articles, letters, local histories, missionary memoirs, sculptures, monumental art, and publicly distributed holy cards.

### ***The French Revolution and the Cult of the Saints: Iconoclasm & Restoration***

After twelve centuries of unbroken possession, the thirty nuns and thirteen novices who still lived at the Abbey of Sainte-Croix in 1792 were expelled and the property confiscated by the state,

The abbey buildings were then discovered to possess qualities which were highly prized at the time, as the material of which their walls were composed contained a considerable quantity of saltpeter. Accordingly the premises were invaded by an army of munition-workers, and the process of extracting the saltpeter from the walls went on until the whole abbey, with the exception of the abbess's lodge, had disappeared.<sup>8</sup>

Today, nothing remains except for a scattered grouping of column bases and crumbling wall fragments outside the five-story apartment building that now occupies the site where the old abbey used to stand. Radegund’s foundation survived the ravages of the Huguenots and may have even surpassed its medieval glory days under Abbess Flandrine’s management, but the Revolutionary hostility towards Catholic institutions proved to be insurmountable.

---

<sup>8</sup> Brittain, *Saint Radegund*, 75.

Before we explore the three innovative ways Radegund's identity was reconceived in the long nineteenth century, it is important to first situate their emergence within the context of revolutionary iconoclasm. Like the Reformation, the French Revolution resulted in the widespread destruction and vandalism of Catholic objects, places, and institutions. However, the systematic and nation-wide scope of the suppression gave the revolutionary attacks on Radegund's cult sites a very different character from their Reformation-era counterparts. Their subsequent revival (when possible) was also substantially different. The restoration of buildings and the production of new devotional objects were overtly reactionary with designs that embraced a romanticized medievalism as authors, artists, patrons, and orators looked backwards to the imagined ideal past of the pre-Revolutionary Ancien Régime they believed Radegund to have inhabited.

In addition to the Abbey of Sainte-Croix, in 1792, the "Vandales révolutionnaires"<sup>9</sup> also destroyed the nearby chapel dedicated to the Pas-de-Dieu, a flagstone from Radegund's cell imprinted by the footsteps of Christ when he appeared to her in a vision shortly before her death. But, struck by the overwhelming power of Radegund's holiness, those same revolutionaries were compelled to save the holy stone, which they transported to the Church of Sainte-Radegonde for safety where it is still exhibited for veneration today.<sup>10</sup> Emile Briand, author of the 1898 *Histoire de Sainte-Radegonde* and curate of her church in Poitiers, retrospectively saw this miracle as "a testimony to the irrefutable remnant of popular belief" that survived the violent revolutionary suppression.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Term used in Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 214.

<sup>10</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 214.

<sup>11</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 214.

The unique cave-chapel dedicated to Radegund at Chinon, so painstakingly restored after the Huguenot vandalism of 1562 by Canon Louis Breton with his addition of six murals, barely survived the ravages of the Revolution. The revolutionary government sold the chapel property and it was divided into multiple dwellings. The nave was converted into a pig sty and the twelfth-century statue of Radegund, which survived the Reformation, was believed to have been stolen or lost. In 1878, a local wealthy Catholic, Madame Élisabeth Charre, bought the land and employed the architect, Monsieur Daviau, to clear out the debris and fully restore the chapel to its medieval form. Briand recounts the transformation, exclaiming, “We were amazed to see suddenly appear a monument of very great interest, with columns, windows, and arches, there where we only saw filthy stables!”<sup>12</sup> In addition to these expensive restorations which were completed within the year, Mme Charre also engaged the Poitevin sculptors, Messieurs Charron and Beusoleil, to produce a lifelike limestone statue of Jean the Recluse reclining on his tomb. Mme Charre had no need of their services for a new Radegund icon because, during the rebuilding, the twelfth-century statue was miraculously discovered by her workers in the nearby vineyard where it had been ignominiously tossed when the chapel was decommissioned in 1792.<sup>13</sup> She did however have a new pedestal erected to display it, to which she added a Latin inscription memorializing her and M. Daviau’s efforts. The restoration was celebrated with a blessing and dedication ceremony on Radegund’s feast day of August 13 in 1879.<sup>14</sup> Mme Charre

---

<sup>12</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 448.

<sup>13</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 448.

<sup>14</sup> J.X. Carré de Busserolle, “Dictionnaire Géographique, Historique, et Biographique d’Indre-et-Loire et de l’Ancienne Province de Touraine,” *Mémoires de la Société archéologique de Touraine* 31, no. 80 (Société archéologique de Touraine: Touraine, 1883), 253.

sought to restore the chapel to its medieval state, invoking a romanticized appreciation for the artistic styles of the Ancien Régime shared by so many French Catholics of the 1870s.<sup>15</sup>

The medieval Chapelle de Sainte-Radegonde in the rural hamlet of Ganties, situated in the Occitan region of southwestern France, was completely destroyed during the French Revolution. Unlike so many of Radegund's other cult sites, Ganties was one of the few, in addition to Chinon, that was entirely rebuilt. But unlike the more conventional aspirations of Mme Charre which entailed a no-expenses-spared restoration of a site of popular historical and religious value, the motivations for the Ganties restoration took on a uniquely rural character and signaled a revival of Radegund's medieval associations with the protection of agricultural produce.

In the spring of 1852, the parish of Ganties was hit by a devastating hailstorm. According to local tradition, "it was unheard of that hail had fallen on the neighborhoods [Radegund] was protecting."<sup>16</sup> The inhabitants believed that they could secure Radegund's intervention by rebuilding her chapel, which was thought to be the first church of Ganties, and by establishing a community feast day on the anniversary of the hailstorm. In a letter to his local archdeacon, Abbé Figarol, the parish priest of Ganties, presented his congregation's case and requested permission to go forward with their rebuilding project and their plan to institute an annual mass in Radegund's honor every May 27, the anniversary of the hailstorm. Figarol writes that, while it's true that public religious observation ceased during the French Revolution when the chapel was destroyed, "for a long time, *and today more than ever*, the

---

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Emery and Laura Morowitz, *Consuming the Past: The Medieval Revival in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003), 6.

<sup>16</sup> Abbé Figarol to the archdeacon, May 1853, [http://aspetinf.chez.com/assoc/bull/bull\\_10\\_art/bull\\_10\\_art1.htm](http://aspetinf.chez.com/assoc/bull/bull_10_art/bull_10_art1.htm)



inhabitants have called for reconstruction again.” He continues to explain that his parishioners have

All resolved to suspend their work in the fields on this day so that they may derive more fruit from their devotion, and they earnestly desire that a mass be celebrated and vespers sung at which they can assist. They add that they have such a great confidence in the merits of this one they want to honor, who has been worshiped from time immemorial by themselves and the inhabitants of the neighboring parishes, who used to come in great veneration to this country chapel dedicated in her honor.<sup>17</sup>

Unlike the restoration of the Chinon chapel, which was a top-down affair spearheaded by a local wealthy elite, the Ganties restoration (at least as it was framed by Abbé Figarol) was driven by the specific needs and concerns of this farming community, who believed rebuilding Radegund’s chapel could mitigate a very real threat to their livelihoods.

The archdeacon granted their request and May 27 became a non-working holiday in the community of Ganties. Figarol’s successor, Abbé Pourrech, recorded the popular religious customs of his parish, noting the enduring devotion to their patroness. He describes in great detail the pastoral celebration that took place each year on her feast day when the whole parish assembled at the church which, according to his rather romantic description, “rises in the middle of a small valley, surrounded by beautiful oaks and far from any habitation.”<sup>18</sup> Everyone walked in procession, following four young girls dressed in their First Communion clothes, who bore Radegund’s relic on a platform. After mass was celebrated, families scattered to the woods or meadows for a picnic lunch and drank from the nearby Fontaine de Sainte-Radegonde. At two o’clock, the feast day congregation reformed to recite the rosary. Each decade was followed by a short lesson derived from the life of

---

<sup>17</sup> Abbé Figarol to the archdeacon, May 1853, [http://aspetinf.chez.com/assoc/bull/bull\\_10\\_art/bull\\_10\\_art1.htm](http://aspetinf.chez.com/assoc/bull/bull_10_art/bull_10_art1.htm)

<sup>18</sup> Abbé Pourrech, “Preface to letter from Abbé Figarol to the archdeacon,” 1940, [http://aspetinf.chez.com/assoc/bull/bull\\_10\\_art/bull\\_10\\_art1.htm](http://aspetinf.chez.com/assoc/bull/bull_10_art/bull_10_art1.htm)

Radegund. After singing Vespers, they recited Radegund's panegyric, kissed the relics, and went out in procession once again with the relics enclosed in "a simple medallion." Father Pourrech ponders to himself whether "this saint and queen of France who has been honored from time immemorial in Ganties had ever visited there during her lifetime, or whether the nuns of her order had ever founded a monastery there?" Unfortunately, "we do not know," he concludes, but Pourrech certainly appreciates the religious zeal of his rural community whose traditions and identity have been shaped by Saint Radegund.<sup>19</sup>

While the curate of the church of Sainte-Radegonde in Poitiers, Emile Briand, was too young to have witnessed the destruction of Radegund's foundations, he was present for their great revival almost a century later. As Briand reports, Bishop Pie of Poitiers, who features more prominently in this study in the following section, officiated at the new Sainte-Croix's dedication ceremony in 1869. Local pious donations funded the construction of a new abbey church to "console" the nuns for the "disappearance of their ancient basilica demolished from top to bottom."<sup>20</sup> In his dedication homily, Pie laments the move, but prefers to emphasize the theme of continuity, noting, "it is still there on this patch of particularly blessed land where all our great saints have lived, saint Hilary, Saint Martin, Saint Radegund, Saint Agnes, Saint Fortunatus, and how many others!" All the holy lives and deaths that transpired there served to "unite this new monastery to the old monastery."<sup>21</sup> For Pie, the sacred space that gave the original Sainte-Croix its spiritual authority extended beyond Poitiers' city walls and across the river.

---

<sup>19</sup> Abbé Pourrech, "Preface to letter from Abbé Figarol to the archdeacon," 1940, [http://aspetinf.chez.com/assoc/bull/bull\\_10\\_art/bull\\_10\\_art1.htm](http://aspetinf.chez.com/assoc/bull/bull_10_art/bull_10_art1.htm)

<sup>20</sup> Louis-Édouard-François-Desiré Pie, "Homélie prononcée à l'office de la solennité de Sainte Radegonde, patronne de la ville, sur la rôle de la sainte reine dans le temps de guerre," *Oeuvres de Mgr Louis-Édouard-François-Desiré Pie, Evêque de Poitiers*, Vol. 6 (Paris: H. Oudin, 1887), 502.

<sup>21</sup> Pie, "Homélie prononcée à l'office de la solennité de Sainte Radegonde," 493.

Furthermore, Radegund's daughters retained their most precious assets, despite their relocation. As Pie argues, "The rich abbey has lost its luster, but has lost nothing of what makes its true wealth and its finest claim to fame: the spirit of its holy foundress and the treasure of the true cross."<sup>22</sup> Radegund's "spirit" was translated to the new Sainte-Croix in the form of a new reliquary made for the fragment of skull and arm bone the courageous little girl was divinely inspired to save during the Huguenot iconoclasm of 1562. Funded by the Poitevin clergy and lay devotees in 1854, it was described as "one of the masterpieces of nineteenth-century goldsmithing" by Abbé Charles Eschoyez.<sup>23</sup> The golden reliquary was designed by the architect J.B. Lassus to resemble a thirteenth-century church, due to the high regard for this period's "purity of style."<sup>24</sup> The multi-sided design incorporates eight scenes from Radegund's life, including the ordination of Radegund as deaconess, the Miracle of the Oats, Radegund offering bread to the bishop of Poitiers to be used in the Eucharistic sacrament, Radegund's vision of Christ that resulted in the Pas-Dieu stone, Radegund's entombment officiated by Gregory of Tours, Fortunatus composing the *Vexilla Regis* in honor of the True Cross relic, and two portraits of her saintly companions, Agnes and Disciola. The interior of the reliquary is decorated by the coat of arms of Bishop Pie, as well as those of Alphonse de France (brother of Saint Louis and count of Poitou in the thirteenth century who funded Sainte-Radegonde's stained glass program). Bishop Pie's remarkable lifelong devotion to the Holy Cross inspired his decision to commission a new reliquary for Radegund's relic of the True Cross, as well, which he presented at the church dedication ceremony. Noting his role as benefactor in the reliquary's Latin inscription, Pie also used his

---

<sup>22</sup> Pie, "Homélie prononcée à l'office de la solennité de Sainte Radegonde," 493.

<sup>23</sup> Eschoyez, *Origines de l'abbaye royale de Sainte-Croix*, xiii.

<sup>24</sup> Eschoyez, *Origines de l'abbaye royale de Sainte-Croix*, 28.

homily to praise “this pious monument” (and, indirectly, himself) which had been “awarded to the successors of Fortunatus, as a pledge and a reward for their employment as testamentary executors of Radegund faithfully and perseveringly accomplished.”<sup>25</sup> Pie’s “proprietary” attitude toward the True Cross relic actually resulted in some minor conflict with the superior of Sainte-Croix, Madame de Marans, who had to insist that the relic remain in her custody.<sup>26</sup> While Pie’s interference here clearly threatened the nun’s authority over their possessions, which they saw as a fundamental part of their institution’s identity thanks to Radegund’s early efforts to secure episcopal independence, his enthusiasm for Radegund’s cult would result in her increased popularity - and politicization - by the 1870s.

The Confraternity of the Tomb of Saint Radegund in Poitiers, originally founded in 1645 and dissolved in 1792, was reinstated in 1883 as an archconfraternity, “with a greater reach and more numerous privileges.”<sup>27</sup> A year later, Pope Leo XIII issued a brief permitting all confraternities dedicated to Radegund to assume the same expanded indulgences. The terms and goals of the mother confraternity in Poitiers give us some insight into the needs and concerns of Radegund’s devotees during the Catholic Revival. The most illustrative are the requirements for a plenary indulgence on Radegund’s feast day of August 13, which devotees may only receive “on condition that they visit the church of the confraternity and pray there for the concord of the Christian princes, the extirpation of heresy, the conversion of sinners, and the exaltation of the Holy Church our mother.”<sup>28</sup> Here, we can see that

---

<sup>25</sup> Pie, “Homélie prononcée à l’office de la solennité de Sainte Radegonde,” 503.

<sup>26</sup> Brian Brennan, “Piety and Politics in Nineteenth Century Poitiers: The Cult of St Radegund,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47, no. 1 (January 1996): 68; Josephine de Marans, Superior of Sainte Croix to M. Oudin Devouloir of *L’Univers*, Jan. 1854, Archives de l’évêché de Poitiers, 570 Ste Radegonde; Josephine de Marans to Mgr Pie, 6 Aug. 1854, Archives de l’évêché de Poitiers, 570 Ste Radegonde.; Labande- Mailfert, *Histoire de l’abbaye Sainte-Croix*, 450-61.

<sup>27</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 258.

<sup>28</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 258.

devotion to Radegund was explicitly synonymous with devotion to the monarchy and the institution of the Catholic Church.

We can also see that even after the 1787 Edict of Tolerance, the Revolution, and the Concordat of 1801, Radegund's association with the fight against heresy was just as relevant for French Catholics in the nineteenth century as it was in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation. In a forum published in *French Historical Studies*, Caroline Ford challenges the assumption that religious violence in France essentially disappeared in the nineteenth century when it was replaced by the French Revolution's political and social violence.<sup>29</sup> Ford argues that religious violence never disappeared, rather it was fundamentally transformed. In order to better understand the post-revolutionary situation, she proposes a methodology that "[situates] it in a longer history of religious violence, from the Wars of Religion to the Third Republic, and by assessing that violence not only in terms of its frequency but also in terms of its changing forms of expression."<sup>30</sup> Of course, major differences existed between the nature of conflict during these two periods: The focus of tension in the nineteenth century was no longer strictly along the confessional lines of Protestant and Catholic, but "assumed the form of resistance to an anticlerical state or a political opponent."<sup>31</sup> The effusion of support for Radegund's cult – and traditional Catholic approaches to spirituality in general – in the two centuries following the end of the Wars of Religion did not mean that conflict between Catholics and Protestants had ceased. Religious tension and violence continued throughout France during this time and into the nineteenth century. In the 1680s, Louis XIV initiated the systematic repression of Protestantism by excluding Protestants from political

---

<sup>29</sup> Caroline Ford, "Violence and the Sacred in Nineteenth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 21, no. 1 (Winter, 1998), 101.

<sup>30</sup> Ford, "Violence and the Sacred," 101.

<sup>31</sup> Ford, "Violence and the Sacred," 105.

office and actively limiting their ability to practice their religion. His revocation of the 1598 Edict of Nantes in 1685 with the Edict of Fontainebleau launched a new period of religious conflict that persisted until the 1787 Edict of Toleration.<sup>32</sup> For Ford, the political and religious upheaval of the French Revolution and its aftermath cannot be separated from that which occurred during the Wars of Religion because both periods share the common “context of civil war and the rupture of political power embodied in organized institutions.”<sup>33</sup> I would add to Ford’s thesis that any study of post-Revolutionary religion – especially regarding the cult of the saints – ought to be conducted in conjunction with an examination of the Wars of Religion and its aftermath. Denis Crouzet argues in his study of religious violence, *Guerriers de Dieu*, that even though “violent gestures can be the same in different situations,” they may not have “the same motivations and meanings.”<sup>34</sup> Of course, Crouzet here is analyzing physical acts of violence between people, but his theory can be applied to saints, as well. Violence against the saints – and Radegund in particular – may look the same during the Revolution as it did during the Reformation, but it took on new symbolic meaning because the politico-religious context and discourse were so different. As the following sections continue to show, Radegund was reinterpreted within this context and became an important symbol for expressing political and religious views.

### ***Radegund’s post-Revolution Identities***

#### **Radegund the Royalist**

The political transition from empire to republic, the demoralizing military defeat, and the uncertainty surrounding the monarchy’s restoration produced a sharply polarized climate

---

<sup>32</sup> Ford, “Violence and the Sacred,” 104.

<sup>33</sup> Ford, “Violence and the Sacred,” 104.

<sup>34</sup> Crouzet, *Guerriers de Dieu*, 297.

in France in the second half of the nineteenth century and created an opportunity for Radegund to become a vehicle for legitimist political views. The Legitimists were a conservative, royalist, ultra-Catholic faction who opposed liberal, republican, and democratic ideas. They vehemently detested the Revolution and any enduring revolutionary sentiment, hoping for a restoration of the Ancien Régime. They considered Charles X (1824-1830) from the senior line of the Bourbon Dynasty as the last legitimate French monarch, according to the traditional Salic laws of succession, and supported Charles X's direct heir, Henri, Count of Chambord, as the rightful king of France.<sup>35</sup> Louis-Édouard-François-Desiré Pie, bishop of Poitiers from 1849-1879, was one of the biggest proponents of the legitimists, and used his position and his city's association with Radegund to promote his ideology.

Pie worked tirelessly to revitalize Radegund's cult in Poitiers and throughout France, often using her memory, feast day, and relics to channel his support for the restoration of a Catholic Bourbon monarchy. When the Assumptionist and member of the Comité Central des Pèlerinages, Father Vincent de Paul Bailly (1832-1912), organized the first national pilgrimage to Lourdes, Pie collaborated with him to ensure that a stop at Sainte-Radegonde's would be added to the itinerary. Bailly's very modern pilgrimage was facilitated by the recent completion of the Paris-Bordeaux railway line which offered fifty-percent discounts to pilgrims traveling in groups. Thanks to the addition of the Poitiers railway station, which was added onto this line in 1851, Pie was able to collect pilgrims directly from the train station and conduct them personally around Radegund's shrine.<sup>36</sup> National pilgrimages to Lourdes –

---

<sup>35</sup> Robert Locke, *French Legitimists and the Politics of Moral Order in the Early Third Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 3.

<sup>36</sup> Bailly to Pie, 9 Aug. 1877, Archives de l'évêché de Poitiers 570 Ste Radegonde; Brian Brennan, "Visiting 'Peter in Chains': French Pilgrimage to Rome, 1873-93," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51, no. 4 (October 2000): 743.

and especially to Rome after Napoleon III's withdrawal of troops from Italy allowed for the Pope's capture in September 1870 – had significant political overtones and were used by ultramontane royalists to signal their rejection of the anticlerical Third Republic.<sup>37</sup> Pie's national pilgrimage to Sainte-Radegonde was a particularly well-suited event for expressing legitimist views.

A few days after Radegund's feast day in 1874, Pie delivered an address to a large group of Parisian pilgrims at the church of Sainte-Radegonde, now a regular stop on the national pilgrimage routes to Lourdes and Rome. Pie used this opportunity to speak about political, social, and religious issues that were important to the legitimist faction: namely, the restoration of France as a Catholic Bourbon monarchy – just as God designed it to be. He began his sermon by lamenting the current state of affairs in France, which, in the second half of the nineteenth century, had become the standard opening for Pie and other like-minded orators: The world is plunged into shadow and chaos, people now disdain the miraculous, and only the publicly demonstrable faith of true believers like his audience of Parisian pilgrims “will cure the ills of society, will restore life and movement to this paralytic nation.”<sup>38</sup> Then assuming a more hopeful tone, Pie champions Radegund as a national saint who played a crucial role in the early formation of France as an enduring Catholic monarchy. He does this by drawing on details from her historical life to illustrate the qualities of an ideal ruler. This is a strategy we have seen almost all previous Radegund biographers employ. However, Pie's purpose is quite different from theirs. He begins by posing the question,

---

<sup>37</sup> Brian Brennan, “Visiting ‘Peter in Chains’: French Pilgrimage to Rome, 1873-93,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51, no. 4, (October 2000): 741; 743.

<sup>38</sup> Louis-Édouard-François-Desiré Pie, “Discours adressé dans l'Église de Sainte-Radegonde de Poitiers aux Pèlerins de Paris Le 17 Aout 1873,” *Oeuvres de Mgr Louis-François-Desiré-Ed. Pie, Evêque de Poitiers*, Vol. (Paris: H. Oudin: 1878), 169.



“Who remembers today so many other queens of France who lived in delights, in riches, in honors, and who died on the throne?” Even Clotilde, Balthilde, Joan of France, and Saint Louis’ mother, Blanche of Castille, have not stood the test of time, whereas “Radegund has remained more popular than all the others” and, especially today, “she is more present than ever to the memory of the nation.” Her commitment to peace through diplomacy is a major theme in all Pie’s public speeches about Radegund after the 1870 military defeat. But he also recounts how as queen she always supported the clergy and put the Church’s interests first, “because she already knew that the prosperity of France is inseparable from the destinies of the Church.”<sup>39</sup> Unlike Hildebert, Jean Bouchet, or the three post-Reformation authors of Chapter 6, Pie was not addressing these remarks on good queenship to any living ruler or even to ruling-class women in general. Rather, this politically charged sentiment seems intended as a poignant critique of the secularizing state agencies who stripped the privileges, property, and funding that the clergy had enjoyed for centuries under the Bourbon monarchy.<sup>40</sup> Without specifically mentioning Henri de Chambord, the legitimist candidate for king, Pie likely had this presumptive monarch in mind as he expounded on the qualities of good queenship. In fact, Pie symbolically and physically linked Chambord with Radegund when he sent Madame la Comtesse de Chambord a precious piece of Radegund’s relics. As reported by Pie’s biographer, Mgr Louis Baunard, the bishop included a letter with his gift which concluded with the hopeful sentiments, “May this precious dispatch bear with it graces, consolations, and hopes! May the exile of today come soon to pay a visit to her

---

<sup>39</sup> Pie, “Discours adressé dans l’Église de Sainte-Radegonde,” 69.

<sup>40</sup> Christopher Clark, “The New Catholicism and the European Culture Wars,” *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, eds. Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11.

predecessor such as she made to her.”<sup>41</sup> Here, Pie refers to Mme Chambord as the soon-to-be queen and Radegund’s successor, inviting the Chambords to visit the tomb of their holy ancestor at the Church of Sainte-Radegonde. On the surface, Pie’s discourse might seem to follow the centuries-old pattern of rewriting Radegund as a model for contemporary queens. However, we should interpret Pie’s use of Radegund as part of his life-long mission of generating support for a Bourbon restoration. Pie’s orations are the first instances where Radegund’s queenship was discussed outside of the context of living under a monarchy. Here, Radegund has entered the political milieu of nineteenth-century France more as a symbol – for a heroic Christian past, for a better type of society where religion and governance were fully integrated – than as a model to imitate. And as we will continue to see later in this chapter, it is Radegund’s symbolic value, rather than her exemplarity, that characterizes her appeal in the late nineteenth century.

Raymond Jonas explores the symbolic links between Chambord, the legitimist faction, and the promotion of French national pilgrimages in the 1870s in his article on the politicization of the national pilgrimage to the shrine of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre in Paris, "Restoring a Sacred Center: Pilgrimage, Politics, and the Sacré-Coeur." He recounts how a train full of pilgrims pulling out of the Béziers station on their way to Lourdes in 1873 boisterously sang, "Give us a King in the name of the Sacred-Heart," and waved white handkerchiefs – a symbol of the Bourbon dynasty, and specifically, Henri de Chambord – from the open windows. As Jonas argues, "The incident at the train station of Béziers shows how the ancient penitential practice of pilgrimage served to mobilize the faithful and to animate the partisans of popular royalism in the relatively new cult of the Sacré-Coeur, the

---

<sup>41</sup> Mgr Louis Baunard, *Histoire du Cardinal Pie*, Vol. 1 (Poitiers: H. Oudin, 1886), 273.

Sacred Heart.”<sup>42</sup> While we have no specific accounts of white handkerchiefs at Radegund’s shrine, we do know that Bishop Pie was actively involved in the construction of Montmartre as a national shrine dedicated to the Sacred Heart and he presided over national pilgrimages to many other sites in the 1870s which were politically charged.<sup>43</sup> For example, he addressed a crowd of Chartres-bound pilgrims at Montmartre about the desperate need for France, “the eldest daughter of the Church” and “King Jesus’s” chosen-one, to return to the path of salvation, saying, “Such is the cry of France in distress, which awaits a leader, who calls for a master....,” whom Jonas interprets as Chambord.<sup>44</sup> Pie’s address is all the more significant for the fact that it was planned for the anniversary of Marie-Antoinette’s execution.<sup>45</sup> And so we can see Pie’s promotion of pilgrimage to Radegund’s tomb in Poitiers as part of his larger campaign to raise royalist support and to mobilize a following for his legitimist faction.

Brian Brennan, author of a 1985 study on the early development of Radegund’s cult at Poitiers, has also noted Pie’s initiative of promoting Radegund’s cult during the Second Empire and the Third Republic in his 1996 article, “Piety and Politics in Nineteenth Century Poitiers.” Brennan sees Radegund’s religious and political connotations in Poitiers – her overwhelming associations with French Catholic nationalism and monarchism – as a local reflection of French national sentiment “as royalists contended with Bonapartists and republicans, clericals waged war against secularists and the ultramontanes sought to rouse their fellow countrymen in support of Pius IX.”<sup>46</sup> Brennan explores Pie’s propensity for packing his sermons and liturgies with legitimist sub-text and suggests that he was

---

<sup>42</sup> Raymond A. Jonas, “Restoring a Sacred Center: Pilgrimage, Politics, and the Sacré-Coeur,” *Réflexions Historiques* 20, no. 1 (1994): 95.

<sup>43</sup> Jonas, “Restoring a Sacred Center,” 99; 114.

<sup>44</sup> Pie, “Discours adressé dans Église de Sainte-Radegonde,” 545; Jonas, “Restoring a Sacred Center,” 119.

<sup>45</sup> Jonas, “Restoring a Sacred Center,” 119.

<sup>46</sup> Brennan, “Piety and Politics in Nineteenth Century Poitiers,” 65.

particularly devoted to promoting the festival of Saint Radegund from August 13-15 because “it provided a convenient distraction for Poitevins from the Bonapartist festival of 15 August, the birthday of Napoleon I.”<sup>47</sup> This seems highly likely, considering Pie’s aptitude for symbolism. Brennan’s analysis of Pie’s role in promoting Radegund’s cult is thorough and insightful, but misses the centuries-long trajectory of Radegund’s transformation into her nineteenth-century version. Without analyzing Radegund’s nineteenth-century characteristics in relation to her medieval and early modern iterations, we risk missing the rich nuances of Radegund’s multi-faceted identity and simplifying the process of how communities “create” saints that reflect their social, political, and religious needs. For example, the significance changes when we recognize that the Parisian pilgrims’ collective gift of a new ever-burning lamp for Radegund’s tomb in 1874 replaced Anne of Austria’s ever-burning lamp that had been destroyed in the Revolution, which, in turn, replaced the ever-burning lamp donated by Marie of Anjou (wife of King Charles VII) that had been destroyed in the Reformation. Both of these queens’ gifts were in recognition of services rendered to the French nation: the healing of the young king and the recapture of Cherbourg from the English. And both gifts were destroyed in popular uprisings against royal authority and perceived Church corruption. The Parisian pilgrim’s lamp therefore carries nationally significant implications consciously situated in the historical trajectory of Radegund’s cult – both for the fact that the pilgrims themselves were engaged in a national demonstration of faith and because they were continuing a cultic tradition that stretched back to the moment when Radegund’s cult was first patronized by the monarchy in recognition of the kingdom-wide reach of her intercession. Pie’s public speeches both recapitulated the Radegund tradition and interpreted

---

<sup>47</sup> Brennan, “Piety and Politics in Nineteenth Century Poitiers,” 67.

it to support his vision of a France shaped by an idealized history of Catholic monarchs allied harmoniously with the Church.

Possibly no religious event in nineteenth-century France was more politically charged than the crowning ceremony of Radegund's statue in Poitiers on the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death in August of 1887. While coronation ceremonies for statues of the Virgin Mary had been conducted since at least the seventeenth century, the explicit political significance of crowning the statue of a deceased French queen did not escape republicans.<sup>48</sup> According to Brennan's "Piety and Politics in Nineteenth Century Poitiers," Pie's successor, Bishop Henri Bellot des Minières, was politically opposed to the legitimist faction and distanced himself from the cult of Radegund during his episcopacy.<sup>49</sup> It is worth noting that Bellot's disavowal of his own city's patron saint, and especially his refusal to plan or officiate at her 1300<sup>th</sup> centenary in 1887, confirms the now widespread recognition of the royalist associations with Radegund's cult. But Bellot nonetheless recognized the importance of this date for Poitevins and deputized his auxiliary bishop, Mgr Charles Gay, and the legitimist bishop of Angers, Mgr Charles Freppel, to organize the celebration.<sup>50</sup> Already off to a rocky start due to Bellot's estrangement, Gay and Freppel's centenary celebration would exhibit their legitimist politics so blatantly that the Republican government would intervene and the event would be marked with violence. To make matters worse, the drama surrounding the event was documented and inflamed by newspapers – the chief battlefield on which the culture wars

---

<sup>48</sup> As noted by Brennan, "There is evidence of sixty-six such crownings in France between 1853 and 1890 and the crowning of Radegund's statue would hence have served to reinforce latent Marian parallels." Brennan, "Piety and Politics in Nineteenth Century Poitiers," 76.

<sup>49</sup> Brennan, "Piety and Politics in Nineteenth Century Poitiers," 76.

<sup>50</sup> Brennan, "Piety and Politics in Nineteenth Century Poitiers," 76.

were fought.<sup>51</sup> The republican *L'Avenir de Vienne* covered the developing story closely throughout the month of August as a dangerous event of coup-d'état-proportions, while the Catholic papers, *L'Univers* and *La Croix* continued to push back against accusations that the ceremony had any political connotations whatsoever.

Mayor Léopold Thézard of Poitiers initially approved the ceremony in June of 1887, permitting the Poitevin clergy to transport the statue of Saint Radegund on August 15 from her church to the cathedral for crowning and back again. But, most likely due to the protests of republicans, such as that persistently appearing in *L'Avenir*, the mayor subsequently issued an interdiction on August 4. *L'Avenir's* major objection was not actually the religious nature of the display, but the novel coronation program and the invitation to the papal *nuncio*,<sup>52</sup> Mgr Rotelli, to officiate at the crowning, which they saw as “a veritable provocation on the part of the clerical faction.”<sup>53</sup> Inviting the papal *nuncio* to crown even a long-dead queen raised republican suspicions against the clerical faction, whom they believed was working to expand the pope's temporal power. These reasons were proposed by the Catholic newspaper, *La Croix*, which suggested that the republican “fears” and “extravagances” in pushing for the interdiction “come from the fact that saint Radegund was a queen, and they fear a *coup d'Etat*. It was, in effect, her coronation, in the name of the pope through the *nuncio*; it seemed an enterprise against the government.”<sup>54</sup> Referring to the planned ceremony repeatedly as a “monstrous” and “anti-republican demonstration,” the republican *L'Avenir* suspected the true aims of “the black faction” (i.e. the clerical faction), under whose oversight the feast of Saint

---

<sup>51</sup> The culture wars “were primarily fought through the cultural media: the spoken and printed word, the image, the symbol.” See Clark, “The New Catholicism and the European Culture Wars,” for more on the significance of newspapers in “fanning the flames of the culture wars (6).”

<sup>52</sup> A papal *nuncio*, officially called an Apostolic *nuncio*, holds the rank of archbishop and is the permanent diplomatic representative who heads the diplomatic mission of the Holy See.

<sup>53</sup> “Un ‘Couronnement,’” *L'Avenir de Vienne*, August 6, 1887.

<sup>54</sup> “Poitiers,” *La Croix*, August 17, 1887.

Radegund “would naturally become a political demonstration.”<sup>55</sup> *L’Avenir* warned the mayor to “beware of counter-demonstrations!” if the procession was permitted.<sup>56</sup>

Hesitant to ban the celebration entirely but wishing to avoid the threatened counter-demonstrations, the mayor’s interdiction still allowed the statue to be transported by a restricted number of clergy, without pomp, down a prescribed route, whose narrowness required the party to walk two abreast. Thanks to the nationalization of Radegund’s cult, the expected train-loads of pilgrims would be met at the railway station and conducted to their hostels to prevent them from moving freely about the city. The police commissioner was charged with executing the mayor’s decree and preventing any unrest.<sup>57</sup> While the republican *L’Avenir* applauded the interdiction, saying, “*M. le maire* understands the danger of this situation,” and “we expected no less from his clairvoyance and his republican loyalty,” they still objected to the mayor’s apparent leniency and urged him to ban the event altogether, threatening that “it would fall to the republican party itself to ensure, on that day, that the strict execution of your decree is respected according to the law.”<sup>58</sup> *L’Avenir* insists that Mayor Thézard’s interdiction was supported by a revolutionary-era law from 18 Germinal Year X that banned all religious demonstrations in the public street (*sur la voie publique*) and they invoked this law as a valid basis for the complete prohibition of the feast day.<sup>59</sup> However, it seems more likely that the diplomatically-inclined mayor based his interdiction on a special clause in the treaty between the Holy See and the French Republic

---

<sup>55</sup> “A M. le Maire,” *L’Avenir de Vienne*, August 9, 1887; Un ‘Couronnement,’” *L’Avenir de Vienne*, August 6, 1887.

<sup>56</sup> Un ‘Couronnement,’” *L’Avenir de Vienne*, August 6, 1887.

<sup>57</sup> “Poitiers,” *La Croix*, August 17, 1887.

<sup>58</sup> “It is by virtue of this same law that we now demand M. the mayor to compose his decree forbidding formally even the transport of the Radegund statue to the cathedral.” “Un ‘Couronnement’ avorté,” *L’Avenir de Vienne*, August 7, 1887.

<sup>59</sup> “A M. le Maire,” *L’Avenir de Vienne*, August 9, 1887.

signed 26 Messidor Year IX (July 15, 1801). The treaty protected religious worship inside church buildings, but made it possible for the Republic to issue interdictions against religious ceremonies and processions that were perceived as posing a threat to public order.<sup>60</sup> Threats of counter-demonstrations from *L'Avenir* and other like-minded sources pushed Thézard towards his more diplomatic solution of allowing the transport of the statue and permitting the coronation to take place inside the cathedral, but restricted the number of religious personnel *sur la voie publique*.

*L'Avenir* insisted that other Catholic newspapers, *L'Ouest* and *Le Courier*, were writing deriding articles about the mayor, “a veritable protest against your decree of interdiction.”<sup>61</sup> *L'Univers*, considered “the single most important journal of Catholic opinion,”<sup>62</sup> avoided any attacks against the mayor, though they did assert that their “legitimate anger” was justified.<sup>63</sup> *L'Univers*' strategy for defending the ceremony focused on the “traditional” quality of Radegund's annual feast day celebrations and the importance of this patron saint to the town's history and culture, regardless of religious persuasion. They also juxtaposed the interdiction to “the worst days of the Terror,” a strategy *L'Avenir* openly scoffed at for its extremity. The Catholic *L'Univers* published a letter from M. le comte d'Orfeuille describing the day of the ceremony which included a striking comparison between Radegund, “imprisoned” and escorted by republican guards wearing tricolor uniforms, and the execution of Marie Antoinette,

And, if it were permissible to refer at this moment to secular history, we would have said that at the same hour we were reminded of another queen of

---

<sup>60</sup> Paul d'Hollander, “The Church in the Street in Nineteenth-Century France,” *Journal of the Western Society for French History* 32 (2004), <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/w/wsfh/0642292.0032.011?view=text;rgn=main>

<sup>61</sup> “A M. le Maire,” *L'Avenir de Vienne*, August 9, 1887.

<sup>62</sup> Clark, “The New Catholicism and the European Culture Wars,” 24.

<sup>63</sup> “Le couronnement de Ste. Radegonde,” *L'Univers*, August 16-17, 1887.



France, before whom also posterity will bow, who once was taken from Paris under the shadow of those same colors: Marie Antoinette.<sup>64</sup>

*L'Univers'* invocation of this period of the Revolution that both sides tended to remember negatively served to support the publication's more general political aim of restoring Catholic practice to more areas of public life. The Catholic paper, *La Croix*, expressed disappointment at the interdiction, but carefully avoided any kind of inflammatory rhetoric. In fact, they considered the event a success, writing, "we are happy to learn that the decrees did not impede the feast from being splendid."<sup>65</sup> They scoffed at republican fears, replying, "it's the title of queen that frightens them," and asserted that "they have distorted [the ceremony's] meaning by attributing a political character that it never had." *La Croix* defends Radegund herself from republican accusations, choosing to focus instead on Radegund's cloistered life and how she "disposed of her crown at Noyon to come seek the poverty of the cloister in Poitiers." If one crowns her in the name of the Pope, they insist, "it's for her having made this sacrifice" and to show their censure of decrees made against religious institutions, "and not for the usurpation of the presidential chair or the royal throne."<sup>66</sup> Mgr Freppel, bishop of Angers and key speaker at the coronation, similarly highlighted Radegund's special status as a queen who gave up her crown. Crowning her on her centenary was not, however, a contradiction, he asserts, because sanctity has its own infinitely superior crown.<sup>67</sup> Much like the Virgin Mary's impossible identity as both mother and virgin, Radegund's apparent contradictions made her the perfect symbol for France's legitimist party

---

<sup>64</sup> René d'Orfeuille, "Le couronnement de Ste. Radegonde," *L'Univers*, August 16-17, 1887.

<sup>65</sup> "Poitiers," *La Croix*, August 17, 1887.

<sup>66</sup> "Poitiers," *La Croix*, August 17, 1887.

<sup>67</sup> Mgr. Charles-Émile Freppel, "Discours prononcé dans la Cathédrale de Poitiers à l'occasion du centenaire de Sainte Radegonde et du couronnement de sa statue au nom du Pape, le 14 Aout 1887," *Œuvres Pastorales et Oratoires de Monseigneur Freppel*, Vol. 10 (Paris: Maison A. Jouby et Roger, 1888), 215.

and monarchist/clerical factions because her royal associations could be so easily repudiated – or highlighted, as in the discourses of Bishop Pie. This excellent strategy of deflecting focus from Radegund’s royalty was also one of the most significant factors in Radegund’s simultaneous appropriation by the Republican government, which I explore in the following section. It also ensured that Radegund’s popularity could continue at a high caliber throughout this period, despite the kind of republican suspicion we see in *L’Avenir*.

However much the Catholic papers denied the political significance of the coronation ceremony, there is no doubt that the event was politically charged from its inception. From the novel decision to crown the likeness of this early French queen, to the symbolic garb she was dressed in, to the blatantly political panegyric of Mgr Freppel, to the commemorative texts published and distributed, to the final demonstrative act of protest that resulted in violent confrontations, Radegund’s centenary was deliberately harnessed as a vehicle for members of royalist and clerical factions at a truly national level.

If at this point, Radegund’s role as a national saint could be doubted, the fact that the all-women committee in charge of collecting funds for “a magnificent crown” received contributions from départements all over France, including Paris, demonstrates the country-wide appeal Radegund’s cult had generated.<sup>68</sup> Emile Briand, curate of Sainte-Radegonde, published a collection of texts and images from the ceremony which includes the first photographic interpretation of Radegund. The full-page photo shows a queenly figure with a solemn gaze, extravagantly garbed and crowned, holding a fleur-de-lis scepter in one hand and a book in the other, bedecked with at least 12 golden Sacred Hearts suspended from a chain running between her hands and down the front of her mantle. The novel use of Sacred

---

<sup>68</sup> Emile Briand, *Les fêtes du treizième centenaire et du couronnement de Ste Radegonde à Poitiers: documents relatifs à ces fêtes* (Poitiers: Imprimerie de Paul Oudin, 1887), 11.

Heart imagery here in association with Radegund likely references the explicitly legitimist/royalist connotations of the cult of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre, with which Bishop Pie of Poitiers was involved. The crown of solid gold is adorned with amethysts, pearls, eight diamonds, eight fleur-de-lis around the sides, and topped with “the double fleur-de-lis which is the crest of the kings and queens of France.”<sup>69</sup> Radegund has been depicted with a fleur-de-lis cloak and scepter since Jean de Berry’s fifteenth-century illuminated manuscript. But the decision in 1887 to dress Radegund in a white mantle, as opposed to her traditional French blue or royal purple, much like the addition of the Sacred Hearts, was a blatant reference to the legitimist faction in support of the restoration of a Bourbon monarchy. Brennan explains the origins of this symbolism,

In 1871 the count of Chambord had signified his aversion to a modern constitutional monarchy by his rejection of the tricolor in favor of the *drapeau blanc*. Later a legitimist follower such as the Baron de Lamprade could describe himself as ‘an uncompromising *blanc*’. Radegund’s white mantle, significantly embroidered with prominent fleurs-de-lis, had woven into it a clear political statement.<sup>70</sup>

Here, the association of Radegund with French royalty carried a very different meaning than it did in the fifteenth century when Radegund’s icons were first decorated with the fleur-de-lis. Furthermore, when we consider this symbolism of the *drapeau blanc* together with le comte d’Orfeuille’s comparison of Radegund with Marie-Antoinette “shadowed” by the tricolor in his letter to *L’Univers*, the political significance is unmistakable.

It goes almost without saying that Briand’s little book was intended equally as a commemorative souvenir and as propaganda. The photograph of Radegund’s crowned white-mantled statue was displayed in the frontispiece of his publication, and he takes every

---

<sup>69</sup> Briand, *Les fêtes du treizième centenaire*, 11.

<sup>70</sup> Brennan, “Piety and Politics in Nineteenth Century Poitiers,” 78.

opportunity to “remember” the multi-day celebration in exaggerated terms: the sheer ubiquity of faithful support, the continuous problem at each event of the consistently larger-than-ever-seen-before crowds overflowing the too-small space of church or cathedral, the surpassing eloquence of the speakers, the emotional responses of the faithful, and, of course, the well-behaved and orderly pilgrims.

*L’Univers* provided a description of the riot, which was closer to reality, though still quite rose-colored. D’Orfeuille recounted in his letter to the paper that at the moment of Radegund’s coronation, a crowd of twenty thousand faithful spectators spontaneously chanted,

“Long live Saint Radegund! Long live the queen of France! Long live the Church!” In vain did they try to stop the voices in the holy temple, one cannot imprison the heart of the people. You would have to live one thousand years to be able to forget this spectacle; you might say that the vaults of the old church were going to fall in. We heard children, little boys of 12 years, protest with an energy that promised for the future. Honor to them!<sup>71</sup>

D’Orfeuille’s account reimagines the event as anything other than a chaotic defiance of a municipal decree of interdiction. The image of protesting children connotes a sense of purity and innocence that elevates the riot to a righteous and legitimate display of emotion, religious fervor, and patriotism. He then quickly passes over the fact that “a band of thirty or forty had given the impression of attacking honest people” but they received an “exemplary correction” from faithful Poitevins.<sup>72</sup>

Piecing accounts together from newspapers representing both sides allows us to reconstruct what the riot might have looked like by finding a middle-ground between the two exaggerated perspectives. It appears that police agents and gendarmes on horseback

---

<sup>71</sup> d’Orfeuille, “Le couronnement de Ste. Radegonde.”

<sup>72</sup> d’Orfeuille, “Le couronnement de Ste. Radegonde.”

successfully cordoned off the plazas around the church and cathedral the morning of the ceremony, which barriers the crowds mostly respected when the statue was first carried from Sainte-Radegonde to Sainte-Pierre. However, the appearance of the crowned statue exiting the cathedral doors inspired onlookers to break through the cordons and follow the statue back to Sainte-Radegonde, thereby forming the procession M. Thézard's decree expressly banned. Two policemen and a mounted gendarme attempted to arrest a woman – as *L'Univers* reported, “they are always the first when it comes to showing courage” – who first broke the cordon. But her cry of, "Either kill me or let me pass," astonished the guards to such an extent that they released her, and she was joined in the illegal procession by numerous others.<sup>73</sup> An anonymous “authorized representative of one of the most ancient families of Poitou” who submitted another account of the ceremony to *L'Univers* revealed in his account of the ensuing chaos,

And a crowd of many thousands of people launched themselves after those carrying the statue. Nothing could resist this human torrent. Police agents, gendarmes, horses, all were caught up amidst the acclamations such that I cannot remember ever having heard anything like it. It was thus that Saint Radegund triumphally returned to her church and M. Thézard had, without wishing it, worked towards the glory of our saint.<sup>74</sup>

It seems highly unlikely that the police and gendarmes charged with executing the interdiction orders were so moved by religious fervor for Radegund that they joined in the protesting. The story of unbelievers suddenly displaying religious zeal for what they had just been scoffing at or vandalizing a moment before is a popular *topos* in hagiography and appears several times in the Radegund tradition. The desire to reframe the riot as a traditional miracle narrative likely inspired the writer's account here.

---

<sup>73</sup> d'Orfeuille, “Le couronnement de Ste. Radegonde.”

<sup>74</sup> “Le Couronnement de Ste. Radegonde,” *L'Univers*, August 16-17, 1887.

And so, Radegund's devotees got their procession after all and the opposition of "the enemies of God" seemed to only increase their enjoyment of the ceremony.<sup>75</sup> Harnessing the persecution narrative as a show of Catholic heroism, strength, and continuity was a major strategy used by the newspapers and Radegund's post-Reformation biographers alike. Considering the centuries of art and texts that emphasized Radegund's queenship and deliberately associated her with living members of the royal family, it is unsurprising that republicans would see the coronation as a political demonstration. Despite the deflections of the Catholic newspapers and even an explanatory letter to the mayor from Bishop Bellot insisting on the procession's neutrality, the political significance of Radegund's centenary celebrations for French royalists was indisputable.<sup>76</sup> The republican *L'Avenir* accused Poitiers of being "one of the last fortresses of Clericalism" and devotion to Radegund was an important part of that identity.<sup>77</sup> Bishop Pie's efforts over the many decades of his episcopacy to establish Radegund as a national saint and his rhetorical skill in continuing to shape Poitiers' identity as a Catholic town which benefited from the harmonious alliance of monarchy and church were highly effective: it seemed like Radegund's symbolic anti-republican potential was solidified. However, this would not be the case for long.

### Radegund the Mother

One of the most powerful politico-religious identities Radegund assumed in post-Revolutionary France was that of Mother. The first time we see Radegund explicitly associated with motherhood was in the late 1820s when the Confrérie des Mères Chrétiennes de Sainte Radegonde (the Confraternity of the Christian Mothers of Saint Radegund) was re-

---

<sup>75</sup> d'Orfeuille, "Le couronnement de Ste. Radegonde."

<sup>76</sup> Brennan, "Piety and Politics in Nineteenth Century Poitiers," 78.

<sup>77</sup> "Un 'Couronnement' avorté," *L'Avenir de Vienne*, August 7, 1887.

formed in the parish of Cour-sur-Loire in the diocese of Blois. The confraternity's terms of membership and prescribed duties suggest strong conservative royalist associations. They are also in line with the growing valorization of motherhood that accompanied efforts to sustain a patriarchal social order in opposition to the campaign for women's rights. Bishop Pie is responsible for the second and most enduring reinterpretation of Radegund as a mother-figure when he designated her *Mère de la Patrie* (*Mother of the Fatherland*). Carrying with it nationalistic, royalist, and gendered implications, this title can be interpreted as the culmination of Radegund's now inseparable association with French queenship that began in the fifteenth century with Charles VII's patronage, was codified in the work of Jean Bouchet in the early sixteenth century, creatively elaborated by our three post-Reformation authors, and catalyzed into popular use thanks to the nationalistic sentiments of the nineteenth-century Catholic Revival.

#### *The Confraternity of the Christian Mothers of Saint Radegund*

According to a narrative preserved in the diocesan records of Blois by Père Charles Beaussier, who served as priest at Cour-sur-Loire from 1834-1882, the origins of this women's confraternity date back to at least the seventeenth century. Beaussier notes that he cannot precisely say when his community began celebrating Radegund's feast day, but that he knows the chapel of Saint Radegund, located inside the church of Saint Vincent and Saint Radegund, was restored at the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>78</sup> A large oil painting of Radegund located above the chapel's altar dates to this period and seems to confirm

---

<sup>78</sup> Jean-Jacques Loisel, "Sainte Radegonde entre Loire et Cher," July 20, 2012, [https://www.vendomois.fr/societeArcheologique/ressources/livres/radegonde\\_auto%C3%A9d26-8-12\\_statue\\_m%C3%A9zi%C3%A8re](https://www.vendomois.fr/societeArcheologique/ressources/livres/radegonde_auto%C3%A9d26-8-12_statue_m%C3%A9zi%C3%A8re) ; Dioc 41, N 74, Archives diocésaines de Blois.

Beaussier's theory about the confraternity's origin.<sup>79</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, there was a great surge in the establishment of laywomen's devotional orders and confraternities (sometimes known as "the third course" or "the third status") in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This coincided with a growing preference for charitable service over penitential asceticism as the dominant spiritual mode, which attracted pious married, unmarried, and widowed laywomen who were better able to engage in hands-on charitable activities in their communities than their cloistered counterparts. Our confraternity was indeed devoted to charity, according to article four, "The aim of the association is to develop the spirit of Faith and Christian Charity in the parish through good example and imitation of the virtues of Saint Radegonde."<sup>80</sup> As Sarah Curtis has shown in her study on laywomen's charitable groups in nineteenth-century Paris, charity-focused women's confraternities during this period owed their re-emergence to seventeenth-century religious models. She argues that scholars should cease isolating religious developments on either side of the French Revolution because "after the twin shocks of disestablishment and de-Christianization, the French Catholic church returned self-consciously to Reformation models in evangelization, education, medical care and welfare in order to re-establish their utility in French life."<sup>81</sup> The nineteenth-century emphasis on personal contact and religious moralization in charity work first began within the context of the Catholic Reformation when Catholic religious workers sought to use their positions to evangelize and bolster Catholic influence in opposition to the Protestant threat.<sup>82</sup> And so, applying Curtis' argument to this situation, we should see the re-

---

<sup>79</sup> "Autel latéral et son retable avec tableau: Sainte Radegonde," *Website of the Ministère de la Culture*, last modified August 1, 2019, <https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/palissy/PM41001068>.

<sup>80</sup> Transcribed in Loisel, "Sainte Radegonde entre Loire et Cher," 64; Dioc 41, N 74 (Archives diocésaines de Blois).

<sup>81</sup> Sarah A. Curtis, "Charitable Ladies: Gender, Class and Religion in Mid Nineteenth-Century Paris," *Past & Present*, no. 177 (2002): 123.

<sup>82</sup> Curtis, "Charitable Ladies," 123.



establishment of the Confrérie des Mères Chrétiennes de Sainte Radegonde in terms of post-Tridentine/Reformation-era religious ideals. But, at least in the case of this particular confraternity, the guidelines for its members also suggest a distinctive post-Revolutionary character – one shaped by an urgent need to advocate for the return of the Church’s traditionally dominant role in public life.

We can observe a clear association between femininity, motherhood, and monarchism in the updated 1826 rules of the Confrérie des Mères Chrétiennes de Sainte Radegonde, which require members to

ask the Lord, through the intercession of this great saint, for the preservation of the Holy Catholic Church, the protection of heaven for the royal family, peace in families, the maintenance of good morals, and good order in the parish. They will also say ten rosaries for the same purposes every Sunday and feast of obligation.<sup>83</sup>

It seems highly significant that the confraternity was re-formed and this invocation of Radegund on behalf of the royal family added just one year after the coronation of Charles X. Charles – heir of Louis XVIII who had ascended the throne in the Bourbon Restoration of 1814 – sought to return France to its pre-Revolutionary state by enacting exceptionally conservative policies and by expanding the Church’s power. The political connotations of the confraternity requirement are clear and point towards what soon became the overwhelming tendency in the mid-to-late nineteenth century to evoke Radegund as a symbol for royalist and counter-revolutionary values.

We can also analyze the development of the Confrérie des Mères Chrétiennes de Sainte Radegonde in terms of two significant developments in expectations for women’s gendered behavior. Firstly, we can see these Christian Mothers as an early iteration of the

---

<sup>83</sup> Loisel, "Sainte Radegonde entre Loire et Cher," 63; Dioc 41, N 74 (Archives diocésaines de Blois).

more powerful trend that emerges several decades later in various political, religious, and social spheres of viewing motherhood as a form of patriotism during the national population crisis of the nineteenth century. As Karen Offen has demonstrated, in the course of this century, “the French birth rate fell more dramatically, earlier, and further than that of any other Western nations while infant mortality rates remained scandalously high.”<sup>84</sup> After the Franco-Prussian defeat and especially by the end of the nineteenth century, concern over depopulation became an obsession and drove the issuance of pro-natalist legislation that awarded families for producing more children and offered protections to working women and mothers.<sup>85</sup> Eileen Janes Yeo documents the formation of a “new ideal of motherhood” that became popular in both Britain and France during this period.<sup>86</sup> Much like in Britain where Christian middle class family life was defined by the maternal and moral influence of the mother as the “angel in the house,” the French bourgeois family was similarly romanticized by republicans and Catholics alike.<sup>87</sup> “The good counter-revolutionary family had a home-based Catholic mother at its centre,” Yeo argues, and “her faith was strengthened by the resurrection of the late-medieval mother saints, in the Society of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, by the Archiconfrérie des Mères Chrétiennes and especially by the Madonna.”<sup>88</sup>

Historically, Radegund was never a biological mother, and so in Cour-sur-Loire, the cult of Radegund was maternalized through a deliberate association of Radegund with the

---

<sup>84</sup> Karen Offen, *The Woman Question in France, 1400–1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 7.

<sup>85</sup> Yeo, “The creation of ‘motherhood,’” 205; Offen, *The Woman Question in France*, 101; Karen Offen, *Debating the Woman Question in the French Third Republic, 1870–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 249.

<sup>86</sup> Yeo, “The creation of ‘motherhood,’” 205.

<sup>87</sup> For the development of British ideals of motherhood, see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The female world of love and ritual: relations between women in nineteenth century America,” *Signs* 1 (1975): 8–9, 22–23; Leonore Davidoff & Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middleclass, 1780–1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).

<sup>88</sup> Yeo, “The creation of ‘motherhood,’” 206.

Virgin Mary and through its member selection. To conform the already popular Radegund cult to the national ideal of motherhood as defined by counter-revolutionary Catholic morality, Père Garreau, a priest at Cour-sur-Loire from 1898-1935, took steps to link the confraternity to the larger Archconfrérie des Mères Chrétiennes, which had been established at Notre-Dame-de-Sion in Paris around 1850 and was dedicated to the Virgin Mary.<sup>89</sup> As we already saw, cults devoted to the Virgin, such as Our Lady of Lourdes, were affiliated with royalist politics and, beginning in the 1850s, the royalist Poitevin Bishop Pie used this affiliation to further characterize Radegund as a royalist symbol. Furthermore, Père Beaussier had established a Confrérie de la Sainte Vierge in the early days of his ministry at Cour-sur-Loire and it seems that there always existed some overlap between this confraternity and that dedicated to Radegund, since the feast day of Saint Radegund was always celebrated there on August 15, the day of the Assumption, instead of the anniversary of her death on August 13. Furthermore, the seventeenth-century Radegund painting at Cour-sur-Loire depicts a sleeping Radegund dreaming of the Virgin Mary and nineteenth-century banners of both Radegund and the Virgin hang in the church and are still used today during a pilgrimage in Radegund's honor.<sup>90</sup> While it is unclear whether the motherhood component of the confraternity was present in the seventeenth century, the new regulations introduced in 1826 by l'abbé Jolly established marriage as an official requirement for membership. According to article six, "One will admit in the said confraternity only women who have received the nuptial blessing

---

<sup>89</sup> *Petit formulaire de l'archiconfrérie des mères chrétiennes: contenant les réglemens et statuts de l'archiconfrérie, l'ordinaire de la messe, des méditations et les messes propres pour les douze fêtes de l'archiconfrérie, la messe pour les défunts, etc.* Nouvelle Edition. (Orléans : Blanchard, Libraire-Éditeur, 1868), 5.

<sup>90</sup> "Ensemble de trois bannières de procession : Vierge à l'Enfant, Vierge de l'Assomption et sainte Radegonde," *Website of the Ministère de la Culture*, <https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/palissy/PM41001071>

with the ceremonies prescribed by the Holy Church.”<sup>91</sup> In addition to excluding unmarried women, the article also excluded non-Catholics.

Secondly, the Confrérie des Mères Chrétiennes de Sainte Radegonde was used – at least in theory – to control the quotidian gendered behavior of its members. According to the 1826 statutes, members “will carefully avoid anything that could be a subject of scandal, such as malicious gossip, quarrels, free speech (*discours libres*), suspicious company, immodesty in adornments, neglect in the education of their children.”<sup>92</sup> This suggests that in the 1820s in Cour-sur-Loire, the ideal upstanding Catholic woman restricted her public speech and the way she associated with other women, dressed modestly, had children, and was responsible for their education (though perhaps, only their moral or religious education). Karen Offen has explored the *mère-éducatrice* (mother-educator) model within the context of increasing restrictions on women’s legal status in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. After the Revolution’s “initial spurt of liberalizing legislation,” which included access to civil divorce and more favorable property and inheritance rights, Napoléon’s Civil Code of 1804 significantly curtailed women’s legal advances.<sup>93</sup> It “enshrined male authority in marriage over the persons and property of wives and children” by legally delineating “public” and “private” spheres in terms of a “male/female dualism.”<sup>94</sup> The ascendancy of “natural laws” and biomedical arguments (such as those that most famously appeared in Rousseau’s *Émile* in 1762) for redefining traditional social roles justified these legal restrictions.<sup>95</sup> They also “seemed to offer men a concrete way of contending with the

---

<sup>91</sup> Loisel, "Sainte Radegonde entre Loire et Cher, 63 ; Dioc 41, N 74 (Archives diocésaines de Blois).

<sup>92</sup> Article 9, as transcribed in Loisel, "Sainte Radegonde entre Loire et Cher," 63; Dioc 41, N 74 (Archives diocésaines de Blois).

<sup>93</sup> Offen, *The Woman Question in France*. See 53 for civil divorce; 6 for property and inheritance; 50 for the Napoleonic civil code.

<sup>94</sup> Offen, *The Woman Question in France*, 50.

<sup>95</sup> Offen, *The Woman Question in France*, 68.

apparent chaos and disorder of the revolutionary period.”<sup>96</sup> Women’s declining legal status was compensated by the elevation of motherhood as a patriotic ideal and promoted in conjunction with the *mère-éducatrice* model. Raising up mothers as a moral and civilizing force for their children – the future of a moral and civilized France – found support from Catholic monarchists, Protestants, and secular republicans alike.<sup>97</sup> Early medieval marriage reforms, such as the codification of monogamy in the Carolingian period, had the similar effect of valorizing women’s positions as wives and mothers while at the same time strengthening male dominance, reinforcing sexual stereotypes, and restricting women’s sphere of influence to the family.<sup>98</sup> With this in mind, we can see the confraternity statutes as part of the larger movement to restrict women’s public role while simultaneously elevating their “natural” capacity for caregiving, whether as performers of charity under the patriarchal oversight of a priest or as educators of children under the patriarchal oversight of a husband. Ironically, Radegund performed her charitable acts without male supervision from her villas and superintended the education of her monastic community after having secured her institution’s episcopal independence.

And yet, despite the statutes’ apparent restrictions, the Confrérie des Mères Chrétiennes de Sainte Radegonde nonetheless provided an avenue for women to have meaningful roles outside their homes in the larger community. As Yeo argues, women “subverted or stretched the ideology of private motherhood in order, paradoxically, to authorise their entry into the public sphere.”<sup>99</sup> And this is precisely what we see in the case of this confraternity which embraced the Reformation-era focus on women’s charity in the

---

<sup>96</sup> Offen, *The Woman Question in France*, 6.

<sup>97</sup> Offen, *The Woman Question in France*, 44.

<sup>98</sup> Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 95.

<sup>99</sup> Yeo, “The creation of ‘motherhood’,” 203.

public sphere, while at the same time regulating women's behavior by promoting a particular ideal of the married Catholic mother as a moral force.

*Mother of the Fatherland*

At the start of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) Bishop Pie of Poitiers was the first to honor Radegund with the title of *Mère de la Patrie*, which afterwards became a permanent moniker. On Radegund's feast day, August 13, 1870, two weeks after the French army invaded German territory in what would become one of the most debilitating defeats in French history, Pie addressed his congregation with a homily "on the role of the holy queen in times of war."<sup>100</sup> He began with a poignant account of Radegund's own encounters with the "appalling fruits of war" when her native Thuringia was devastated by Clothar's army in 531.<sup>101</sup> Pie recited the most touching excerpts from the poem Radegund wrote about her experiences thirty years after the Frankish-Thuringian war and, alternating between French and Latin, he built up to his thesis: "our holy protectress is neither less benevolent nor less powerful today than she was when she lived in this city... thanks to her mediation, we may *still* obtain the concord of kings, the mitigation of war, and the salvation of France!" Even though Radegund renounced her queenship, "when rumors of war were heard, she resumed the appearance of her original authority, she spoke, she wrote, she dispatched couriers and mediators, she became a negotiator." If not by letters that Radegund wrote to the warring kings of her time, Pie effuses, then by her powerful intercession with God, Radegund would "show herself to be the Mother of the Fatherland" by protecting both France and Poitiers

---

<sup>100</sup> Pie, "Homélie prononcée à l'office de la solennité de Sainte Radegonde, patronne de la ville, sur la rôle de la sainte reine dans le temps de guerre," 598.

<sup>101</sup> Pie, "Homélie prononcée à l'office de la solennité de Sainte Radegonde," 600.

from the Prussian troops that were at that moment advancing from the east into France towards Paris.<sup>102</sup>

Contrasting France's current decline into barbarism with the glorious birth of Christian Gaul, Pie praises the efforts of the early bishops, Hilary and Martin, "who made France ready for the Frankish King, Clovis, to convert the people." But the work of these "fathers" "was not enough" because "France must have mothers [and] Radegund is one of them." Pie compares the pains of childbirth to the "painful birth of France by Radegund" who "suffered immensely for France." This, Pie argues, is what makes Radegund a national saint, and "it is therefore right that we salute her with this title of 'Mother of the Fatherland,' and that we call the French people 'her people.'"<sup>103</sup> For Pie, Radegund's maternal piety first formed France as an enduring Catholic monarchy.

Five months later Paris had fallen to German forces and, by the terms of the Treaty of Frankfurt, the French were obliged to forfeit billions of francs in reparations to the new German Empire, as well as most of Alsace and parts of Lorraine.<sup>104</sup> The Franco-Prussian war forever changed the balance of power in Europe, dislodging France from its position as the dominant power and paving the way for Germany's ascension in stature and authority. With Emperor Napoleon III captured at the Battle of Sedan, the Second Empire was dissolved and France was declared the Third Republic on September 4, 1870. In the Republic's early days, the government considered re-establishing the monarchy, but no consensus could be reached regarding either the identity of the monarch or the nature of his office. Originally conceived

---

<sup>102</sup> Pie, "Homélie prononcée à l'office de la solennité de Sainte Radegonde," 602.

<sup>103</sup> Pie, "Discours adressé dans l'Église de Sainte-Radegonde de Poitiers aux Pèlerins de Paris Le 17 Aout 1873," 8, 176.

<sup>104</sup> Emery, *Consuming the Past*, 19.

of as a provisional government, the Third Republic would endure until the Nazi occupation of France in the first years of World War II.

### *Radegund the Great Civilizer*

This section introduces the important theme present in almost every interpretation of the Radegund tradition produced during the nineteenth century: The juxtaposition of France's apparent present state of barbarism with the contrasting civilization of a past Golden Age. This barbarism versus civilization theme was a widespread *topos* in textual and visual culture throughout the nineteenth century that was strategically used by parties on both sides of the culture wars. Regardless of political or religious persuasion, a sense of loss and disconnect – a feeling that the present conditions of society did not match their preferred worldview – pervaded post-Revolution France. And yet at the same time, this tendency to look back towards a Golden Age prompted the dissemination of France's great myth of superiority (in terms of history, culture, education, science, and military achievements) that justified the colonial enterprise. Radegund's identity as the Great Civilizer was the common thread that united her three post-Revolution personas – the colonial, the royalist, and the republican. First, I show how Bishop Pie and his colleagues adapted the Radegund tradition to fit the barbarism versus civilization narrative in their public speeches, followed by an analysis of a new "legitimist" *vita Radegundis* from 1849. Next, I explore efforts on the part of the French Republican government to harness Radegund's exceptional popularity to illustrate their vision of French identity and nationalism in monumental art. And lastly, I demonstrate how integral this theme was to the interpretation of Radegund within the colonial context.

One of the things that made Bishop Pie and his colleagues such compelling orators and writers was their talent for interpreting history to support their agenda. We have already



seen several examples of how Pie and Freppel wove elements from France's early medieval history into their homilies and sermons. Numerous scholars of late nineteenth-century France observe a general fixation on France's history during this period and a particular interest in what it meant to be French. As Jonas argues, "France's rapid and stunning defeat [in the Franco-Prussian war], and the subsequent encirclement and siege of Paris, led to profound meditations on France and its past."<sup>105</sup> Much like our three seventeenth-century Radegund biographers from the post-Reformation era, Pie consistently situates Radegund's exemplary holiness within the broader history of a Catholic France. As discussed in the previous chapter, Filleau, Dumonteil, and Moquot all centered their *vitae* around Radegund's role in the Protestant Reformation to highlight the continuity of her power and the Catholic heroism that preserved her cult from the threat of heresy. Pie similarly deploys the Radegund tradition to interrogate what it meant to be French within the context of what royalists saw as a political, religious, and social crisis. This idea was most provocatively demonstrated in Pie's repeated lament that the violence of both the Reformation and the French Revolution had resulted in France's historical decline into barbarism culminating in France's 1871 defeat.

For example, in a homily given on Radegund's feast-day in 1871, about a year after the siege of Paris, Pie invokes Radegund "in this Merovingian tomb which brings us back to our first national origins" because "the present time is perhaps the worst that France has experienced in fourteen centuries. Look, my very dear brethren, and see there's nothing left standing."<sup>106</sup> Here, Pie highlights Radegund's special identity as the first queen-saint of Merovingian France, which makes her intercession on the nation's behalf all the more

---

<sup>105</sup> Jonas, "Restoring a Sacred Center," 99.

<sup>106</sup> Pie, "Homélie prononcée en la fête de Sainte Radegonde, Patronne de la ville de Poitiers, sur les alliances de Dieu avec les peuples, Le 13 Aout 1871," Vol. 7, 288.

powerful. By “nothing left standing,” Pie is referring to the present lack of what he sees as the historic and fundamental qualities that made the kingdom of Francia so formidable and bequeathed to France her influential position in Western Europe: the traditional institutions of Church and monarchy together with the dominance of Catholicism in public life. Pie asserts that France’s diminished post-war state is a punishment from God for overturning the rightful order of things, lamenting,

The one who rightly boasted of being the first nation in the world, has walked from disaster to disaster; she has been overthrown from her rank and her preeminence. For behold, Lord, we are lessened, more diminished than all the other nations. As they have grown, we have been humbled, and today we are small and humbled in the eyes of all the earth, because of our sins. We who dictated our wills in all the councils of Europe, we who spoke loud and firm throughout the world, we no longer have the right to raise our voices.<sup>107</sup>

Pie’s solution to this problem is clear: “Now therefore, O Radegonde, we are turning to you, complete what you have started...if you [the people of France] come back to God, you will again become the France of the old days.”<sup>108</sup> Pie’s enduring argument that the past was better than the present and that embracing the values of Merovingian-era Francia – or at least, pre-Revolutionary France – was the only hope for the nation was the rallying cry of royalists throughout the nineteenth century.

But even before Pie’s flourishing years, Marie-Théodore de Bussière, a legitimist who resigned his diplomatic career in 1830 after the July Revolution,<sup>109</sup> was the first post-Revolution writer to associate Radegund with a past Golden Age of civilization. In his new *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, published in 1849, we can see how de Bussière built his entire Life of Radegund around the central theme of civilization versus barbarism, which

---

<sup>107</sup> Pie, “Homélie prononcée en la fête de Sainte Radegonde,” 289.

<sup>108</sup> Pie, “Homélie prononcée en la fête de Sainte Radegonde,” 293.

<sup>109</sup> The July Monarchy lasted from 1830 to the Revolution of 1848 and is considered as marking the end of the Bourbon Restoration.

interpretation would come to influence depictions of Radegund in visual culture several decades later.

De Bussi re’s central argument is that Catholicism *is* civilization and Radegund was God’s instrument for establishing that civilization in a once-barbaric Francia. He explains his “historical purpose” in his prologue, stating, “We have chosen the life of Saint Radegund, because it demonstrates that the Church alone could make modern civilization succeed the decay of the ancient world and the brutality of the barbarians.”<sup>110</sup> He also points out Radegund’s relevancy to his modern audience, asserting,

We also thought that the story of the holy queen might have, in certain respects, the merit of topicality, and that many of the lessons it contains would be applicable to our present social state... The sixth century, which we call barbarian, was on this point more advanced than the nineteenth. We had to adopt this plan of presenting the Christian and barbarian societies against each other because it was necessary to make people appreciate the civilizing action of the Church.<sup>111</sup>

For de Bussi re, even though his contemporaries might have thought of the sixth century as a barbarous time, it was so obviously more advanced than the nineteenth century because of the prevalence of monasteries, like Radegund’s, which are “the true civilizers of humanity.”<sup>112</sup> Considering de Bussi re’s personal politics, it is unsurprising that he felt the need to produce a new *Life of Radegund* from this perspective at this particular moment in time. He resigned from his diplomatic career in 1830 when the last Bourbon King, Charles X, was overthrown and replaced by his cousin Louis Philippe, Duke of Orl ans, from the cadet branch of Bourbons. The instigation of the July Monarchy factionalized monarchists into legitimists (supporters of a Bourbon restoration) and Orl anists (who supported the new

---

<sup>110</sup> Marie-Th odore de Bussi re, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde, reine et de la cour de Neustrie sous les rois Clotaire 1er et Chilperic* (Paris and Lyon : J.-B. Pelagaud, 1849), 7.

<sup>111</sup> de Bussi re, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 7.

<sup>112</sup> de Bussi re, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 67.

constitutional monarchy). At the death of his father in 1846, de Bussi re inherited the family estate of Reichshoffen in north-eastern France and then experienced the 1848 Revolution which ended French monarchy entirely with the establishment of the Second Republic.<sup>113</sup> As a staunch legitimist who was part of the land-owning nobility himself, de Bussi re would have seen all of these events as catastrophic threats to his personal ideals and way of life. It is therefore no wonder that one year later, still steeped in a volatile political and social climate, that de Bussi re defines “barbarism” as the prevalence of wars, crimes, massacres, and the persecution of monks and nuns who were “hated, hunted down, [and] slandered.”<sup>114</sup> His *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde* paints a picture of Radegund and other monastic personnel harnessing the weapons of education to combat the barbarism that pervaded every other corner of society. He asserts that, “the pure morality of the Gospel was observed in these venerable asylums [i.e. the monastery of Poitiers and in other retreats where Christianity had established its peaceful boulevards] and virtue, science and letters flourished there.”<sup>115</sup> Twenty-five years later, the artist Pierre Puvis de Chavannes would use de Bussi re’s vision of Radegund’s civilized and idyllic life of learning to paint a literal picture, funded by the republican government, that united Radegund’s pure pre-Ancien R gime brand of Catholicism with post-Franco-Prussian war nationalism.

---

<sup>113</sup> Joseph-Marie Qu rard, *La France litt raire, ou Dictionnaire bibliographique des savants, historiens et gens de lettres de la France, ainsi que des litt rateurs  trangers qui ont  crit en fran ais, plus particuli rement pendant les XVIIIe et XIXe si cles*, Vol. 12 (Firmin Didot, p re et fils, 1859), s.v. “Marie-Th odore de Bussi re,” 147.

<sup>114</sup> de Bussi re, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 7 ; 67.

<sup>115</sup> de Bussi re, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 75.

### *Radegund the Republican*

#### "Having Withdrawn to the Convent of Sainte-Croix, Saint Radegonde Shelters Poets and Protects Literature from the Barbarism of the Age, the Seventh Century"

When Pierre Puvis de Chavannes was commissioned by the republican government to design a mural for Poitiers's Hôtel de Ville (city hall) in 1874, he was still two decades from achieving renown as "France's national painter." Art historians today agree with Puvis' contemporaries that, "More than the work of any other public painter, Puvis' murals were imagined to embody a vision of France and to impart a sense of Frenchness."<sup>116</sup> In this capacity, he is most well-known for his later work, the murals *L'Été* and *L'Hiver* for the Hôtel de Ville in Paris (1891), *Le Bois sacré* (1886) for a staircase at the Museum of Fine Arts in Lyon, and the panoramic *L'Ancienne Sorbonne* for the Grand Amphitheater of the Sorbonne in Paris; and, to a lesser extent, for his Sainte Geneviève cycle at the Panthéon in Paris. His Poitiers murals hardly even receive passing mention in monographs on his oeuvre.<sup>117</sup> This is surprising, considering that most art historians interpret Puvis' work as the embodiment of the Third Republic's idealized concept of *la patrie* as a morally pure, democratic, and secular, though still deeply spiritual, nation. The fact that Puvis selected the Radegund tradition with all of its volatile connotations to reflect these republican ideals for Poitiers's civic epicenter makes this mural arguably his most interesting design choice. On the surface the mural makes the explicit claim: Radegund is central to Poitiers' history and civic identity – an undisputed fact that even the most republican of Poitevins would grudgingly admit. Upon closer examination, we can see how Puvis repurposed many of the

---

<sup>116</sup> Jennifer Shaw, *Dream States: Puvis de Chavannes, Modernism, and the Fantasy of France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>117</sup> Shaw, *Dream States*, 1; Aimee Brown-Price, *Pierre Puvis de Chavannes* (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 1994).

conservative/legitimist interpretations of Radegund's life to project a very different definition of Frenchness.

Without making too many assumptions about Puvis' own intentions, we can nonetheless argue that the mural's style, composition, and even the title shows a deliberate effort to make Radegund "safe" as a republican symbol. Firstly, the title, "Having Withdrawn to the Convent of Sainte-Croix, Saint Radegonde Shelters Poets and Protects Literature from the Barbarism of the Age, the Seventh Century," conveys the mural's purposefully secular theme and coincides with the popular nineteenth century *topos* of civilization versus barbarism. Here, Puvis has reimagined Sainte-Croix as an educational haven and depicts Radegund in the same "civilizing" role as de Bussière did in his 1849 "legitimist" *Life of Radegund*. But unlike de Bussière, Puvis has carefully omitted any evocation of Church or even religion in this entirely desacralized interpretation of Poitiers' first convent.

Puvis is successfully able to secularize Radegund and Sainte-Croix as objects of French patrimony by employing the transformative powers of classicism. The central figure of the composition is not Radegund, but "the last Roman poet," Venantius Fortunatus, who stands in an orator's pose with eyes uplifted, left arm outstretched, and right arm clutching his verses to his heart. A demure Radegund and Abbess Agnes, wrapped from head to toe in white drapery more reminiscent of a Roman stola than a nuns' veil, sit enraptured as Fortunatus recites his poetry within a setting that channels both the French salon and the ancient Roman villa. A scribe crouched on a low stool industriously copies what he hears, preserving the patrimony for a modern audience. The placement of the figures is reminiscent of Lawrence Alma-Tadema's 1862 painting, "Venantius Fortunatus Reading His Poems to Radegonda," which won the gold medal when it was exhibited in Amsterdam. However,

Puvis makes more of an effort to depict the Romanesque architectural elements of the historical buildings of Poitiers and portrays the nuns of Sainte-Croix in the background engaged in the idyllic pursuits of an imagined convent life very different from the rough asceticism described in the *vitae Radegundis*. Puvis inserted portraits of himself and his friend Theophile Gautier, a poet and author who produced writings on Fortunatus, while the figure of Radegund was modeled on Puvis' wife, Marie Cantacuzène, a Romanian princess.<sup>118</sup> The art historian, Jennifer Shaw, suggests that “classicism, modernism, and nationalism” were “central issues to Puvis’ oeuvre.”<sup>119</sup> In particular, his use of classicizing style in all his work to conflate antique and French culture offered an appealing fantasy of France and Frenchness as a Mediterranean Greco-Gallo-Roman amalgamation that was distinct from and superior to the barbaric northern culture of the Prussians.<sup>120</sup> The Giottesque color palette and two-dimensional draped figures he always employs present “an air of historical authenticity that associated his work with the then current idea of the ingenuousness or moral purity” of an idealized past Golden Age.<sup>121</sup> And so for Puvis, the Radegund tradition became a useful tool for projecting a republican notion of France’s Christian origins, quite different from the conservative-royalist-legitimist ideals we saw before. By emphasizing this monastic institution as a haven of “pure” religion, art, and learning instead of an instrument of the Church, this mural was in line with the republican

---

<sup>118</sup> Aimée Brown Price, *Pierre Puvis de Chavannes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 183.

<sup>119</sup> Jennifer Shaw, “Imagining the Motherland: Puvis de Chavannes, Modernism, and the Fantasy of France,” *Art Bulletin* 79, no. 4 (December 1997): 587.

<sup>120</sup> Brown-Price, *Pierre Puvis de Chavannes* (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 1994), 14; 17; Bonnie Effros explores the ascendancy of this superiority narrative in nineteenth-century France and how it shaped and was shaped by archaeological interpretations in *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 220.

<sup>121</sup> Brown-Price, *Pierre Puvis de Chavannes* (1994), 16; 18.

idealized role of religion – or rather, spirituality – in French history and its appropriate role in French public life.

As we can see from de Bussière’s comment in his 1849 “legitimist” *Life of Radegund* that “the pure morality of the Gospel was observed in these venerable asylums,” both royalists and republicans shared the same longing for an imagined time of innocence. Aimee Brown-Price notes how Puvis sought to channel this concept with his murals, suggesting that “Puvis’ inventions are consonant with a return to simple Christianity, to a faith undissipated by doctrinaire factionalism, a faith such as accompanied the religious revival and anticlericalism at the beginning of the Third Republic.”<sup>122</sup> Bishops Pie and Freppel evoked a similar sentiment in their discourses, though for these conservatives, both Catholicism and monarchy – united by the concept of the divine right of kings as justification for a restoration of the Bourbon monarchy – were equally crucial to their worldview. But to reclaim Radegund as “safe” for the Third Republic, Puvis need to divorce his Radegund from any ecclesiastical or royal associations, just as he employed classicalism – such as the figures’ Roman garb – to disassociate Radegund from Merovingian (i.e. Germanic and barbarian) culture. Her simple classical drapery could not be more different from the photograph of the luxuriously garbed and bejeweled crowned Poitevin statue that evoked the royal splendor of the Ancien Regime. And perhaps most significantly, Puvis’ Radegund was the first French visual interpretation since the twelfth-century illuminated manuscript, BMP 250, to depict the sainted queen without a crown.

And so, on the surface, such a potentially contentious and religious subject might seem like an odd choice for a young aspiring artist, eager to rise to prominence as the

---

<sup>122</sup> Brown-Price, *Pierre Puvis de Chavannes* (1994), 18.



Republic's national muralist. This might even explain the reluctance of art-historians to offer the same kind of lengthy interpretations for this mural that they do for Puvis' other more seemingly straightforward work. However, when we consider the broader context of how Radegund's identity was being actively shaped during this period, we can see that the mural fulfilled an important need to dissolve the conservative monopoly on Radegund and reclaim her as a national saint for the Third Republic.

Anatole France: *The Anticlerical Radegund*

The celebrated French novelist and journalist, Anatole France (1844 – 1924), is well-known for his skepticism, socialism, anticlericalism, and playful irreverence. He was also, somewhat ironically, a great lover of saints' lives. Anatole France's literary *corpus* is teeming with the *histoires* and *légendes* of medieval saints, suggesting a somewhat nostalgic and romantic approach to France's religious past.<sup>123</sup> Elizabeth Emery notes the prevalence of this attitude among the younger artists and writers of France's "first Republican generation," whose predominantly secular education endeared them to the saints of the Ancien Régime, despite (or perhaps because of) the rampant anticlericalism of the age.<sup>124</sup>

Anatole France's first published work was *La Légende de Sainte Radegonde Reine de France*, which he wrote in 1859 during the Second Empire when he was only fifteen years old. The short text is brazenly anti-monarchical and focuses more on the crimes of King Clothar than on Radegund's deeds. In sharp contrast to de Bussière's admiration for Frankish "civilization," Anatole France depicts the Franks, "the barbarian oppressors of her country,"

---

<sup>123</sup> Christina Ferree Chabrier, "Polychromatic piety: saints according to Anatole France," *Medieval Saints in Late Nineteenth Century French Culture: Eight Essays*, eds. Elizabeth Emery and Laurie Postlewate (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004), 163.

<sup>124</sup> Elizabeth Emery, "Introduction," *Medieval Saints in Late Nineteenth Century French Culture: Eight Essays*, eds. Elizabeth Emery and Laurie Postlewate (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004), 2.

as an object of “disgust” for Radegund.<sup>125</sup> The Frankish court is a theater of royal decadence and “chaos” where Radegund’s prayers are often disturbed by the noise from Clothar’s drinking parties.<sup>126</sup> This is a far cry from the many earlier *Lives of Radegund* that emphasize her special ability to enforce piety and good moral behavior on members of the court. Anatole France’s Radegund performs no miracles, nor does she interact with the clergy, apart from her consecration by Bishop Médard. She appears less as a saint and more as a depressed lonely young woman, dwelling on the trauma of war that separated her forever from her home and loved ones. Despite the brevity of the text, Anatole France quotes an emotionally compelling section from the poem, *The Thuringian War*, to illustrate the consequences of royal belligerence. There is a poignant humanity to this version of Radegund entirely absent from all previous *vitae*. Rather than meekly lowering her eyes and bearing her husband’s abuse with pious grace, Anatole France’s Radegund exposes the king’s crimes and “roar[s]” out a prophesy (or a curse) with a voice “like thunder on a stormy day:”

Assassin of your brother and children of your brother, you will be burdened the rest of your days with the weight of divine vengeance, remorse will tear apart your soul, your days will be full of bitterness and your nights filled with anguish. No sleep, no rest for the assassin.<sup>127</sup>

Immediately upon her condemnation of this “*monarque criminel*,” Radegund’s part in the story comes to an abrupt close.<sup>128</sup> She is treated to a “happily ever after” ending as her post-palace life is summed up by the briefest mention of how she lived in peace with her monastery of virgins, dividing her time between prayer, study, and singing canticles to the

---

<sup>125</sup> Anatole France, *La Légende de Sainte Radegonde Reine de France* (Paris: Société Anatole France, 1969), 1.

<sup>126</sup> France, *La Légende de Sainte Radegonde*, 2.

<sup>127</sup> France, *La Légende de Sainte Radegonde*, 5.

<sup>128</sup> France, *La Légende de Sainte Radegonde*, 5.

accompaniment of Fortunatus' lyre. The moral of the story is clearly articulated in the *Légende*'s final sentence,

Clothar saw well that happiness was in this asylum of virtue and not on a throne stained with blood, not knowing how to escape divine vengeance, he carried his entourage towards this dwelling of peace; he could be seen there with a livid complexion, his hair in disorder, seated at the foot of the wall, crying, "What is your power, king of heaven, who treats the kings of the earth like this?"<sup>129</sup>

Anatole France's *Légende* reads like a children's fable that conveys a simple truth: *sic semper tyrannis* – corrupt kings will meet their downfall and deserve it. Christina Ferree Chabrier asserts that Anatole France's interpretations of medieval saints "reflect his social beliefs."<sup>130</sup> It is then highly likely that the imagery evoked by the blood-stained throne and the king cast down into a state of wretchedness as a direct consequence of his evil actions was intended as a critique of the officially Catholic Second Empire of Napoléon III (Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte), whose authoritarian rule was inaugurated by coup d'état in 1851. Perhaps also it conveys the young Anatole France's nostalgic admiration of the Revolution that overthrew a corrupt and decadent monarch. Regardless of what social belief *La Légende de Sainte Radegonde* was meant to reflect, Anatole France's appropriation of Radegund here to criticize the monarchy, rather than endorse it, demonstrates her versatility in the modern era.

Years later, Anatole France again revisited the Radegund tradition in his novel, *L'Orme du Mail* (1897). This time, Radegund plays a prophetess who appears to eighteen-year-old mademoiselle Claudine Deniseau in daily visions where the queen-saint predicts the end of the Republic and the restoration of a Catholic monarchy. The novel is a cheeky

---

<sup>129</sup> France, *La Légende de Sainte Radegonde*, 5.

<sup>130</sup> Chabrier, "Polychromatic piety," 163.

critique of the corruption of the Catholic clergy whose plot centers on the clash of two equally devious and hypocritical candidates for the bishopric of Tourcoing. Here, Anatole France shows that Radegund can be used to critique the priesthood just as well as the monarchy, her two greatest allies according to the legitimist perspective.

The pious and well-educated Claudine first encounters Radegund while engaged in the domestic task of setting the dinner table. Thinking she hears her mother's voice asking her to go to her room, Claudine sees Radegund standing by her bed surrounded by a great light and wearing a crown of gold and precious jewels. Radegund announces herself as the queen of France and warns Claudine that the country must do penance to avoid great disaster, much like the recommendations offered by Bishop Pie. Radegund then visits Claudine every day to divulge secrets and make prophesies. She predicts natural disasters, local deaths, and instructs Claudine in the preparation of an ointment to cure the ankylosis (fused bones) of a laborer who is then able to return to work. Claudine becomes a sort of medieval mystic, who attracts crowds and curious ecclesiastical examiners. The staunchly secular republican official, Prefect Worms-Clavelin, is drawn into the action when Radegund announces "the fall of the ministry, the dissolution of the Chamber, the resignation of the president of the Republic and the end of the Regime."<sup>131</sup> Worms-Clavelin is particularly horrified when

The clergy, the big landowners, the nobility, and the clerical press leaned over [Claudine] and drank in her words. Saint Radegund rallied the defeated adversaries of the Republic and reassembled the *conservateurs*.<sup>132</sup>

The prefect fears that once the Parisian newspapers catch wind of the story, he himself will become embroiled in the scandal and exposed to the reprimands of the ministry. To save his career and squelch the royalist revival, Worms-Clavelin solicits the help of M. Guitrel, one of

---

<sup>131</sup> Anatole France, *L'Orme du Mail* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1897), 130.

<sup>132</sup> France, *L'Orme du Mail*, 130.

the episcopal candidates. The secular prefect is comically unversed in French history and shocks Guitrel by suggesting that Radegund is little known in France. Guitrel quickly educates him, explaining that “Saint Radegund is venerated by all catholicity...even nonbelievers themselves have contemplated this great figure with admiration.”<sup>133</sup> Here Anatole France is acknowledging the intense revival of Radegund’s cult in the second half of the nineteenth century. He likely has in mind both the statue coronation (with its heated newspaper debates) and Radegund’s ascendancy as an object of French patrimony. Much like Anatole France’s concise *Legende de Sainte Radegonde* which essentially stops as soon as Radegund leaves the palace, the prefect of *L’Orme du Mail* cuts Guitrel’s narrative short at the same spot, telling him to “save it for your seminarians.”<sup>134</sup> Anatole France himself is clearly more interested in Radegund’s historical role as Frankish queen than as monastic ascetic and miracle-worker. Guitrel then insinuates himself into Worms-Clavelin’s consideration for the bishopric by presenting himself as a “rational” priest and agreeing to help the prefect suppress the “miracle” and convince the region of Claudine’s insanity.<sup>135</sup> “Rid of this madwoman and content with the municipal elections which had produced neither new ideas nor new men, M. le préfet Worms-Clavelin rejoiced at the bottom of his heart.”<sup>136</sup>

*L’Orme du Mail* takes aim at nearly every institution, including the Republican ministry, the Catholic Church, the press, and provincial religious culture. Only Radegund, whose appearances illicit respectful awe, remains unscathed. But even acknowledging Anatole France’s characteristically ubiquitous irreverence, his lifelong interest in Radegund, who appears like bookends to his literary career, confirms her significance as a now

---

<sup>133</sup> France, *L’Orme du Mail*, 163.

<sup>134</sup> France, *L’Orme du Mail*, 165.

<sup>135</sup> France, *L’Orme du Mail*, 166.

<sup>136</sup> France, *L’Orme du Mail*, 176.

established part of French identity, regardless of religious persuasion. Chabrier interprets Anatole France's predilection for France's medieval history, "as a means of saving a disappearing legacy and reinforcing a sentiment of nationalism."<sup>137</sup> Even as he disparages provincial "superstition," he recognizes and even appreciates the role of Radegund (and other medieval saints) as a valuable part of France's "collective identity."<sup>138</sup> The saintliness of saints for Anatole France is a thing of the past, but a *national* past that should be appreciated and remembered.

### ***The Colonial Radegund***

At the turn of the twentieth century we see the ascendancy of two of Radegund's original attributes that had been relegated to the background for centuries: her skill in converting pagans to Christianity and her role as a medical caregiver. I would argue that the reappearance of these traits at this particular moment was directly influenced by the coalescence of France's colonial expansion with Radegund's desacralization into the religiously neutral figure that we observe in the *oeuvre* of Anatole France and Puvis de Chavannes. For hundreds of years, Radegund had been monopolized by Catholics for her value as an exemplary French queen and incarnation of ideal Christian virtues. But as this chapter has already shown, the nineteenth-century fixation on mining early French history in search of the medieval origins of modern national identity by all sides of the culture wars established Radegund as a national figure for all French people. This process was equally fueled by the process of empire-building, which made the cultivation of a narrative of French superiority a necessary component for justifying the *mission civilisatrice*. The insistence on France's history as a Catholic nation, even by Republicans, and its global preeminence in

---

<sup>137</sup> Chabrier, "Polychromatic piety," 184.

<sup>138</sup> Chabrier, "Polychromatic piety," 184.

medicine, education, democracy, and military achievements, despite recent failures and crises in all of these areas, was the foundation of the French myth of superiority that circulated at home and abroad. Within this context, Radegund's association with French civilization, evangelization, and medicine shaped – and was shaped by – colonial interests.

### Radegund the Missionary

As a Poitevin native, Monseigneur Prospère Augouard had a number of patron saints to choose from if his intention was to honor his hometown with the name of his Congolese mission site. The most likely contenders would have been Saints Hilary or Martin, whom Bishop Pie had identified as the “fathers” of France. It is particularly surprising that he did not choose Hilary, first bishop of Poitiers, who is most well-known for his evangelization work. Referred to as the "Hammer of the Arians" (*Malleus Arianorum*) and the "Athanasius of the West" for his efforts to wipe out Arianism and promote Orthodox Christianity in Gaul, Germania, and Britain in the fourth century, Hilary would have been the obvious choice for Augouard who might have identified with Hilary's conversion mission. Even Martin of Tours, the “apostle of Gaul” and a favorite of Third Republic France would have seemed a more likely titular saint. When Paris was evacuated in advance of the Prussian siege in 1871, France's government was relocated to Tours, which became the de facto capital of France. As Brian Brennan has shown, it was during this time that “Saint Martin was promoted by the clerical right as the cosmic protector of the nation against the German threat” and his military career became the defining factor in the renewed popularity of his cult.<sup>139</sup> Prospère Augouard first became interested in joining the priesthood and becoming a missionary in his early twenties when he was serving as a papal zouave – a battalion of volunteer soldiers

---

<sup>139</sup> Brian Brennan, "The Revival of the Cult of Martin of Tours in the Third Republic," *Church History* 66, No. 3 (1997): 489–501.

dedicated to the defense of the papal states – during the Franco-Prussian war.<sup>140</sup> And so, as a soldier himself from the Loire at the height of Martin’s newfound popularity, it is surprising Augouard chose Radegund over Gaul’s first missionary and “soldier of Christ” for his mission’s titular saint.

Perhaps it was Radegund’s decisive and somewhat violent action of burning down a pagan temple, as described in Baudonivia’s sixth century *Vita Radegundis*, that Augouard admired. As Baudonivia relates, on her way to the matron Ansifrida’s noble banquet, Radegund traveled a mile out of her way upon hearing of a pagan *fane* (temple) where certain Franks worshipped. There, “she ordered her servants to burn the *fane* revered by the Franks with fire, for she judged that it was iniquitous to show contempt for God in Heaven and venerate the Devil’s instruments.”<sup>141</sup> The pagan Franks mounted a defense of their shrine “with swords and clubs, shouting and all stirred up by the Devil.”<sup>142</sup> But Radegund steadfastly refused to move her horse until the shrine had been consumed by the flames and the pagans were satisfactorily converted.

But perhaps even more compelling than this episode of violent evangelization from Radegund’s early life would have been the association of Radegund with “civilization” which was so popular during Augouard’s youth. In fact, if we re-examine Bishop Pie and Marie-Théodore de Bussiére’s fixation on Radegund as a civilizing influence within a more global context, it is possible that France’s endorsement of *la mission civilisatrice* as

---

<sup>140</sup> Georges Goyau, *Monseigneur Augouard* (Paris : Librairie Plon, Les Petits-Fils de Plon et Nourrit, 1926), 4.

<sup>141</sup> “...jussit famulis fanum igni comburi, iniquum judicans, Dominum cæli contemni, & diabolica machinamenta venerari.” Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.4.

<sup>142</sup> “Hoc audientes Franci, universaque multitudo, cum gladiis & fustibus, vel omni fremitu diabolico conabantur defendere.” Baudonivia, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.4.



justification for their colonial enterprises actually shaped this aspect of Radegund's nineteenth-century identity.

Since the pioneering work of scholars such as Ann Laura Stoler, Mrinalini Sinha, and Kirsten McKenzie, among others, historians have established more nuanced methods of approaching the complex histories of colonialism. While it is not possible to cover the vast scholarship on French colonialism in this chapter, or even to venture too far into the many excellent studies of the French colonizing project in the northern Congo, it is crucial to our understanding of how Radegund's cult developed in the nineteenth century to incorporate here just one of the most significant developments within the field of colonialism: The acknowledgement that the relationship between the colonial periphery and the metropolitan center was defined by reciprocity. Understanding this relationship as one defined by multi-directional transfer has become the standard point of departure for historians of colonialism. Scholars now understand the genealogy of concepts, discourses, and policies as products of exchange within a complex web of interactions that transcended borders with global implications. In other words, it is impossible to produce a comprehensive analysis of any development in "French" ideology during the colonial period without acknowledging that the colonial experience had a role in shaping that ideology because the identities of colonizer and colonized were mutually constituted.<sup>143</sup> As J.P. Daughton has shown in his 2006 study, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism 1880-1914*, scholars should see identity formation, in particular, in terms of this multi-directional transfer. As he argues, "French identity was shaped not only by experiences at home but also in a variety of locations where men and women defined their moral and political positions

---

<sup>143</sup> Stuart Hall, "When was 'the post-colonial'? Thinking at the limit," *The Post-Colonial Question : Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, eds. Chambers, Iain and Lidia Curti (London: Routledge, 1996), 246.

within an international and often contentious context.”<sup>144</sup>The way that the French understood and carried out their colonial policy as a “civilizing mission” went much further than the exertion of power over indigenous populations, “it was also an exercise in defining the values of the *patrie*, how Frenchmen were to think and behave—in short, what it meant to be French.”<sup>145</sup> This then prompts the question: to what degree did *la mission civilisatrice* shape the nineteenth-century articulation – by both the Left and the Right – of Radegund as a bastion of Frenchness and, more specifically, a Frenchness characterized by “civilization”?

The glorification of the Church and her saints as the source of civilization dates back to the origins of Christian theological discourse. While the language appears similar in our nineteenth century Radegund texts, its meaning was influenced and transformed by the many coalescing debates we have observed throughout this chapter: the clashes between Catholics and Protestants, between Legitimists and Republicans, and between religious and secular, whose representatives harnessed powerful symbols and refashioned historical narratives in the great competition to define what it meant to be French. All of these debates were inevitably exported abroad to French possessions like the northern Congo and Algeria where they were played out against the backdrop of furthering France’s colonial interests, forcing policy makers and administrators to continuously redefine the values that constituted Frenchness, French patriotism, and how these were expressed both at home and abroad.<sup>146</sup> The role of French Catholic missionaries, like Augouard, was at the heart of the discord. Daughton describes the “uncomfortable symbiosis” that existed between the missionaries and the republican government, noting that “the new interest in colonial conquest coincided

---

<sup>144</sup> Daughton, *An Empire Divided*, 20.

<sup>145</sup> Daughton, *An Empire Divided*, 21

<sup>146</sup> Daughton, *An Empire Divided*, 199.

exactly with the climax of republican anticlericalism in France.”<sup>147</sup> Many Catholic missionaries were openly hostile to republicanism and, at the turn of the twentieth century, the French government again enacted legislation designed to eradicate clerical influence.<sup>148</sup> But as the prominent anticlerical Third Republic politician and lawyer, Léon Gambetta, famously stated in 1876, “anticlericalism is not an item for export.”<sup>149</sup> As Daughton argues, “Those republicans who tirelessly sought the eradication of all Catholic influence at home found themselves depending on missionary expertise to facilitate—and even justify—their rule abroad.”<sup>150</sup> Paradoxically, republican France needed its army of Catholic religious personnel to carry out the daily operations of *la mission civilisatrice*, which they did almost for free, making their presence necessary by its cost-effectiveness.<sup>151</sup>

But however threatening Catholicism was to the republican French ideal, it was always preferable to Protestantism. As I showed in the first half of this chapter, conflict between Catholics and Protestants continued long after the Reformation. The upper hand Catholicism gained over Protestantism in France survived the Revolution and despite republicans’ overt distaste, a historically Catholic France became part of their ideal, as we saw with the republican monumental art of Puvis de Chavannes. In 1893, the resident-general of Madagascar, Charles Le Myre de Vilers, famously wrote, “abroad, France is Catholicism, and Protestantism, across the seas, is England.”<sup>152</sup> Another oft-quoted phrase, “qui dit Français dit catholique, qui dit protestant dit Anglais” (to say *French* was to say Catholic; to say *Protestant* was to say English) similarly epitomizes the way that the colonial enterprise

---

<sup>147</sup> Daughton, *An Empire Divided*, 6.

<sup>148</sup> Daughton, *An Empire Divided*, 6; 17.

<sup>149</sup> Pierre Guillen, *L’Expansion, 1881–1898* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1985), 35–36.

<sup>150</sup> Daughton, *An Empire Divided*, 6.

<sup>151</sup> Daughton, *An Empire Divided*, 15.

<sup>152</sup> Daughton, *An Empire Divided*, 187.

forced France to define itself in relation to the rest of the world.<sup>153</sup> Daughton succinctly explains this reluctant allegiance to Catholicism, arguing that, “While the Protestants’ adoration of liberty and justice put them on the side of the republican government in France, the same rhetoric was potentially subversive when taught to the indigenous population of the republican colony.”<sup>154</sup> The values inherent in Catholicism, which were faithfully imparted to colonial subjects by Catholic missionaries, were therefore crucial to the republican government’s goal of spreading “French” civilization, i.e. instilling the kinds of values that would produce colonial subjects that could most effectively further France’s colonial interests. And both missionaries and their advocates took full advantage of this fact in their propaganda campaign from the 1890s onward by building upon that connection between France, civilization, and Catholicism. In fact, suspicion of missionaries’ anti-republican leanings seemed to be a major incentive for these campaigns to promote Catholic missionaries as purveyors of French civilization and even patriotism.<sup>155</sup> Associations of “savagery” with “paganism,” which were increasingly appearing in missionary literature, meant that colonial subjects could be both saved and civilized through conversion.<sup>156</sup>

And so, by the time Augouard founded the mission Sainte-Radegonde de l’Alima in 1899, Radegund had been reclaimed by the republican government as a national saint for the Third Republic via Puvis de Chavanne’s civic mural and Anatole France’s popular novel, *L’Orme du Mail*. Since she was already recognized as an important part of French patrimony, she might have been seen as a “safe” choice for Augouard that demonstrated his commitment to France’s interests abroad – or at the very least exhibited his patriotic intention of exporting

---

<sup>153</sup> Daughton, *An Empire Divided*, 167. Translation by Daughton.

<sup>154</sup> Daughton, *An Empire Divided*, 203.

<sup>155</sup> Daughton, *An Empire Divided*, 18.

<sup>156</sup> Daughton, *An Empire Divided*, 19.

something decidedly “French” to the Congo. Desacralized into an object of French patrimony, Puvis’ Radegund “Shelters Poets and Protects Literature from the Barbarism of the Age” just as Augouard served as a civilizing force among “the savage tribe of the Mbochis,” whom he succeeded in “making love our sweet France of which our good queen Radegund was once the most beautiful ornament.”<sup>157</sup> And if we are left with any doubt that Radegund’s nineteenth-century characterization as a civilizing force was influenced by the colonial *mission civilisatrice*, the following quote from Augouard’s 1926 biographer, Georges Goyau, suggests that Augouard’s near-contemporaries did indeed see them as intertwined,

The Poitiers of today sent their apostles to the Congo; and the origins of Congolese Christianity, which was to be definitively founded in 1899, was linked to Merovingian Poitiers, by Radegonde the godmother, and the flower of Latin and Christian civilization suddenly bloomed on the rough trunk of another barbarism.<sup>158</sup>

Goyau then imagines a conversation between Radegund and Fortunatus, such as one that might take place in the seventeenth-century *Dialogue des Morts* written by François de Salignac de La Mothe-Fénelon as a didactic guide for the young duke of Burgundy, Louis, grandson to King Louis XIV,

What a piquant subject for the *Dialogue des Morts*, would be a meeting of Radegonde with the good poet Fortunatus, congratulating his dear abbess on the good fortune of the savages whom, at the end of thirteen centuries, a priest from Poitou wanted to bring to her as devotees, in a bamboo church, all surrounded by mango, orange and tangerine trees!<sup>159</sup>

Goyau’s description of Augouard’s missionary work draws together many of the rhetorical themes that characterized the nineteenth-century interpretations of Radegund: the Christian Merovingian world as the epicenter of intellectual culture, a sense of religious and historical

---

<sup>157</sup> Augouard, *36 années au Congo*, 31.

<sup>158</sup> Goyau, *Monseigneur Augouard*, 361.

<sup>159</sup> Goyau, *Monseigneur Augouard*, 361.

fulfillment in reviving the Catholic faith thirteen centuries after the Merovingian Golden Age, the ability of Catholicism to instill civilization amongst the converted, and the power of the Church with Radegund as her instrument to enlighten a barbarian world. But within the colonial context of Augouard's missionary work, the civilizing narrative becomes more than just an origin story of how France came to be such a great nation. Goyau, conforming to contemporary discourse in support of colonialism, presents the Congo as being in the same state of barbarism that pre-Christian France once was 1300 years before when Radegund helped civilize it. This narrative now justifies France's intervention in the Congo from a position of evolved superiority – a “godmother” figure supervising the moral education of a child.<sup>160</sup>

### Radegund the Nurse

Looking back at how the Radegund-as-civilizer narrative was used by Pie, de Bussiere, and Puvis, it is impossible not to see the influence of the colonial *mission civilisatrice* in their rhetoric. If we examine Radegund's use in a different colonial context about a decade later, we can again see the coalescence of all of these themes, though this time with an emphasis on Radegund's role as a medical caregiver that carries particular gendered implications. In the November 5, 1916 issue of *Le Semeur Algerien*, a Catholic newspaper for French citizens of colonial Algeria, Radegund (and several other historical medieval women) were evoked to recruit nurses for service during World War I.

---

<sup>160</sup> Augouard's civilizing efforts were celebrated by Poitevins in 1922 when the city council approved a measure to name a street after him. The news was announced at the conclusion of a service at the church of Sainte-Radegonde celebrating the first anniversary of his death. The Catholic newspaper, *La Croix*, praised the decision and hailed Augouard as “a great servant of France and of the Church.” “Le Souvenir de Mgr Augouard,” *La Croix*, October 8, 1922.

The article, titled “Les Infirmières de France” (“The Nurses of France”), begins with the triumphal statement that “the women of the world have inaugurated the twentieth century in their new role as nurses.”<sup>161</sup> In the same sentence, Radegund is introduced as the first nurse to “bend over the beds of combatants at the dawn of our history.” Her role as “hospital head” (*major d’hôpital*) at her castle in Athies required her to care for her patients “down to the most disgusting details.” The accounts of the “old authors” describe how Radegund entered sick rooms where doctors “hesitated at the threshold.” Radegund “healed wounds and experienced horrible visions and frightful odors without paling.” In this way, the article argues, “Saint Radegund modeled the path for her modern sisters: she could be the patroness ‘des Sociétés de secours aux blessés militaires.’” The SSBM was an organization first established in 1864 which eventually merged with *L’Association des dames françaises* and *l’Union des femmes* to form the *Croix-Rouge française* in 1940.<sup>162</sup>

In declaring Radegund as the SSBM’s patroness, this article was responding to the heated debate in France over the role of women in the nursing profession and the laicization of nursing under the republican social order. As Katrin Schultheiss and Margaret H. Darrow have shown, nursing was reconceived as a “distinctly feminine” profession in France beginning in the 1880s and crystalized into the new norm during the First World War.<sup>163</sup> On the one hand, the republican mission that began in the 1880s of replacing all religious nursing orders with trained laywomen led proponents to claim that the essential qualities of

---

<sup>161</sup> “Les Infirmières de France,” *Le Semeur Algerien*, November 5, 1916. While the article continues with many examples of pre-twentieth-century women acting as nurses, the “new role” here clearly refers to the greater standardization and organization of the nursing profession during the war years.

<sup>162</sup> Catalogue of the Bibliothèque nationale, s.v. “des Sociétés de secours aux blessés militaires,” <https://data.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb122322086>. For the date, see Margaret H. Darrow, “French Volunteer Nursing and the Myth of War Experience in World War I,” *American Historical Review* 101, no. 1 (1996): 103.

<sup>163</sup> Darrow, “French Volunteer Nursing,” 86-87; Katrin Schultheiss, *Bodies and Souls: Politics and the Professionalization of Nursing in France, 1880-1922* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 86.

womanhood – the maternal instinct, tenderness, sympathy, and the innate ability to offer comfort – made them naturally qualified.<sup>164</sup> But these efforts were met with resistance by some republicans, including physicians, whose conservative views about the appropriate role for women in society overruled their anticlerical position. They opposed the idea of laywomen entering the workforce en masse, shirking their familial obligations, encountering sexual danger, and achieving inappropriate levels of independence.<sup>165</sup> Physicians also saw the prospect of highly educated nurses as a threat to their recently established professionalism.<sup>166</sup> On the other hand, “the deeply rooted connection between women religious and the healing arts” meant that policy makers needed to promote lay nursing more as a vocation than a profession where the ideal “republican nurse” still retained the most admired characteristics of nursing sisters: dedication, humility, deference, and self-abnegation (consequently the same characteristics most appreciated in wife and mother).<sup>167</sup> This desire to have it both ways – to enjoy the benefits of the nearly free workforce of non-threatening, unambitious, self-abnegating nuns without the menace of anti-republican Catholic influence – caused France to fall behind England and Germany where the women’s nursing profession was robust and well-established by the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>168</sup>

Radegund’s special ability to embody multiple and contradictory meanings simultaneously, which has been at the heart of every stage of this study, made her uniquely suited to “preside over the glorious group of nurses of the great war,” as the newspaper article concludes. This article draws on Radegund’s hitherto overlooked historical identity as

---

<sup>164</sup> Schultheiss, *Bodies and souls*, 29.

<sup>165</sup> Schultheiss, *Bodies and souls*, 8; 13.

<sup>166</sup> Schultheiss, *Bodies and souls*, 5.

<sup>167</sup> Schultheiss, *Bodies and souls*, 9; 5.

<sup>168</sup> Schultheiss, *Bodies and souls*, 7.



a medical caregiver in order to reimagine the saint's ministrations to the poor and lepers as the work of a combat nurse bending over the beds of the soldiers of Merovingian France. Nowhere in "Les Infirmières de France" is Radegund's monastic identity referenced. Rather, we see the image of "Radegund the queen...daughter of Bertaire, king of Thuringia, spouse of Clothar I" selflessly running a hospital out of her castle, just like the elite laywomen who converted their country estates into temporary wartime hospitals and convalescent homes. As the demand for qualified nurses rose in the first years of World War I, the nursing profession was "promoted as women's wartime service" and "was envisioned as feminine devotion nationalized."<sup>169</sup> The patriotic flavor that the Great War injected into the women's nursing profession made Radegund the perfect patroness and model for French nurses. In this way, Radegund conformed perfectly to the impossible ideal of the "republican nurse" as someone who selflessly provided medical care without pay and saw it as part of her religious vocation, but was not (yet) part of any religious order. And she served this purpose while also obviously retaining her traditional Catholic meanings as a saint.

Lastly, it is important to consider the colonial context of this article and how it might have shaped this articulation of Radegund. *Le Semeur Algerien* was a radically Catholic and nationalistic newspaper that circulated in colonial Algeria, but mainly published news items from the metropole. The paper's self-stated goal, which it published in its first edition in May of 1911, was to "fight against sectarian politics with vigor, but always with loyalty and the Catholic flag always unfurled," "to unmask the pitfalls of the enemy" whose "unjust laws we find irreconcilable," "to spare nothing to paralyze them with weapons and by the legal ways that are still left to us."<sup>170</sup> The "unjust laws" referred to here were most likely the 1901 Law

---

<sup>169</sup> Darrow, "French Volunteer Nursing," 88.

<sup>170</sup> La Direction, "Notre Programme," *Le Semeur Algerien*, May 7, 1911.

on Associations that closed religious organizations, the 1904 law that officially prohibited members of religious orders from teaching in France, and the famous law of 1905 that essentially “separated Church and state” (and probably also the anticlerical laws of 1880s that inaugurated the secularization of education, the expulsion of the Jesuits from France, and, of course, the laicization of nursing).<sup>171</sup> The colonial context shaped the rhetoric of *Le Semeur Algerien*’s mission statement, which asserts the necessity that,

Christian France, if it doesn't want to perish, must fight in a new crusade for the souls of its children... It must, in a word, defend religious society and human society against the barbarism which advances upon it, against the tide of mud that is always rising, against insane claims and assaults of anarchy.<sup>172</sup>

Once again, we see the theme of Christian civilization triumphing over irreligious barbarism deployed in the service of French nationalism, though this time with the added connotations of the crusades. The newspaper article, “Les Infirmières de France,” similarly evokes crusading imagery, relating how the woman, “Hersandes,” followed Saint Louis to the Holy Land as a healer and played an important role in saving Christian soldiers when,

the Turks sought out the wounded to chop off their heads, the sultan paying a gold coin for each Christian head: it was therefore necessary to pull them out of Saracen hands as quickly as possible.<sup>173</sup>

Even though the work of a medieval crusade-nurse was exhausting and “the organization of sanitary service was little more than rudimentary” outside of France, medieval women nonetheless proved their worth as *ambulancières* (paramedics) and even “wore a costume for the occasion,” which likely references the nursing uniform that served as a symbol of the

---

<sup>171</sup> Daughton, *An Empire Divided*, 17.

<sup>172</sup> “A nos lecteurs,” *Le Semeur Algerien*, May 7, 1911.

<sup>173</sup> “Les Infirmières de France.”

profession in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>174</sup> “Les Infirmières de France” uses these descriptions of Radegund and of other medieval women serving in the unhygienic backwaters of the East during the crusades both to establish women’s historical role as nurses for France and to evoke the crusades as a rhetorical device justifying the European colonial project.

“La Patronne de Poitrinaires” : Radegund and the Tuberculosis Epidemic

The nationalistic myth of France’s superiority in the area of medicine contrasted with the dire situation at home. Tuberculosis was the leading cause of death in France – and in fact all of Europe – in the nineteenth century. At its high point in France from the 1870s-1890s, it accounted for one-fifth to one-fourth of all deaths, with a marked intensification during the Franco-Prussian War and the siege of Paris in 1871.<sup>175</sup> During this time, the “sanatorium movement” was popular throughout Europe and America where facilities were established to provide fresh air, sunshine, and a hygienic environment for thousands seeking “the cure.” In the 1890s, Radegund became “La Patronne de Poitrinaires” (The Patroness of Consumptives) when a children’s tuberculosis hospital was placed under the auspices of the church of Sainte-Radegonde-près-Tours. Perched on a hill high above the Loire near the site of St. Martin’s Abbey of Marmoutier, the Sanatorium de Sainte-Radegonde provided free treatment to poor children suffering from tuberculosis. In 1894, Dr. Edmond Chaumier established a charitable organization called *l’Oeuvre des Enfants Tuberculeux de Touraine* to oversee the

---

<sup>174</sup> Margaret H. Darrow points out the intentional similarity between the traditional nuns’ habit and the turn-of-the-century nursing uniform, “Red Cross uniforms copied nuns’ habits with their coifs and impractical long veils in a conscious effort to appropriate to their wearers not only the qualities of nuns’ selflessness, devotion, and asexuality, but also the respect and privileges society accorded them, for example, the ability to travel alone and to associate closely, even intimately, with men not of their immediate family, without jeopardizing their reputations or their caste.” Darrow, “French Volunteer Nursing,” 90.

<sup>175</sup> David S. Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease: Tuberculosis in Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley : University of California Press: 1995), 4.

foundation and maintenance of the Sanatorium. As part of its fundraising campaign, *l'Oeuvre* produced and distributed prayer cards featuring an image of Radegund on the front with a request for donations on the reverse. These prayer cards offer an interesting opportunity for studying the repeated, newly conceived, and constantly reconceived iterations of Radegund. Just like in the Algerian nurse recruitment article, Radegund's historical identity as a healer of the poor was reconceived for the new needs and expectations at the turn of the twentieth century.

According to the *Livre d'or du sanatorium de Touraine (Sainte-Radegonde, près Tours)* published in 1895, the mission of the *l'Oeuvre des Enfants Tuberculeux de Touraine* was to secure funding for the establishment of a sanatorium where the children of poor families suffering from tuberculosis would receive at least three months of free treatment in the salubrious air of the hilltop asylum.<sup>176</sup> The *Livre d'or* details the rules and organization of *l'Oeuvre* which was composed of a group of men and women who paid yearly dues. There were different levels of membership one could achieve based on the amount of the donation. Revenue came from member dues, individual gifts and donations, as well as profits from events and conferences that benefited the organization.<sup>177</sup> The nuns of Sainte-Radegonde-près-Tours provided the daily care of the children who were also visited by doctors. While Dr. Chaumier was the president of *L'Oeuvre*, the Sanatorium was directed by M. l'abbé Moussé, the curate of Sainte-Radegonde in Poitiers, and it appears that the Superior of the nuns of Sainte-Croix also shared some of the duties of administration.<sup>178</sup>

---

<sup>176</sup> *Livre d'or du Sanatorium de Touraine (Sainte-Radegonde, Près Tours)* (Tours : Imprimerie Deslis Frères, 1895), 7; *Lancette française: Gazette des hopitiaux civils et militaires* 67, no. 2 (1894), 826.

<sup>177</sup> *Livre d'or*, 12.

<sup>178</sup> René Ledoux-Lebard, *La Lutte antituberculeuse en France, par le Dr H. Dehau* (Paris : Hachette, 1906).

Dr. Chaumier first conceived of the Sanatorium when he installed four little girls suffering from tuberculosis with two nuns in la propriété du Petit-Bois at Sainte-Radegonde-près-Tours.<sup>179</sup> However, the space was too limited to house the numbers of children he had hoped to treat. *L'Oeuvre* raised enough money to move the children to a larger site, but still could only accommodate twenty-five children. But thanks to the generosity of their members, they were able to buy new property and build a larger establishment. Soon after, more financial troubles arose that threatened to derail the entire operation. To advertise their fundraising campaign, *l'Oeuvre des Enfants Tuberculeux* printed and distributed prayer cards depicting “Sainte-Radegonde, Queen of France, Patroness of Consumptives” on the front with the following message on the reverse:

To heal the poor little consumptives.

The charity of the “petits poitrinaires” needs you. The Sanatorium de Touraine, which cares for and cures all of France’s poor little consumptives, will be taken away from the nuns in March of 1896, if the charity cannot raise the sum of one hundred thousand francs necessary to purchase it.

Afterwards, it will be necessary to renovate it, because, for want of space, we can currently only accommodate a small number of patients, and throughout all of France there are thousands of children dying from phthisis and tuberculosis that the Sanatorium could be curing.

So give generously, give a large donation for the acquisition of the new property, give an annual donation to help the charity prosper.<sup>180</sup>

Following this were details about the indulgence donors would receive and instructions about sending their contributions to Madame la Supérieure des Religieuses du Sanatorium de Touraine.

But why did the heavy responsibility of caring for “all of France’s poor little consumptives” depend on the contributions of private donors? There were many charities established in France in the late nineteenth century just like *l'Oeuvre des Enfants*

---

<sup>179</sup> *Livre d'or*, 27.

<sup>180</sup> “Sainte-Radegonde,” Prayer card, (Tours : Imprimerie Tourangelle, c.1896)

*Tuberculeux* that funded tuberculosis care. In 1901, the doctor and socialist activist, Octave Tabary, published a critique in the newspaper, *Le Mouvement socialiste*, of the government's lack of response to the tuberculosis crisis and their misdirected encouragement of private sector organizations to assume the financial burden of care and prevention. He derided the “ridiculously impotent and stingy remedies achieved by bourgeois philanthropy,” considering the national scale of the tuberculosis problem.<sup>181</sup>

It is unnecessary to belabor the notion that epidemics can easily become politicized and the tuberculosis epidemic of the nineteenth century was no exception. It is impossible to avoid drawing comparisons between this past global health crisis and the one we are currently experiencing. Much like the situation in the United States, political interests in France undermined an early organized national response, despite recognition that “it [tuberculosis] is truly a national peril.”<sup>182</sup> Pulmonary tuberculosis was the most common manifestation of the disease, but it could also present in an extrapulmonary form called scrofula, which affected the lymph glands of the neck and resulted in abscesses that could become open sores. Both forms of the disease are caused by the Koch bacillus, named for the German bacteriologist who first identified it in 1882, and it is transmitted through the inhalation of aerosolized particles from a carrier's coughing, sneezing, and spitting.<sup>183</sup> Debates among the medical community regarding its causes, transmission, treatment, and contagiousness permeated political and social discourse. Both Britain and Germany enacted

---

<sup>181</sup> Octave Tabary, “Le Parti socialiste et la lutte contre la tuberculose,” *Le Mouvement socialiste*, October 15, 1901, 486–487 ; Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease*, 221.

<sup>182</sup> Lionel Amodru, “Rapport fait au nom de la commission d'hygiène publique sur les mesures à prendre pour arrêter les progrès de la tuberculose,” *Journal officiel: Annexes de la Chambre des députés*, session of June 21, 1901, 782.

<sup>183</sup> The bacteria that causes Tuberculosis is also known as the tubercle bacillus, and *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease*, 3.

rigorous public health campaigns, while France failed to mobilize any concerted national effort to combat the epidemic.<sup>184</sup> Rather, private physicians and charitable organizations assumed the onus of dealing with tuberculosis patients. This was mainly because the Union of Medical Syndicates (composed of private physicians and established in 1881) saw the creation of a state bureaucracy for overseeing public health issues as a threat to their professional status and they fought both to minimize any existing state control and to prevent its expansion.<sup>185</sup> With the greater democratization of the political sector under the Third Republic, opportunities arose that allowed an increased number of doctors to enter politics and enabled them to actively promote the Union's goals through their legislative influence.<sup>186</sup> From the 1850s to the 1880s, there were several attempts to create state-mandated local sanitation commissions, but these efforts failed due to the general lack of compliance from *département* prefects.<sup>187</sup> The central Bureau of Public Health and Hygiene, established in 1886, was modeled directly after Germany's very successful Reichsgesundheitsamt implemented a decade before, but failed for similar reasons.<sup>188</sup> In short, many promising plans to address the situation on a national scale were proposed, but their execution suffered from political paralysis.<sup>189</sup> As a result, French cities experienced increasing mortality rates even as numbers were declining in Britain and Germany.<sup>190</sup> Only after cases began to wane at the *fin de siècle* did governmental and philanthropic organizations start to launch "la lutte

---

<sup>184</sup> Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease*, 6.

<sup>185</sup> Martha L. Hildreth, "Medical Rivalries and Medical Politics in France: The Physicians' Union Movement and the Medical Assistance Law of 1893," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 42, no. 1 (January 1987), 7.

<sup>186</sup> Martha L. Hildreth, *Doctors, Bureaucrats & Public Health in France, 1888–1902* (New York : Garland, 1987), 21.

<sup>187</sup> Allan Mitchell, *The Divided Path : The German Influence on Social Reform in France After 1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 253-254.

<sup>188</sup> Allan Mitchell, *The Divided Path*, 254.

<sup>189</sup> Allan Mitchell, *The Divided Path*, 271.

<sup>190</sup> Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease*, 6.

contre la tuberculose,” translated by David Barnes as “the war against tuberculosis.”<sup>191</sup>

Barnes’ comprehensive study on the history of and social responses to tuberculosis in nineteenth-century France recognizes “spitting, alcoholism, and unsanitary housing” as the leading factors which were thought to cause tuberculosis.<sup>192</sup> The moral failings of the poor – and indeed poverty itself – became the primary target of those seeking to apply blame. Many medical professionals who engaged in tuberculosis studies arrived at the unproductive conclusion that the lower classes willfully or ignorantly practiced poor hygiene and engaged in the morally bankrupt practices of patronizing cabarets and prostitutes – “excesses” which they believed were the obvious causes of the disease and were even leading to the “moral and demographic decline of the French nation.” Despite the growing ascendancy of germ theory (the idea that pathogens transmitted disease), which replaced the miasmatic theory (the belief that “bad air” caused disease), they nonetheless overwhelmingly proposed the ineffective solution of greater surveillance and control of the poor in their miasmatic neighborhoods, rather than governmental intervention.<sup>193</sup> As Barnes aptly notes,

All scientific knowledge is—and has always been—conditioned by social factors. Industrialization, urbanization, class conflict, religious piety and charity, bourgeois sexual morality, demographic stagnation, military defeat, and international rivalry all contributed to the peculiar shape of the French understanding of tuberculosis. Ultimately, to write the history of tuberculosis in nineteenth-century France, one must write a history of nineteenth-century French society.<sup>194</sup>

Responses to disease, even among scientists, is also conditioned by these same social factors, much in the same way that saints are created and recreated based on communities’ social needs. The choice of Radegund as an ally in Dr. Chaumier’s charitable efforts was a natural

---

<sup>191</sup> Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease*, 13.

<sup>192</sup> Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease*, 16.

<sup>193</sup> Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease*, 212.

<sup>194</sup> Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease*, 20.



choice due to her role as titular saint of the Touraine tuberculosis sanatorium. But the belief in her success as a propaganda element for the charity's prayer cards was driven by the deeper meanings Radegund had come to represent in French popular culture. On the one hand, we can see the continuous momentum at work of Radegund's association with Frenchness, nationalism, and patriotism in the charity's manual, in the wording of the prayer card's request for donations, and in the way Radegund is visually represented on the front of the card. But these qualities took on quite a different tone than before as they were mobilized for use during a public health crisis. And on the other hand, popular derision for elements of religious superstition, such as miraculous healing by saints and their relics, made Radegund the perfect choice for a charity that sponsored tuberculosis treatment. Even though Radegund, like any medieval saint, achieved fame thanks to her monastic foundation's promotion of her relics' curative powers, her historical role of providing free medical care to a poor population suffering from the most disgusting ailments corresponded well with the nineteenth-century understanding of tuberculosis as a disease of the unhygienic poor.

The text on the sanatorium prayer card's reverse uses Radegund's identity as a national saint to evoke a national idea of healthcare, despite the fact that it was France's lack of national response that necessitated *L'Oeuvre's* establishment. The Sanatorium of Sainte-Radegonde-près-Tours "cares for and cures *all of France's* poor little consumptives." Children are dying "*throughout all of France*" that the Sanatorium could be curing if only they had the necessary funding. But whether *L'Oeuvre* had the capacity to actually transport these impoverished children from all over France to their facility in Tours for treatment is unknown. Nevertheless, *L'Oeuvre* conceived of its mission as a national one and they advertised Radegund as their patroness, "Queen of France" and "Patroness of

Consumptives,” on a national level. The founding members were all Tourainians and *L’Oeuvre*’s headquarters was based in Tours, but the medical committee was composed of doctors located as far as Paris and Lyon. Associating this national saint with the national scope of their mission made the Sanatorium seem more effective and implied that the donations *L’Oeuvre* received would support *tuberculeux* all over France and not just from Tours.

We can also see the deployment of Radegund’s identity as a national saint to promote the idea that charitable contributions to the Sanatorium de Sainte-Radegonde were an act of patriotism. As Chaumier relates in an address to the members of *L’Oeuvre*, “Until the day when our dream will become a reality, it will be necessary to propagandize more actively; it will be necessary for you to bring everyone together to recruit new members and to collect larger sums, knowing that you are doing your Christian and patriotic duty.”<sup>195</sup> Dr. Chaumier’s association of patriotism and Christian duty with raising funds for tuberculosis care again references the country-wide scope of the charity’s mission. It also seems highly likely that Radegund’s recent notoriety from both the Left and the Right as the great civilizer of the barbarian world also played a significant part in her suitability as Patroness of Consumptives. Scholars of the tuberculosis epidemic concur that French doctors and policy-makers were in constant competition with the Germans, who were perceived as barbarian invaders after the 1871 defeat. The looming reality of Germany’s success in mobilizing resources to combat the disease sat badly with the French, who were reluctant to adopt “a servile imitation” of their enemy’s public health measures, as the leader of the French

---

<sup>195</sup> *Livre d’or*, 28.

temperance movement, Emile Cheysson, put it.<sup>196</sup> In a similar vein, Dr. Camille Savoie, who was sent to investigate German sanatoria by the Ministry of Commerce, reported that there was much to admire about Germany's public health measures, but that their methods were "attainable only through an authoritarian structure that rested on an autocratic government and a military spirit among the people."<sup>197</sup> In other words, what might work for a barbaric nation such as Germany just wasn't appropriate for France's more civilized population. Despite the various controversial uses of Radegund over the recent decades, she was still France's most famous Merovingian queen and her now firmly established Frenchness and role as preserver of French patrimony and bastion of civilization made her a desirable choice for a foundation seeking to employ the concepts of both patriotism and Christian charity to garner financial support.

The pervasive belief in France that tuberculosis was a disease of poverty – and of moral deficiency – similarly made Radegund an effective tool for the Sanatorium's fundraising campaign. While Germany's public health efforts were shaped by its medical community's consensus regarding the disease's transmission via the Koch bacillus, a significant factor in France's lack of coordinated state response to the tuberculosis epidemic was the misdirection of attention and resources towards surveilling and combatting the social evils of alcoholism, prostitution, and slovenly living conditions.<sup>198</sup> This stigmatization of the lower classes and their dangerously filthy habits coincided with the revival of Radegund's identity as a medical caregiver and promoter of hygiene, which we saw to an even greater extent in the previous section on nursing recruitment. The historical Radegund was a great

---

<sup>196</sup> Allan Mitchell, *The Divided Path : The German Influence on Social Reform in France After 1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 262.

<sup>197</sup> Mitchell, *The Divided Path*, 264.

<sup>198</sup> Mitchell, *The Divided Path*, 261-262.

healer of the poor – and lepers in particular – an aspect of her saintliness particularly emphasized in the sixth-century account of Venantius Fortunatus. As he relates, she established a hospital at Athies,

where beds were elegantly made up for needy women gathered there. She would wash them herself in warm baths, tending to the putrescence of their diseases. She washed the heads of men, acting like a servant. And before she washed them, she would mix a potion with her own hands to revive those who were weak from sweating.<sup>199</sup>

And later at Saix, she continued her ministrations,

Girding herself with a cloth, she washed the heads of the needy, scrubbing away whatever she found there. Not shrinking from scurf scabs, lice or pus, she plucked off the worms and scrubbed away the putrid flesh. Then she herself combed the hair on every head she had washed. As in the gospel, she applied oil to their ulcerous sores that had opened when the skin softened or that scratching had irritated, reducing the spread of contagion.<sup>200</sup>

Accounts of her ministrations were distinct from most medieval saints, both because of the lengthy descriptions of the lepers' truly repulsive infirmities and because of the focus on her use of medicine and basic hygienic efforts.<sup>201</sup>

In many ways, Radegund's association with leprosy fit well with her new role as Patroness of Consumptives. In the Middle Ages, the idea that leprosy was God's punishment for the sins of the sufferer was prevalent, leading to the stigmatization of lepers, not just for

---

<sup>199</sup> “Adhuc animum tendens ad opus misericordiae, Ateias domum instruit; quo lectis culte compositis, congregatis egenis feminis, ipsa eas lavans in thermis, morborum curabat putredines, virorum capita diluens, ministerium faciens, quos ante laverat, eisdem sua manu miscebat l, ut fessos de sudore sumpta potio recrearet.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 1.4.

<sup>200</sup> “Ipsa succincta sabano, capita lavabat ægrorum, defricans quidquid erat crustæ, scabiei, tineæ, nec purulenta fastidians, interdum & vermes extrahens, purgans cutis putredines, sigillatim capita pectebat ipsa, quæ laverat. Ulcera vero cicatricum, quæ cutis laxa detexerat, aut ungues exasperaverant, more Euangelico, oleo superfuso, mulcebat morbi contagium.” Fortunatus, *Vita Radegundis*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, 2.13.

<sup>201</sup> Fortunatus' sixth-century *Vita Radegundis* is also full of descriptions of Radegund cleaning: church floors, monastery pavement, clothing, and latrines.

fear of contagion, but for their dangerously sinful nature.<sup>202</sup> Radegund's treatment of lepers with healing potions, medicinal oils, and especially cleansing baths coincided with the nineteenth-century attitude that tuberculosis was caused by unhygienic and immoral living, and that its prevention lay in cleanliness and personal virtue. Furthermore, Radegund's medieval and early modern renown as a healer of skin disorders provides another link to her association with tuberculosis. Tuberculosis occasionally presented as ulcerous lesions, a condition called scrofula, which was known as "the King's Evil" in the Middle Ages because it was believed that the king's touch had the miraculous power of curing this disease.<sup>203</sup> As John Frith relates in his history of tuberculosis,

The belief that disease could be cured by a king's touch has its origins with Clovis of France (487-511), and later other European monarchs such as Robert the Pious, Edward the Confessor and Philip I of France. The cure of scrofula by the King's touch was common after the thirteenth century and performed by English and French monarchs such as King Charles II, who during his 25-year reign touched 92,102 subjects.<sup>204</sup>

Thus for "Saint Radegund Queen of France," as she is labeled on the sanatorium prayer card, to be associated with this disease as the Patroness of Consumptives was the result of several different but complimentary ideas about Radegund and royalty which coalesced in response to these new nineteenth-century needs. This version of Radegund's queenship doesn't seem to connote anti-republican sentiments. Rather, it invites the audience to associate the

---

<sup>202</sup> Saul Nathaniel Brody, *The Disease of the Soul: Leprosy in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1974), 132; Charlotte Pickard, "The Noble Leper: Responses to Leprosy in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *Anglo-Norman Studies XLI: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 2018*, ed. Elisabeth van Houts, NED-New edition (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2019), 119; Jeffrey Richards, *Sex, Dissidence and Damnation: Minority Groups in the Middle Ages* (London and New York: 1991), 150; Christina Welch and Rohan Brown, "From Villainous Letch and Sinful Outcast, to 'Especially Beloved of God': Complicating the Medieval Leper through Gender and Social Status," *Historical Reflections* 42, no. 1 (2016): 48.

<sup>203</sup> Elizabeth Lomax, "Hereditary or Acquired Disease? Early Nineteenth Century Debates on the Cause of Infantile Scrofula and Tuberculosis," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 32, no. 4 (1977), 356.

<sup>204</sup> John Frith, "History of Tuberculosis: Part 1 – Phthisis, consumption and the White Plague," *Journal of Military and Veterans' Health* 22, no. 2.

sanatorium's royal patroness with the tradition of curing this form of tuberculosis by royal touch.

To conclude this discussion of Radegund as Patroness of Consumptives, it is worthwhile to analyze the artistic choices for the sanatorium card which reveal much about Radegund's popular identity in the nineteenth century and reflect the perception of the salubrious effects of the countryside. This image contains no allusions to Radegund's monastic identity. She appears entirely as the sainted queen with a finely embroidered gown and cloak, jeweled belt, crown, and glowing nimbus. With modestly downcast eyes, she stands in the graceful swaying contrapposto attitude so typical of Gothic figural sculpture and stained glass.<sup>205</sup> In no way is this grace diminished by the fact that she stands upon the tilled soil of an oat field, which signals the subject of the scene as the Miracle of the Oats. This apocryphal story, which developed as early as the thirteenth century, recounts Radegund's harrowing escape from her husband, King Clothar, on her way to found the monastery of Sainte-Croix in Poitiers. According to this legend, newly sown oats miraculously grew to full height, hiding Radegund from capture by Clothar and his soldiers. Despite the fact that this episode is absent from all medieval *Lives of Radegund*, the Miracle of the Oats became one of the most popular ways to depict Radegund in visual culture from about the fifteenth century onwards. The particular design of the prayer card's image is nearly identical to a stained-glass depiction of the Miracle of the Oats (1862) at the church of Sainte-Radegonde in Chacé, which lies just east of Tours along the Loire River.<sup>206</sup>

---

<sup>205</sup> For example, see details of the medieval window at the cathedral of Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul de Troyes, France (14th century) and the Ivory Triptych from the church of Saint-Sulpice (13<sup>th</sup> century).

<sup>206</sup> Chacé, Eglise Sainte-Radegonde, Paroisse Saint Vincent des Coteaux de Saumur (website), <http://paroisse.vincent.saumur.chez-alice.fr/Chace.htm>

The use of this particular Radegundian tradition for the sanatorium card demonstrates how recognizable this version of Radegund was well into the nineteenth century. But more importantly, the scene presents a “safe” Radegund. We see her crowned, but know that she has just rejected her queenship. The absence of her usual attributes – the nun’s habit and fleur-de-lis – serves to disassociate her from any problematic connotations of monasticism or monarchism.<sup>207</sup> And finally, the setting of the agricultural field evokes the cure by fresh air that the Sanatorium de Sainte-Radegonde offered as an antidote to the dangerously overcrowded and unsanitary environment of the city. This sentiment is evoked by the careful positioning of Radegund’s hands: the left softly brushes the tops of the oat stalks, while her right hand is raised to her breast, a symbolic gesture referencing her ability to heal the *poitrines* of the suffering *poitrinaires*.<sup>208</sup>

### **Conclusion**

As the French early medieval historian, Numa-Denis Fustel de Coulanges, observed in the devastating year 1871,

Each person fashions his own imaginary Middle Ages. Errors are many, because there are so many ways of deceiving oneself, and each person establishes his faith and his political credo following the errors which he has chosen, or to which his earlier education has bound him. There are as many ways of envisioning the Middle Ages in France as there are political parties. It is our historical theories that divide us the most; they are the point of departure for all our factions; they are the lands on which our hatreds have been nurtured.<sup>209</sup>

---

<sup>207</sup> See plates in Laverret, “L’iconographie de sainte Radegonde dans les manuscrits,” 85-112.

<sup>208</sup> This particular image seems to be based on the stained glass window at the church of Sainte-Radegonde in Chacé, completed in 1862, which is located only 8 miles from Saix. However, in this version, Radegund is turned towards her female companion (either Agnes or Disciola) and does not have her hand raised to her breast.

<sup>209</sup> Numa-Denis Fustel de Coulanges, “L’organisation de la justice dans l’Antiquité et les temps modernes. III. La justice royal au Moyen Âge,” *Revue des Deux Mondes* 94 (July–August 1871): 537–8.

Indeed, by the time of de Coulanges' musings, Radegund had ceased to be little more than a divisive historical theory – her legacy mythologized again and again into something far removed from the saintly exemplar of the medieval and early modern eras. “Imaginary” is an apt term for this hero of early medieval France whose tradition lent itself so well to the process of reimagining. To return to the oft-cited quote by the Belgian sociologist, Pierre Delooz, with which this study first began, “All saints are more or less constructed in that, being necessarily saints for other people, they are remodeled in the collective representation which is made of them.”<sup>210</sup> Constructing and reimagining saints is an ongoing process that owes just as much to historians, devotees and their adversaries, as it does to early hagiographers. The medievalist, Edward James, suggests that during the Third Republic in France, “One’s political stance could even be gauged, to some extent, by the attitude that one took towards Clovis and the Merovingians.”<sup>211</sup> This deployment of historical origin-narratives for political purposes was certainly not new to 1870s France. But as this chapter has demonstrated, in the case of Radegund, the new aggressive politicization of her historical and spiritual legacy by both sides of the culture wars in response to the identity crisis of post-Revolution France serves as a powerful tool for understanding how individuals and communities rely on history to define their place in the world.

As we have seen, regardless of religious persuasion, the French acknowledged Radegund as an important part of their shared national history. Her tradition was so appealing to people on all sides of the culture wars because of their collective longing for the imagined ideal past that Radegund represented within a climate of social and political

---

<sup>210</sup> Pierre Delooz, “Pour une étude sociologique de la sainteté canonisée dans l’Eglise catholique,” *Archives de Sociologie des religions* 13, no. 1 (1962): 23.

<sup>211</sup> Edward James, “The Merovingians from the French Revolution to the Third Republic,” *Early Medieval Europe* 20, no.4 (2012): 455.



upheaval. This instability and uncertainty prompted the reexamination of France's history in the desire to explain the nation's apparent downfall and to generate hopeful visions of the future.

But exactly what Radegund meant – and for whom – took on new and drastically different meanings. As the Sainte-Geneviève scholar, Moshe Sluhovsky, argues, “The cult of the patron saint was the people who practiced it, and was as diverse as these people were.”<sup>212</sup>

Catholics rebuilt Radegund shrines that were destroyed or vandalized during the Revolution, often looking backwards for artistic inspiration as they sought to recreate the medieval aesthetic. We saw this in Mme Charre's restoration of the Chapelle-Sainte-Radegonde at Chinon with its monolithic columns, atrium, and Romanesque archivolt that were intended to return the site to its *physionomie première*.<sup>213</sup> Bishop Pie's golden Radegund reliquary was designed to resemble a thirteenth-century church in the “purity” of the gothic style.<sup>214</sup> In the farming community of Ganties, the local people urged their clergy to restore their chapel to Radegund, whom they believed had protected their crops “since time immemorial.”<sup>215</sup> Their feeling that the chapel's absence revoked Radegund's ability to prevent hailstorms shows how their communal identity and livelihoods were fundamentally linked to the memory of this medieval saint.

In the aftermath of the Revolution, conservative monarchists of the legitimist faction like Bishop Pie of Poitiers and the aristocratic diplomat Marie-Théodore de Bussière saw Radegund as a symbol for articulating their vision of France as a historically Catholic monarchy where the role of Catholicism and traditional Catholic rituals was central to public

---

<sup>212</sup> Sluhovsky, *Patroness of Paris*, 212.

<sup>213</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 448.

<sup>214</sup> Eschoyez, *Origines de l'abbaye royale de Sainte-Croix*, 28.

<sup>215</sup> Abbé Figarol to the archdeacon, May 1853, [http://aspetinf.chez.com/assoc/bull/bull\\_10\\_art/bull\\_10\\_art1.htm](http://aspetinf.chez.com/assoc/bull/bull_10_art/bull_10_art1.htm)

life. Thanks to the expanding national railway system that made travel easier and more cost-effective, pilgrimage to Radegund's tomb – and the *loci* of other new cults like the Sacred Heart in Montmartre and Our Lady of Lourdes – were undertaken with a new kind of fervor that was just as political as it was religious.

The trauma of the Franco-Prussian War prompted Republicans to reexamine France's history and French identity to the same degree as Catholics. Republican France's famed national muralist, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, selected the Radegund tradition to represent Poitiers' place in France's national history. However, his entirely desacralized and de-royalized interpretation of Radegund was very different from the way her identity was reimagined by monarchists, though just as romanticized. Puvis' "safe" version of Radegund bypassed the perceived corruption of the Ancien Régime with a return to the pure religious and intellectual origins of Late Antiquity that set France on its path to greatness.

If Puvis' Radegund was "safe," the Radegund of Poitier's statue coronation ceremony was decidedly "dangerous." Despite vocal republican censure, Mayor Léopold Thézard went against his own party to allow the ceremony, likely in recognition of Radegund's fundamental importance to Poitevin identity. Republican and Catholic news outlets took aim at each other in published censures, threats, accusations, and speculations. The battleground shifted from the newspapers to the streets when local devotees and visiting pilgrims broke through the gendarmes' restrictive cordons to defiantly follow the crowned statue in procession. The ensuing riot gave Catholics the opportunity to recast the event as a moment of Catholic triumph and heroism. Was this just a traditional display of religious fervor or a conscious political statement? All signs point towards the latter.

The grueling medieval spiritual trends Radegund had engaged in became more difficult for people to relate to within the context of post-Revolutionary approaches to Catholicism. This shift towards a less self-abnegating and more personal approach to devotion coincided with a turning point in how Radegund was textually and artistically interpreted. There was less emphasis on how one could aspire to be like Radegund – as in the traditional hagiographic approach of her sixth- through sixteenth-century biographers – and more effort to stretch her identity so that it more closely resonated with her modern audience. Beginning to some extent with the seventeenth-century *Lives of Radegund* that placed so much new emphasis on her opposition to heresy to make her more relevant to post-Protestant Reformation Catholics, this trend was scaled up in the orations of Bishop Pie. Despite Radegund's historical opposition to clerical intervention, Pie chose to emphasize Radegund's cooperation with the Church and her support of its clergy to promote his vision of a restored Bourbon monarchy harmoniously allied with the Church.

This move away from presenting Radegund strictly as a saintly exemplar reached a crescendo in the civilization versus barbarism narrative. De Bussi re first recast her as the Church's instrument of civilization to justify the return to a traditional Catholic-dominated society and to demonstrate the superiority of the Catholic way of life over republican secularism. Puvis de Chavannes similarly chose to isolate Radegund's commitment to education from her more problematic religious and royal qualities. His mural depicted her as the great protector of France's cultural arts from an (implicitly non-French) barbarism in a clear reference to the recent Prussian invasion of France. As the titular saint of Augouard's Congo mission, Radegund came to symbolize the colonial *mission civilisatrice* and to justify France's project of civilizing "barbarian" lands. When Bishop Pie first referred to Radegund

as “mother of the fatherland,” he also reshaped her into a more modern “negotiator” who helped her country avoid the ravages of war that France had just suffered at the hands of the Prussians. Similarly, Radegund’s somewhat forgotten role as a medical caregiver was dusted off and deployed to recruit nurses during World War I in *Le Semeur Algerien*. Her self-abnegating care of the poor and lepers, which characterized Radegund’s expression of Christian piety, was reimagined as the patriotically motivated duties of a combat nurse. And finally, this historically childless queen who abandoned her still-living husband for the convent became patron of the lay Confraternity of Christian Mothers in Cour-sur-Loire. Only by associating her with the Virgin Mary could they make her better reflect their own identities as mothers. In this way, they were able to successfully conform Radegund to the new national ideal of motherhood as defined by counter-revolutionary Catholic morality. To some degree, all of Radegund’s post-Revolutionary identities – the royalist, the republican, and the colonial – shaped and were shaped by the context of colonial expansion.

In the epilogue and concluding chapter that follow, we will see the broader implications of Radegund’s fourteen-hundred-year story. After briefly retracing the highlights from the long trajectory of her ever-changing cult, I explore how this early medieval saint’s popularity has endured into the twenty-first century. Radegund is still enthusiastically venerated today with feast day celebrations and pilgrimages at her cult sites all over France. But her predominant characterization is now as an object of tourism. We can see this as a continuation of the republican interest in secularizing Radegund into an object of French patrimony, detracting from her traditional medieval role as a saintly exemplar whom devotees sought to imitate. But even in this form, we can see that Radegund continues to

exist as an important part of communal identity, both in Poitiers and in the many small communities all over France who still remember her.

## Epilogue

### Radegund Today

The power that Radegund has exercised over the European imagination from the sixth century through the twenty-first is remarkable. But how does a medieval saint's identity adapt to a decidedly secular society, when the vast majority of people are no longer believers?<sup>1</sup> The answer is, as a tourist destination and as a crucial component of Poitiers' "brand." According to its calendar of events, the Poitiers Office de Tourisme offers a walking tour on March 19, 2022 at three o'clock in the afternoon called "Poitiers: In the Footsteps of Radegund." The description reads,

Founder of the first female monastery of Gaul, Radegund, once queen of the Franks, then nun, is a major figure (*personnage majeur*) in Poitiers. Rediscover her exceptional history, from the Church of Sainte-Radegonde to the Musée Sainte-Croix.<sup>2</sup>

Since the nuns of Sainte-Croix relocated to Saint-Benoît 6 kilometers away, the church of Sainte-Radegonde, the municipal museum, and the tourist office are now the keepers of her memory in Poitiers. Radegund is still the patroness of Poitiers, and pilgrims – or more often, tourists – are still drawn to her tomb. Today, just as in the Middle Ages, Poitevin identity is derived from its history. Knowledge of Radegund's role as a *personnage majeur* in that history is clearly still an important part of Poitiers' civic identity, though her sainthood is rarely mentioned in civic publications. Radegund's historical association with Poitiers shapes

---

<sup>1</sup> As reported on the official website of the European Union. The question asked was "Do you consider yourself to be...?" 40% of people surveyed responded they do not identify with any religion, while 41% identified as Catholics. "Discrimination in the European Union," *Special Eurobarometer 493 Report*, European Union: European Commission, October 2019, pages 229-230. Retrieved May 4, 2022, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2251>

<sup>2</sup> Visit Poitiers (website), Office de Tourisme de Grand Poitiers, du 26/02/2022 au 31/03/2022, <https://visitpoitiers.fr/evenement/visites-guidees-de-poitiers/>

the way its citizens conceive of their community and communicate their history to tourists, that is, to the outside world. Some highlights include the free children’s coloring book featuring a cartoon Radegund available at the Poitiers Tourist Office and the city’s tourism app, *Portées disparues*.<sup>3</sup> This free smartphone app, advertised as “a great treasure hunt in search of the famous women of Poitiers: it’s up to you to conduct the investigation,” guides visitors on an interactive walking tour of the city and introduces them to Radegund, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Joan of Arc, and others.<sup>4</sup>

The Département de la Vienne, in which Poitiers is situated, is the heart of the Nouvelle-Aquitaine *région*. As the second most visited region in France, Nouvelle-Aquitaine draws around 27 million tourists annually. As of 2015, the tourism generated by Nouvelle-Aquitaine accounted for 12.3 billion euros, or 8.5% of the entire French tourism industry. The tourism sector provides more than one-hundred thousand jobs, making it one of the most important economic considerations of the Département. But tourism is more than just money – it is also about defining and expressing self-identity. The *Plan de développement touristique 2018-2021* for the Département de la Vienne states that, “in order to attract tourists, both French and foreign, the territories are engaged in a real battle of regional brands.”<sup>5</sup> The “Poitou brand” (*la marque Poitou*) established in 2017, has been a particularly influential marketing tool that has helped “strengthen the attractiveness of the territories within the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region.”<sup>6</sup> From gastronomy to history, the “Poitou brand” is defined by its regional assets, which for Poitiers in particular, includes about twice as many

---

<sup>3</sup> “Livret de coloriage et de jeux pour les 3-6 ans et 7-9 ans,” Office de Tourisme de Grand Poitiers (website), downloaded January 2020, <http://www.ot-poitiers.fr/brochures.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> “Jeu interactif pour découvrir Poitiers : Portées disparues,” Office de Tourisme de Grand Poitiers (website), <http://www.ot-poitiers.fr/accueil/decouvrir/sitesetmonuments/porteesdisparues.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> Le Département de la Vienne, *Plan de développement touristique 2018-2021*, 14, <https://www.lavienne86.fr/fileadmin/medias/Publications/Plan-de-developpement-touristique-2018-2021.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Le Département de la Vienne, *Plan de développement touristique*, 15.

historical monuments than any other city in the Département.<sup>7</sup> Aside from its tourism office, one of the most central vehicles for showcasing the “Poitou brand” is the metropolitan museum. The Musée Sainte-Croix, built on the site of the ruined Abbey of Sainte-Croix in 1974, offers a robust collection of art and artifacts from Prehistory through the twentieth century. This is where Poitiers’ long and complex history is distilled into carefully arranged exhibits and interpreted to a mixed audience of local, national, and international visitors. Like most small-scale French civic museums, their collection has a special focus on local patrimony, including several items owned by Radegund, such as her wooden stool and a cross medallion.

Although Radegund’s exhibit at the Musée Sainte-Croix might just be one of many, her memory nonetheless exerts considerable influence over the institution. The museum’s emblem is the red silhouette of a dragon, which pays homage to one of their most prized acquisitions: La Grand'Goule. In 1677, the abbey of Sainte-Croix commissioned a wooden dragon effigy about a meter long from the Poitevin cabinetmaker, Jean Gargot. This dragon, called La Grand'Goule, was then carried in procession by the nuns of Sainte-Croix and the canons of Sainte-Radegonde during the week of Rogations. According to Louis de La Liborlière's 1846 "Notice sur la Grand'Gueule" in *Vieux souvenirs du Poitiers d'avant 1789*, women would rub their rosaries against the scales and children would throw cakes called casse-museaux at the dragon when it passed by, crying, "Boune sainte vermine, priez pour nous!"<sup>8</sup> This wooden dragon effigy may have been inspired by a dragon design on one of the banners of Sainte-Croix mentioned as early as 1466.<sup>9</sup> However, by the time that the

---

<sup>7</sup> Le Département de la Vienne, *Plan de développement touristique*, 26.

<sup>8</sup> Bellin de La Liborlière, *Vieux souvenirs du Poitiers d'avant 1789 ; suivis de notices spéciales sur la Grand'Gueule, et l'ancienne Université de Poitiers* (Poitiers: Brissaud, 1983), 196.

<sup>9</sup> Briand, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, 395.



Grand'Goule was constructed, the dragon was remembered as a great menace to the city of Poitiers who would lie in wait for unsuspecting nuns in the wine cellars of Sainte-Croix. Radegund intervened, however, and her fervent prayers defeated the dragon who fell dead at her feet. La Liborlière offers the suggestion that the Grand'Goule could have been a symbolic allegory of idolatry or heresy which was carried before a cross during the procession to emphasize the triumph of Catholicism.<sup>10</sup> At the Musée Sainte-Croix gift shop, tourists can buy cardboard dragon models, coffee mugs, notebooks, and tote bags featuring the Grand'Goule to remember their visit to the site of Radegund's abbey.<sup>11</sup> For the more adventurous, the discothèque La Grand'Goule (est. 1965) offers drinks and music in a rather dungeon-like atmosphere directly across the plaza from the church of Sainte-Radegonde.

On a more spiritual note, Radegund's feast days are still celebrated at her church. The program for the 2021 August 13<sup>th</sup> celebration in Poitiers, posted on the Diocese website, describes Radegund as "patronne de Poitiers et patronne secondaire de la France."<sup>12</sup> Following a special opening of her cell, there was a lecture at the church of Sainte-Radegonde by Père Yves-Marie Blanchard about her acquisition of the relic of the True Cross and a presentation by Antoine Marot, an international banking and finance professional, who recently published a popular biography of Radegund. A Gregorian choir group sang Fortunatus' hymn, "Vexilla regis," and after mass there was a solemn procession

---

<sup>10</sup> La Liborlière, *Vieux souvenirs du Poitiers d'avant 1789*, 198. This would have occurred as part of the great religious fervor, which often manifested as explicitly anti-Protestant, during the seventeenth-century post-Reformation Catholic revival.

<sup>11</sup> La Boutique de Musée Sainte-Croix, Ville de Poitiers (website), [https://www.poitiers.fr/c\\_231\\_924\\_La\\_boutique\\_en\\_ligne.html](https://www.poitiers.fr/c_231_924_La_boutique_en_ligne.html)

<sup>12</sup> Solennité de sainte Radegonde, Actualités diocésaines, Le diocèse de Poitiers (website), <https://www.poitiers.catholique.fr/?s=radegonde>

to Radegund's tomb.<sup>13</sup> Aside from a few details, this itinerary from 2021 might have been the same as it was in 1221.

Radegund's annual feast day celebrations are also promoted online by numerous civic and diocesan organizations outside of Poitiers. While the celebration in Poitiers revolves around her tomb and the relic of the True Cross (the locus of Radegund's power there) the feast day itineraries at her cult sites all over France are tailored to the unique features that define each community's memory of Radegund. For example, Courant's city website advertises its yearly pilgrimage to the Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde where three fountains were miraculously produced by Radegund as she passed by during her flight from Clothar: one cures gout, one cures diseases of the eye, and the third was for the tired and thirsty Radegund to drink from.<sup>14</sup>

The Miracle of the Oats is still celebrated annually in February at the Chapelle Sainte Radegonde in la Génétouze. In 2017, the *Journal du Pays Yonnais* published an article by Nicolas Pipelier describing the event. Complete with “banners, relics, and songs dedicated to the holy queen,” the town celebration ended with a communal picnic. The article includes an interview with Marie-Luce Cousseau, “the guardian of the chapel and of the memory of Saint Radegund.” Pipelier writes that “the story between Marie-Luce Cousseau and Radegund dates back thirty years, from the time when the parishioner took her children to play in the enclosure of the chapel of Genetouze.” Since then Madame Cousseau has “devoured all the

---

<sup>13</sup> “Fête de Ste Radegonde, patronne de Poitiers,” Le diocèse de Poitiers (website), <https://www.poitiers.catholique.fr/accueil/les-paroisses/paroisse-trinite-poitiers/358081-fete-de-sainte-radegonde-patronne-de-poitiers/>

<sup>14</sup> In spiritual emulation of the apocryphal story of the spring that arose during Christ's Flight to Egypt. Christophe Lerolle, “Courant, Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde,” *Eglises-en-Charent-Maritime*, Last modified November 26, 2020, [http://ch.lerolle.free.fr/eglises17/courant\\_chapelle\\_sainte-radegonde.php](http://ch.lerolle.free.fr/eglises17/courant_chapelle_sainte-radegonde.php)

books ever written about her” so that her individual relationship to Radegund’s memory shapes how she organizes her community’s feast day celebrations.<sup>15</sup>

The legend of the “Étoiles de Sainte Radegonde” (the Stars of Saint Radegund), which developed at the village of Sainte-Radegonde-des-Pommiers in Nouvelle Aquitaine, is the most unusual tradition associated with our queen-saint. According to the village homepage, which advertises the legend as part of their local history and as a tourism opportunity,

When Radegund obtained permission to leave her husband, king Clothar, in 555, she naturally traveled to the territory that she had held in her possession since 550, by virtue of a gift the king had made her. But seized with regret, Clothar wanted to take his wife back and sent his soldiers to pursue her... That’s what historians say. And *this* is what we are told here: One evening, as Radegund found herself in her lands near Thouars and Clothar’s soldiers were going to stop her, the queen, covered by her mantle edged with ermine and decorated with stars, implored God to save her. It was then that the blossoming apple trees bent down their branches to hide her from the eyes of her pursuers and the fugitive passed the night in the apple-tree field.<sup>16</sup> The soldiers were gone, but Radegund had lost her mantle. It is since that day that the stars from her mantle have risen to the surface of the “field of stars,” testimony to the miracle. Here at Sainte-Radegonde-des-Pommiers, this is *not* a legend... Not a single inhabitant of the village will tell you different.<sup>17</sup>

The so-called “stars” from Radegund’s mantle that cover the ground as “testimony to the miracle” are, in fact, fossilized crinoids (a marine animal). The fossils can be found at the “champ des étoiles” (field of stars), which is located on the southern edge of Sainte-Radegonde-des-Pommiers. A 2014 article from *La Nouvelle République* by Nolwenn Pareige includes an interview with Andrée Giret, deputy mayor of the town, who, “In her spare time

---

<sup>15</sup> Nicolas Pipelier, “La Genétouze. Sainte-Radegonde et le miracle des Avoines,” *Le Journal de Pays de la Loire* August 19, 2017. [https://actu.fr/pays-de-la-loire/genetouze\\_85098/la-genetouze-sainte-radegonde-le-miracle-avoines\\_11535319.html](https://actu.fr/pays-de-la-loire/genetouze_85098/la-genetouze-sainte-radegonde-le-miracle-avoines_11535319.html)

<sup>16</sup> Much like Radegund’s miraculous springs, the bending fruit tree branches here is also a reference to the apocryphal story of Christ’s Flight to Egypt.

<sup>17</sup> “La légende des champs des étoiles,” Site officiel de la commune de Sainte-Radegonde-des-Pommiers (website), [http://www.ville-sainte-radegonde.fr/crbst\\_9.html](http://www.ville-sainte-radegonde.fr/crbst_9.html)

is happy to serve as a guide to the curious who question her over the row of geraniums on her property, located at the entrance to the old town.” Madame Giret has a deep reverence for her village’s *étoiles* which draw curious treasure-seekers with rakes and chisels. But as Pareige writes, “To make the earth speak, Andrée simply recommends caressing it with your fingertips.” Andrée demonstrates her technique for the visiting reporter, saying, “You can look ahead for ten minutes and see nothing. And then suddenly, they appear to the eye, as if miraculously. They were there. It’s as if they were waiting for us.”<sup>18</sup> The deputy mayor clearly has a flair for the dramatic, likely hoping that this regional newspaper for the Centre-Ouest will entice tourists to the tiny village in search of Saint Radegund’s stars.

The miracle of the “champ des étoiles” has also inspired pilgrimages to the site by devotees of Radegund. As recently as August 2017 on Radegund’s feast day, a group of pilgrims hiking the Camino de Santiago de Compostella, considered the third most popular pilgrimage of the Western Church, documented the day they spent in devotion to Radegund. After mass at the church of Sainte-Radegonde, the group was guided to the “champ des étoiles” where the legend was recited and the group collected the star-shaped fossils.<sup>19</sup> Due to the lack of historical sources, this alternative version of the Miracle of the Oats cannot be traced back beyond this century, which is why it was not included in Chapter 4. The name of the village, “Saint Radegund of the Apple Trees,” alludes to its association with apple production and it is interesting to note how the area’s agricultural features have reshaped this

---

<sup>18</sup> Nolwenn Pareige, “On remue ciel et terre pour les étoiles de Sainte-Radegonde,” *La Nouvelle République*, August 15, 2014, <https://www.lanouvellerepublique.fr/deux-sevres/commune/sainte-radegonde/on-remue-ciel-et-terre-pour-les-etoiles-de-sainte-radegonde>

<sup>19</sup> Champs des étoiles à Ste Radegonde, Diocèse Orthodoxe de Saintes et Thouars, Tours, et Angers (website), August 15, 2017, <http://orthodoxe-ouest.eklablog.fr/champs-des-etoiles-a-ste-radegonde-a131031008>

tradition so that it is no longer stalks of oats, but blossoming apple branches, that miraculously hide Radegund from her pursuers.

The 1400-year trajectory of the development of Radegund's cult has culminated in a saint who is venerated at both the national and local levels. As "Mère de la Patrie," Radegund saved all of France from English occupation in 1450 just as she protected them during the Franco-Prussian war in 1871 and again in 1921 when the French government made her feast day a national holiday in fulfillment of a vow made during the First World War.<sup>20</sup> In this same year, the Sacré Congrégation des Rites authorized for her feast day to be celebrated "in all the dioceses of France and French colonies, as the secondary patron of the French nation, annually on the thirteenth of August."<sup>21</sup> Poitiers is the home of Radegund's physical remains but fountains, caves, stones, and fields mark the sites of her memory in villages throughout the French countryside where each community preserves their own unique traditions and practices. As Chapter 4 showed, there are almost countless examples of local Radegund traditions that developed according to the special ways different communities have remembered and interpreted Radegund's presence and intercessory powers. And this association with Radegund, expressed today through online publicized feast-day celebrations, historical sites with interpretive signage, parish fundraising events (such as the 2019 assembly of Les Amis de Sainte Radegonde de Marconnay), and other landmarks, such as Radegund fountains and walking paths, are often central to the local branding efforts and

---

<sup>20</sup> Aigrain, *Sainte Radegonde*, 73.

<sup>21</sup> SéP 5 Poitiers Sainte-Radegonde, C 2-9 boîte 1, dossier 1 – Fêtes de sainte Radegonde, "Réponse positive de Rome à la demande des évêques de France pour que la fête patronale de sainte Radegonde s'étende à tous les diocèses de France, le treize août de chaque année, 1921," *Catalogue de Diocèse Poitiers Archives historiques*; See also an excerpt of the original request published in *Bulletin religieux de l'archidiocèse de Rouen Eglise catholique*, Diocèse (Rouen), no.8, 25 (February 1922) : 173 ; See also the calendar of the *Almanach catholique français 1923* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1923), which lists Radegund as "reine; autre patronne secondaire de la France."

tourism industries of the many French cities who count Radegund as a *personnage majeur* in their histories. These modern instances of encounters with Radegund show that her legacy is *still* integrated into the communal identity not just of Poitevins, but of people throughout France.

## Conclusion

### **Rewriting History, Hagiography, and the Myth of the French Nation**

Who was Saint Radegund, this princess of Thuringia...What courage was hers who found the strength to leave her brutal and bloodthirsty husband and to declare her religious consecration before Bishop Saint Medard? “Let wives be subject to their husbands as to the Lord Jesus. For the wife, the husband is the head, just as for the Church, Christ is the head, he who is the Savior of his body.” If I quote these words from the letter to the Ephesians, they are received as scandalous, as unheard of, by most of our contemporaries. It is not only because Radegund has always sought to live these words with regard to the husband who was imposed on her, while Clothar, for his part, completely disregarded them with regard to his wife: it is also because they give us an answer to the mystery of Radegund's holiness. Saint Radegund, in fact, submitted herself all her life to the only Spouse of the Church, who is Christ. It is important to specify that "to submit", in the language of Saint Paul, does not mean to become a slave, but simply handing over one's trust to another. And it is precisely because her husband Clothar was not trustworthy that Radegund, making use of the spiritual freedom given to us in Christ, turned to the one Spouse, of whom the spouses of this world are the reflection only insofar as they reveal themselves to Him: "You men, follow Saint Paul, love your wife after the example of Christ: he loved the Church, he gave himself up for her." The challenge of our life is therefore to choose well to whom we are going to submit, that is to say, I repeat, in whom we are going to place our trust.<sup>1</sup>

It seems fitting to conclude this study on the same note with which it began: the words of a bishop defending Radegund's flight from Clothar. Bishop Jean-Pierre Batut of Blois delivered this homily to a group of pilgrims at the celebration of Radegund's feast day in August 2021 at Cour-sur-Loire – the birthplace of the Confrérie des Mères Chrétiennes de Sainte Radegonde. Batut returns to the issue that troubled Radegund's first biographer, which was the central theme of Chapter 1. After more than fourteen centuries, this holy woman's abandonment of her husband still seems to require explanation. Channeling the spirit of

---

<sup>1</sup> Monseigneur Jean-Pierre Batut, “Homélie Donnée 22 août 2021 - Pèlerinage à sainte Radegonde à Cour-sur-Loire,” Diocèse de Blois (website), <https://www.catholique-blois.net/eveque/homelies/homelie-pour-la-sainte-radegonde-2021>

Fortunatus, whose strategic portrayal of Radegund's aversion to her marriage justified her escape, Batut similarly highlights the importance of choice with regard to Radegund's marriage – her choice to be a *sponsa Christi*. For Batut, “the answer to the mystery of Radegund's holiness” is her success as a wife. Although Clothar was “imposed” on her and he proved “not trustworthy,” that is, not worthy of her submission, Radegund nonetheless did her part to live out Paul's dictum for wives, both towards Clothar and towards Christ. And so, like many authors before him who have engaged in rewriting Radegund, Batut sees Radegund as a model wife and he recognizes this identity as a foundational component of her sanctity.

Each chapter in this dissertation has explored how Radegund's *vita* has been rewritten again and again to promote specific ideas about women's gendered spirituality. In each case, the particular version of Radegund was embroidered to reflect the interests of author and audience. My aim has not been to uncover any revelations that indicate a linear trajectory of improvement for women's roles as we progress towards modernity, nor to find evidence of explicitly positive or negative changes in status for women. Rather, using Radegund's cult as a case study has demonstrated *how* the cult of the saints operates as a social construction subject both to prevailing and contested gender ideals, as well as limitations imposed by hagiographical *topoi* and perceived “tradition.” The many Radegunds that appear over the course of this study – the virgin, the wife, the mother, the reformer, the passive, the courtly, the nurse, the civilizer, the new Helena or Martha – can all be interpreted as responses to contemporary events, shifting spiritual trends, and changing attitudes towards women's role in society or the Church.



What patterns that do emerge are subtle and cannot be indiscriminately applied to all categories of “woman” irrespective of geographical or social location. Comparisons of Radegund’s *vitae* composed in France from the sixteenth through twentieth centuries with her medieval lives suggest an increasingly widening gap between the early medieval queen-saint model, where social status was understood as an obstacle to sanctity for the wealthy, and early modern expectations for pious elite women. As Radegund became useful in political contexts as a dynastic link to the Merovingians, her value shifted from ideal monastic leader, whose holiness was rooted in her *contemptus mundi*, to ideal queen, who exemplified the pinnacle of Christian virtue while still inhabiting the secular world.

With this shift came a “softening” of the extreme asceticism celebrated by her sixth and twelfth-century hagiographers. Beginning in the fifteenth century, a desire to claim Radegund as a holy ancestor to legitimize secular royal power and to show her legacy reflected in the behavior of contemporary pious elite and royal women resulted in a Radegund whose more moderate and domestic virtues could be imitated at court without taking the veil. The ecclesiastical perspective of Radegund’s medieval biographers, who portrayed her sexual relationship with Clothar in such a convoluted way, led to later confusion about her virginity, as we saw in several English calendars and the Early Modern vernacular *lives* of Jean Bouchet, Henry Bradshaw, Etienne Moquot, and Joseph Dumonteil. Nonetheless Radegund’s later *Lives* show a more or less steady increase in the compatibility of sainthood and marriage. As this saint was recreated in mass-produced printed texts for wider audiences by a mix of ecclesiastical and lay authors, Radegund came to resemble more so the model of the virtuous Christian housewife over the early medieval *virago*. As I argued in Chapter 6, the Tridentine reforms accounted for a large part of these changes. Marriage

was endorsed by reformers in the sixteenth century as an explicitly legitimate path to salvation as a way to deter women from the problematic “third order” – ironically the same type of unregulated hybrid religious lifestyle that Radegund embraced for years before founding Sainte-Croix. The ascendancy of charity over penitence as the dominant spiritual mode for women also contributed to an Early Modern Radegund whose abstinence and self-mortification were minimized in favor of more relatable attributes in texts that targeted charitable laywomen. Furthermore, the national scope of Radegund’s cult in the nineteenth century accelerated the trend (that began with Charles VII’s national feast day) of acknowledging Radegund as a saint for all of France, not just Poitevins, aristocrats, and nuns. In this capacity, we see her cult eventually responding to the valorization of motherhood as a patriotic duty during the nineteenth-century population crisis and the tensions over laywomen entering the nursing profession at the turn of the twentieth century.

Radegund’s political value in the development of French national identity – whether dynastic or republican – has been a major theme in the history of her cult from the Middle Ages to the modern era. And I would argue that the alliance between Radegund and the ruling families of France is a crucial and relatively unexplored component of her cult’s longevity with broader implications. It is well established that the Capetians, the Valois, and the Bourbons undertook historiographical campaigns to legitimize their dynasties. There was nothing new in this strategy for rulers of Frankish/French territories which dated back at least to the Carolingians in the ninth century who sought to link their dynastic line to the Merovingian kings.<sup>2</sup> But while a robust scholarship exists concerning the significant role

---

<sup>2</sup> Agnès Graceffa, "Writing the History of Merovingian Gaul: An Historiographical Survey," *The Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World*, eds. Bonnie Effros and Isabel Moreira (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 55; Magali Coumert, *Origines des peuples : les récits du Haut Moyen Âge occidental (550-850)*

Merovingian history has played in the development of French (and German) national consciousness from the medieval to the modern period, far less scholarly attention is devoted to how the cult of the saints fits into French nationalistic historiography.

The case of Radegund has demonstrated the considerable politico-religious value of hagiography and the cult of the saints in defining “French” national identity, especially during periods of instability. Radegund’s foundations in Poitiers had always benefited from royal protections and privileges, but it wasn’t until the twelfth century when Norman elites sought to establish themselves as legitimate rulers abroad in England and Sicily that Radegund, as one of the first sainted Merovingian queens, was used to perpetuate the dynastic myth connecting the present to the past and preserving the historical continuity of ruling power. By the fifteenth century, Radegund was acknowledged as the patroness of the House of Valois. Jean de Berry’s successful *translatio* of her relic to his Sainte-Chapelle in Bourges created a physical link between the Merovingians and the Valois, even as her inclusion in his missal (BnF Latin 8886) suggested a spiritual link. The depiction of Radegund in BnF Latin 8886 enveloped in gold fleur-de-lis from head to toe identified her as a holy ancestor, part of the *familia* of the French kings. Charles VII continued what his uncle started. By proclaiming her divine intervention in recovering Cherbourg from the English, he established her as the patroness of all France, not just Poitiers, and cast his reign in the light of the sainted Merovingian queen’s blessing. Jean Bouchet’s *Life of Radegund* for Charles VIII at the turn of the sixteenth century situated Radegund firmly within the history of France and French kingship, reinforcing the unbroken lineage connecting their reigns. A Thuringian by birth, Radegund was now decidedly a “French” queen. As the Wars of Religion in the

---

(Paris: Institut d’études augustiniennes, 2007), pp. 267–379 ; Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

sixteenth century threatened to derail the reigning monarch and the dominance of Catholicism in public life, Radegund was deployed more aggressively as the embodiment of French, royal, Catholic tradition. Her seventeenth-century Jesuit hagiographers used her *vita* as a vehicle to characterize the destruction of Catholic institutions and objects as synonymous with an assault on the monarchy. Radegund's seventeenth-century cult was put in the service of claiming France as an inherently Catholic nation, rightfully governed by a monarch whose lineage could be traced back to Clovis.<sup>3</sup> The culture wars of the nineteenth century, together with the influence of France's colonial project, escalated Radegund's deployment in French identity politics as both royalists and republicans saw Radegund as a valuable symbol to express their worldviews, though for very different reasons. Today, Radegund has emerged as a far less contentious object of French patrimony – a tourist destination and part of the “Poitou brand.” Though despite this rather bureaucratic religious neutrality, she has not been entirely forgotten by French Catholics who still seek miracles at her tomb and come as pilgrims to her shrines all over France.

The French Revolution and its legacy triggered a significant turning point in approaches to early medieval historiography in the nineteenth century, which was politically charged to a higher degree than before the Revolution. Considering the political climate, it is unsurprising that the central contention among scholars of French history was based on “the assumption that the royal lineage could represent and lend unity to the nation's history.”<sup>4</sup>

Augustin Thierry, the famed liberal historian and author of *Récits des temps mérovingiens*

---

<sup>3</sup> The popularity of the Merovingians was particularly high in the seventeenth century, as evidenced by the attempt to canonize Clovis during the reign of Louis XIII. The discovery of the tomb of the Frankish king Childeric in 1653 at Tournai bolstered this interest even further. The golden bee ornaments that were buried with Childeric and given to the reigning monarch, Louis XIV, soon became royal emblems. Graceffa, “Writing the History of Merovingian Gaul,” 56.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew D'Auria, *The Shaping of French National Identity: Narrating the Nation's Past, 1715–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 311.

(1840), argued that “Merovingian history symbolized the illegal origin story of the monarchy and its alliance with the Catholic Church.”<sup>5</sup> By condemning Clovis’ reign as a coup, Thierry “thus condemned the Merovingian dynasty, as well as its successors, as illegitimate and illegal.”<sup>6</sup> The aristocratic diplomat and author of the 1849 *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, Marie-Théodore de Bussière, openly condemned Thierry’s work and accused him of altering historical details to suit his liberal political agenda,

M. Thierry, misunderstanding the great role that Christianity played at the dawn of the Middle Ages, and discovering at the beginning of our history, no other traces of civilization than the last vestiges of that of the ancient world, wishes to demonstrate that the fundamental principle of our social state is to be found in the customs and traditions of the Gallo-Romans [as opposed to the Franks]... The author of whom we are speaking arranges the events and the characters, and alters the facts, without perhaps realizing it, in order to make them agree with the idea that he cherishes.<sup>7</sup>

At the heart of this historiographical disagreement, we can see the larger issue of nineteenth-century French identity politics playing out that began with Abbé Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès’ famous discourse, *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-État? (What is the Third Estate?)*, which he delivered in 1789. If the ruling class sought to claim Frankish identity, Sieyès suggested they be “repatriated to the Franconian forests” from whence they came since they claimed their right to rule on the basis of having conquered the original inhabitants of Gaul.<sup>8</sup> As anti-royalist liberal historians, such as Thierry, would go on to argue, the real French nation was composed of conquered Gallo-Roman descendants, while the aristocrats who traced their lineage to the Franks were illegitimate usurpers, foreigners, and barbarians.

---

<sup>5</sup> Graceffa, "Writing the History of Merovingian Gaul," 58.

<sup>6</sup> Graceffa, "Writing the History of Merovingian Gaul," 58.

<sup>7</sup> de Bussière, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, iix.

<sup>8</sup> Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, “Chapter 2. What Has the Third Estate Been Until Now? Nothing,” *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-État?*

But as de Bussi re’s critique of Thierry suggests, hagiography plays an equally important role as historiography in this debate over French identity. We can see this in the way he takes Thierry to task on his interpretation of Radegund,

He [Thierry] does not see in our Saint [Radegund] Faith personified, the successor and daughter-in-law of Saint Clothilde, in a word, the strong woman of the Gospel entrusted with a great providential mission — first on the throne, then in the cloister. Hence this figure of fantasy which appears in the *r cits des m rovingiens* under the name of Radegund. Our saint, a model so pure, so radiant, and so composed, is replaced there by a being who clings much more to earth than to heaven, and who carries worldly tastes to the inner sanctum of the cloister. She is represented to us as a *grande dame* of the ancient world, as a blue-stockinged Roman, shrewd, witty with an ascetic bent, by turns austere and worldly, reclusive and loquacious, stern, and sensible to the delicacies of good food and to the most futile *jeux d’esprit*. In his preoccupation, the historian even makes the convent of Sainte-Croix, built by the queen, an elegant villa worthy of serving as a retreat for Horace and Maecenas, and where pleasures mingle in a bizarre way with the exercises of the cenobitic life.<sup>9</sup>

Thierry’s characterization of Radegund is the textual equivalent of Puvis de Chavannes’ republican mural for Poitiers’ H tel de Ville. While both Thierry and de Bussi re claim Radegund as a source of civilization in a barbarian world, de Bussi re’s major contention with Thierry’s history is that it subverts both the dynastic myth of French kingship and the long tradition of situating the history of France within a narrative that positions the newly arrived “Germanic” Franks and the Catholic Church, with the saints as its instrument, as the originators of French civilization. Both de Bussi re and Thierry then are guilty of the sin of “arranging the events and characters” of history to “agree with the idea that he cherishes.” And that history is one in which saints stand right alongside kings in the contested understanding of the past that shapes the collective identity/ies of the French nation.

---

<sup>9</sup> de Bussierre, *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde*, ix.

The abundant media coverage of the controversy surrounding the national celebration of the anniversary of Clovis' baptism in 1996 demonstrates the enduring significance of the cult of the saints in defining "Frenchness." Like Radegund, her father-in-law was never formally canonized. Attempts were made during the medieval and early modern periods, with the most recent campaign led by the Jesuits in the seventeenth century.<sup>10</sup> Despite a lack of official (papal) recognition, Clovis has nonetheless been publicly venerated as a saint for centuries. The centers of his cult include Reims Cathedral, Saint-Remi, the Benedictine Abbey of Saint-Denis, the Abbey of Saint Geneviève in Paris, and various locations in the south of France.<sup>11</sup> When the *Comité pour la commémoration des origines : de la Gaule à la France* was convened to oversee the national commemorations of the 1500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the baptism of Clovis and the 1600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Martin of Tours, their blatantly religious agenda and exclusively conservative membership led to public outcry from a largely (and legally, since 1905) secular French nation. Much like the Radegund statue coronation debacle surrounding the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death in 1887, newspapers again served as the central battleground nine months in advance of the proposed ceremony.<sup>12</sup> *Le Monde*, in particular, played a chief role in consolidating the major contentions and providing a platform that brought voices from all sides of the debate to public attention. Thierry Meyssan, head of the Voltaire Network, pointed out that Pope John

---

<sup>10</sup> Chantal Grell, "Le baptême de Clovis aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles," *Versalia : revue de la Société des amis de Versailles* 1, no. 1 (1998): 48–59

<sup>11</sup> Philippe Jansen, "La part du Midi dans la naissance de la nation française: Beaune (Colette), Naissance de la Nation France, Paris, Gallimard, Bibliothèque des Histoires, 1985," *Annales du Midi* 99, no. 177 (1987): 138–140; Anne Lombard-Jourdan, "L'invention du "roi fondateur" à Paris au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle : de l'obligation morale au thème sculptural," *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* (1997): 485-542; Amy Goodrich Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past: Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Susan J. Terrio, "Crucible of the Millennium?: The Clovis Affair in Contemporary France," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, No. 3 (July, 1999), 439.

Paul II's decision to celebrate Clovis' baptism "not on the day of its anniversary [December 25] but on the anniversary of the proclamation of the First Republic [September 21, 1792]," suggested a profoundly "counter-revolutionary" agenda.<sup>13</sup> The Grand Master of France's largest Masonic Lodge, Jacques Lafouge, called the commemoration "an all-out attack on republican secular values."<sup>14</sup>

Were they exaggerating? Perhaps not. That year, Clovis was appropriated by Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the extreme right Front National (FN) party, "as a symbol of the Christian origins and collective soul of "true" France."<sup>15</sup> The FN established *Le Comité Clovis* as their own vehicle to promote the anniversary celebration and commissioned the FR theorist, Jean-Marc Brissaud, to present their perspectives in his 1996 book, *Clovis, roy des Francs : l'album du XVe centenaire*.<sup>16</sup> Le Pen wrote the preface, in which he hailed Clovis as a founder of the nation who "dwells in the deepest heart of the people, in this collective unconscious which alone gives it its unity and its identity."<sup>17</sup> For Le Pen, Christianity is "the germ of the extraordinary destiny that was the history of the West." Thanks to Clovis, he argues, Christianity has united Europeans for centuries in their fight against Islam, which even now, along with *Eurocrates* and *mondialistes*, threatens to irradicate French culture.<sup>18</sup> Commemoration of the past, whether it takes the form of the erection of a statue, the recreation of a historical event, the establishment of a holiday or anniversary celebration, is to claim that person or event as a valuable and definitive part of communal identity. And this

---

<sup>13</sup> *Le Monde*, September 10, 1996.

<sup>14</sup> *Le Monde*, June 25, 1996.

<sup>15</sup> Terrio, "Crucible of the Millennium?", 445.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Davies, "The Front National and Catholicism: from intégrisme to Joan of Arc and Clovis," *Religion Compass* 4, no.9 (2010): 584.

<sup>17</sup> Jean-Marie Le Pen, "Preface," *Clovis, roy des Francs : l'album du XVe centenaire*, by Jean-Marc Brissaud, (Éditions nationales, Saint-Cloud, 1996), 5.

<sup>18</sup> Le Pen, "Preface," 5-7.



begs the question of *whose* past is being commemorated? Who is included or excluded in that past? And who gets to decide? Meyssan of the Voltaire Network answered this question succinctly in his response to the Clovis commemoration for *Le Monde*, "The message is clear: To be French, one has to be white and Christian."<sup>19</sup> Republican fears in 1996 were probably just as relevant as they were in 1887 at Radegund's statue coronation, especially considering the added racist and xenophobic implications of the meanings Le Pen attributed to Clovis as the "soul" of France.

Even more recently, on June 8, 2021, President Emmanuel Macron was slapped in the face by a man who shouted, "Montjoie Saint Denis! A bas la Macronie!" (*Down with Macronism!*). Shortly after the incident was announced, MP Eric Coquerel came forward saying that the same phrase was shouted at him during an "attack from the ultra-right group Action Française."<sup>20</sup> Saint Denis, the third-century martyr and bishop of Paris, has been considered the patron saint of France since the seventh century when King Clothar II acclaimed him as his "special patron." Clothar's successors continued this tradition and, after Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis Abbey in Paris claimed Denis as patron saint of the realm in the twelfth century, subsequent kings of France chose the abbey as their royal burial site.<sup>21</sup> "Montjoie Saint Denis!" was a battle cry of medieval French kings that also appears on royal coats of arms.<sup>22</sup> Much like Clovis, the phrase has also been appropriated by members of the far-right. A journalist for the media channel, TF1 info, pointed out that a Twitter account for "Montjoie Saint Denis" includes the following ambitions in their biography, "to save France,

---

<sup>19</sup> *Le Monde*, September 10, 1996.

<sup>20</sup> *The Connexion*, June 9, 2021.

<sup>21</sup> Pierre Nora, *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de Mémoire*, vol. 4 of *Histories and Memories* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 207; Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 162.

<sup>22</sup> Anne Lombard Jourdan, "'Munjoie !', Montjoie et Monjoie. Histoire d'un mot," *Nouvelle revue d'onomastique* (1993) 21-22: 159.

the eldest daughter of the Church, and European civilization from the cosmopolitanism of the globalized elites,” while another account under the same slogan claims to be "Breton, Catholic and royalist."<sup>23</sup> Over two centuries after the Revolution and the establishment of the Republic, royalism is far from extinguished in France and modern-day royalists rely on the same type of Catholic symbolism as the nineteenth-century legitimists. The cult of the saints has always held an important position in medieval and early modern conceptions of French identity, and this importance survived the Revolution where it continues to serve as a rallying point for identity politics today.

## §

This dissertation has explored to the fullest extent possible the myriad ways that Radegund has been “rewritten” in text, art, and ritual. The secret of the endurance of Radegund’s cult over the span of fourteen long centuries has always been its versatility. As Julia M. H. Smith argued in her study of female sanctity in the Carolingian world, “Sanctity is in the eye of the beholder...it was negotiated, contested and shaped as much by the needs of the audience as by the experiences of the saint in question.”<sup>24</sup> Radegund herself always seemed to inhabit the realm of ambiguity as she dealt with the pitfalls and opportunities life had to offer: she was reduced to the humble status of prisoner and ascended to the heights of sovereign, she reigned over the Frankish kingdom as a queen and administered to the most wretched paupers as a servant, she healed with miracles and with medicine, she cleaned latrines and negotiated peace between kingdoms, she kissed lepers and convened with

---

<sup>23</sup> “Emmanuel Macron giflé : à quoi fait référence "Montjoie Saint Denis", devise créée par l’agresseur ?” *TF1 Info*, June 8, 2021, <https://www.tf1info.fr/politique/video-emmanuel-macron-gifle-a-quoi-fait-reference-montjoie-saint-denis-devise-criee-par-l-agresseur-2188206.html>

<sup>24</sup> Julia M. H. Smith, “The Problem of Female Sanctity in Carolingian Europe,” *Past and Present* 146, no.1 (1995): 5.

bishops, she was a queen who gave up her crown, a wife who fled her husband. By emphasizing or de-emphasizing parts of her story, Radegund becomes relatable to anyone. The long trajectory of Radegund's meanings and usage over the centuries suggests that saints have played a more significant role in the ideology of state formation, nationalism, and identity than is typically recognized. And, as has so often been the case, to rewrite Radegund is to rewrite the history of the French nation.

## Appendix A : Manuscripts of the *Life of Radegund*

Manuscript	Date	Provenance	Contains: Fortunatus	Contains: Baudonivia	Contains: Gregory of Tours	Contains: Hildebert
Dijon, Bibliothèque municipale						
MS. 641 - Le Légendier de Cîteaux	c.1130-1140	Abbaye Notre-Dame de Cîteaux	*	*		
London, The British Library						
MS. Harley 649 (Latin)	12th	Abbey of St Mary and St Benedict at Ramsey (Cambridgeshire)	*			
MS. 11880 (Latin)	9th		*			
München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek						
MS. Clm 3810 (Latin)	10th	Augsburg, cathedral library	*	*		
MS. Clm 14095 (Latin)	11/12th	Regensburg, St. Emmeram	*			
MS. Clm 4618 (Latin)	10/11th	Benediktbeuern	*			
MS. Clm 22242 (Latin)	12th	Windberg, Premonstratensian	*			
MS. Clm 332 (Latin)	12th	München	*			
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale						
MS lat. 5275	11th	-	*	*		
MS. lat. 13761	10th	-	*	*		
MS. lat. 9742	12th	Mont-Tonnerre	*			
MS. lat. 11748	9/10th	Abbey of Saint-Maur-des-Fossés	*			
MS. nal. 2261	11/12th	Cluny	*	*	*	
MS. lat. 5351	11th	Sancti Martialis Lemovicensis	*	*		
MS. lat. 16734	12th	Abbey of Notre-Dame de Châalis	*	*		
MS. lat. 5343	11th	Vendôme, Trinité	*	*		
MS. lat. 17005	12th	Abbey of Val-Notre-Dame	*	*		
MS. lat. 5323	13th	-	*	*	*	
MS. lat. 11758	13th	-	*	*	*	
MS. lat. 1146	15th	Jean d'Orléans, comte d'Angoulême	*			
MS. lat. 5360	14th	-	*	*	*	
MS. lat. 5296	13th	-				
MS. Français 5718	15th	Charlotte de Savoie	*	*		*
MS. Français 1784	14th	-	*	*		*
MS. Dupuy 499	15/17th	-		*		
Poitiers, Bibliothèque Municipale						
MS. 250 (136)	12th		*	Now missing	*	
MS. 252	13th		*	*	*	*
MS. 253 - Lectionnaire de Sainte-Radegonde	15th		*	*	*	*

## Appendix B: Radegund in Books of Hours, Breviaries, Calendars, etc.

Manuscript	Name	Date	Provenance	Notes
Boston, Boston Public Library				
MS. q. Med 89	Book of hours : use of Poitiers	c.1425-1450	Poitiers	
Cambridge, Corpus Christi College				
MS. 391	St. Wulfstan's Portiforium	c.1060	Worcester	
Cambridge University Library				
MS. Dd.4.17	Book of Hours: Sarum Use	14th	East Anglia, near Ely and Huntingdon	
Genève, Bibliothèque de Genève				
MS. lat. 34	Book of Hours for use in the Abbey of St. Martin of Tours	15th	Tours	
The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek				
MS. 76 F 13	Psalter of Eleanor of Aquitaine	1185	Fécamp Abbey	
Limoges, Bibliothèque municipale				
MS. 2	Le Graduel de Fontevrault	c.1250-1260	Abbey of Fontevraud, Abbess Alienor of Brittany	Image - fol.169v, decorated R, Radegund enthroned, musical notation
London, The British Library				
MS. 24686	The Alphonso Psalter	c.1284-1316	Wedding gift to Prince Alphonso of England	Image - fol.3, Radegund standing
MS. Egerton 1070	Book of Hours, Use of Paris - "The Hours of René d'Anjou [Valois]"	c.1410	Paris	Image - fol.98v., Radegund as nun reading, w/office
MS. 49363	Cluniac Breviary and Missal	c.1280-1290	England	
MS. 81084	The 'Golden Psalter' of St. Albans or the 'Cron Psalter'	12th	Made at the Benedictine abbey of St. Albans, probably during the abbacy of Ralph Gubiun (1146-1151)	
MS. 100	Barking Ordinal	15th	The Benedictine abbey (nuns) of Barking, Essex	
MS. Harley 2785	Choir Breviary (winter part), use of Sarum	15th	London	
MS. Arundel 157	The Book of Psalms, Psalter of the Virgin Mary, and Little Office of the Virgin Mary	13th	The Augustinian Priory of St Frideswide at Oxford	
MS. Egerton 3153	Missal with Calendar	13th	France	
MS. Kings 8	Hours for the use of French Benedictines of the congregation of Tiron	15th	England	
MS. Kings 7	Hours and Calendar with many French Saints	16th		
Oxford, Bodleian Library				
MS. Harley 579	Leofric Missal	c.970		
MS. Hatton 113	St. Wulfstan's Homiliary	11th	Worcester	
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale				
MS. lat. 8886	Pontificale-missale Johannis, ducis Bituricensis	c.1404-1407		Image - fol.439r, Radegund kneeling before altar
MS. nal. 1363		c.1404-1407	Bourges	
MS. Français 310	vincentius bellovacensis, speculum historie (trad. jean de vignay)	15th		Image - fol. 222v, Ordination of Radegund

Manuscript	Name	Date	Provenance	Notes
MS. nal. 3191	Horae ad usum Pictaviensem	c.1455-1460	Western France	Image - fol. 151v, Radegund standing crowned
MS. lat. 1023	Breviarium Parisiense	13th	Philippe le Bel	
MS. nal. 3115	Horae ad usum Parisiensem	15th		Image - fol. 188r, owner kneeling before crowned Radegund
MS. 108	Psautier de l'abbaye de Sainte-Croix de Poitiers	13th	Abbey of Sainte-Croix, Poitiers	
MS. 227	Pontifical de Poitiers	c.870-880	Poitiers	
MS. 274	Bréviaire de Saint-Bénigne de Dijon	14th	Dijon	
MS. 276	Bréviaire à l'usage de l'église de Coutances	15th	Coutances	
MS. 104	Bréviaire à l'usage de Metz	14th	Metz	
MS. 426	Livre d'heures	14th		
MS. 412		14th		
MS. 650	Livre d'heures	c.1415		
MS. Rothschild 2536	Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis	15th	Northern France	
MS. nal. 3203	Horae ad usum Parisiensem	c.1475-1480	Tours	
MS. nal. 3229	Horae secundum usum Romanum	c.1440-1450	Avignon	
MS. lat. 1082	Psalterium et horae ad usum Sanctae Capellae Parisiensis	c.1364-1400		
MS. nal. 3093	Très belles Heures de Notre-Dame	c.1380-1390	Paris, Bourges	
MS. lat. 5594	Antiphonae et hymni de sancta Radegonda	12th	North-western France	
MS. lat. 1202	"Heures de Charles V, Empereur" - Horae ad usum Turonensem	15th	Tours, Bourges	
MS. nal. 3209	Horae ad usum Romanum - "Heures d'Hugues de Clugny"	c.1445	Chalon-sur-Saône	
MS. Français 5385	Kalendrier royal des SS. roys de la France et de leurs alliés pour tous les mois de l'année, avec la chronologie de leur siècle & Étienne Mocquet, Martyrologe royal de la France	17th		
Philadelphia, Free Library of Philadelphia				
MS. Lewis E 87	Book of Hours, use of Bourges	c.1550	Bourges, Jean Lallemand the Younger	
Poitiers, Bibliothèque Municipale				
Poitiers, Trésor de la Cathédrale Saint-Pierre				
MS. unnumbered	Bréviaire d'Anne de Prie, abbess of La Trinité at Poitiers from 1480-1505	1485	Poitiers	Image - lower border, Miracle of the Oats
Utopia, armarium codicum bibliophilorum				
MS. Cod. 105	Book of hours for the use of Rome, calendar for the use in Poitiers.	c.1450-1460	Poitiers. Miniatures by the Master of Poitiers.	

## Appendix C: Radegund's Cult Sites in France, England, and Sicily

### Chapels and Churches in France

Town	Department	Institution Name	Foundation Date
Aiguillon	Lot-et-Garonne	Église Sainte-Radegonde	1668
Anzex	Lot-et-Garonne	Église Sainte-Radegonde et Sainte-Christine	11th, add 14th
Arbanats	Gironde	Église Saint-Hippolyte-et-Sainte-Radegonde	14th, add 15th
Arganchy	Calvados	Église Sainte-Radegonde	11th, add 13th
Athies	Somme	Église Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption d'Athies	9th abbey, 12th church
Baignes-Sainte-Radegonde	Charente	Église Saint-Etienne	unknown
Bassignac	Cantal	Église Sainte-Radegonde	11/12th
Bon-Encontre	Lot-et-Garonne	Église Sainte-Radegonde	11th
Bonnes	Charente	Église Sainte-Pierre et Sainte-Radegonde	12th, add 16th
Bouresse et Verrières	Vienne	Chapelle de Sainte-Radegonde	13th
Bourg de Céancé	Orne (Normandy)	Chapelle de Sainte-Radegonde	unknown
Boussay	Loire Atlantique	Église Sainte-Radegonde	rebuilt 19th
Bouvées	Gers	Église Sainte-Radegonde	1881
Bouxal	Lot	Église Sainte-Radegonde	unknown
Budelière	Creuse	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde	11/12th
Bué	Cher	Église Sainte-Radegonde	1871
Busloup	Loire-et-Cher	Chapelle de Sainte-Radegonde	12th
Cagouilles	Vendée	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde	11th, destroyed
Cartigny	Somme	Église Sainte-Radegonde	12th, 15th fortified
Chacé	Maine-et-Loire	Église Sainte-Radegonde	19th
Château de L'Epinay-Sainte-Radegonde	Eure-et-Loir	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde at Église de Lanneray	12th
Chaumoux-Marcilly	Cher	Église Sainte-Radegonde	19th
Chinon	Indre-et-Loire	Chapelle de Sainte-Radegonde	11th
Cirières	Deux-Sèvres	Église Sainte-Radegonde	1092
Clairefougère	Orne (Normandy)	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde	19th
Cognat-Lyonne	Allier	Église Sainte-Radegonde de Cognat-Lyonne	12th
Colomiers	Haute-Garonne	Église Sainte-Radegonde	11th
Courant	Charente-Maritime	Chapelle de Sainte-Radegonde	13th
Cour-sur-Loire	Loire-et-Cher	Église de Cour-sur-Loire	1492-1517
Driencourt	Somme	Église Sainte-Radegonde	16th
Emanville	Eure	Église Saint Étienne et Sainte Radegonde	unknown

Ensigné	Deux-Sèvres	Église Sainte-Radegonde	1103, rebuilt 1852
Frayssinet-le-Gélat	Lot	Église fortifié Sainte Radegonde	1116, rebuilt 1580
Ganites	Haute-Garonne	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde	16th, rebuilt 1850
Gétigné	Loire-Atlantique	Église Sainte-Radegonde	19th
Giverny	Eure	Église Sainte-Radegonde	11th, add 15/16th
Gomené	Morbihan (Brittany)	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde	13th
Haute-Goulaine	Loire-Atlantique	Église Sainte-Radegonde	rebuilt 19th
Jard-sur-Mer	Vendée	Église Sainte-Radegonde	1198, fortified 15th, rebuilt 16th
La Bruffière	Vendée	Église Sainte-Radegonde	12th, rebuilt 19th
La Ferrière	Vendée	Église Sainte-Radegonde	destroyed in Revolution, rebuilt 1857
La Genetouze	Vendée	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde	12th
La Pinçonnière	Vendée	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde	1658, destroyed 1793
Latoue	Haute-Garonne	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde	1200
La Villeneuve	Creuse	Église Sainte-Radegonde	1870
Les Fosses	Deux-Sèvres	Église Sainte-Radegonde des Fosses	12th
Lessac	Charente	Chapelle de Sainte-Radegonde à Lessac	12th
Lizant	Vienne	Église Sainte-Radegonde-Saint Junien	12th
Mancioux	Haute-Garonne	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde	1858
Marsais-Sainte-Radegonde	Vendée	Église Sainte-Radegonde de Sainte- Radégonde-la-Vineuse	12th, add 1738, add 1890
Marconnay	Vienne	Église Sainte-Radegonde	11th
Marigny	Allier	Église Sainte-Radegonde	unknown
Marmoutier/Tours (rue Saint- Gâtine)	Indre-et-Loire	Église Sainte-Radegonde	10/11th, add 12th
Marval	Haute-Vienne	Église de l'Assomption-de-la-Très- Sainte-Vierge	12th
Mazières	Maine-et-Loire	Église Sainte-Radegonde	14th, rebuilt 19th
Meilhards	Corrèze	Chapelle de Sainte-Radegonde	17th
Mézière	Loire-et-Cher	Chapelle de Sainte-Radegonde	15th
Mirebeau	Nouvelle- Aquitaine	Eglise Sainte-Radegonde	1102
Missy-sur-Aisne/Missy Sainte- Radegonde	Aisne	Église Sainte-Radegonde	12th, add 15th and 16th
Miolles	Tarn	Église Sainte-Radegonde	Rebuilt 1608
Monnières	Loire-Atlantique	Église Sainte-Radegonde	11/12th, rebuilt 19th
Montagne (à Grenois)	Nièvre	Église Sainte-Radegonde	12th
Neufchâtel-en-Bray	Seine-Maritime	Chapelle de Sainte-Radegonde	1100/1135
Péronne	Somme	Église Sainte-Radegonde	12th
Perréal	Vaucluse	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde	1551



Perroy	Nièvre	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde at Église Notre-Dame de Perroy	15th
Pis	Gers	Église Sainte-Radegonde	12th, destroyed by Huguenots
Plaine-et-Vallées	Deux-Sèvres	Église Sainte-Radegonde de Bilazais	12th, restored 1615 and 1883
Poitiers	Vienne	Église Sainte-Radegonde	6th, rebuilt 1099
Pont-l'Abbé	Charente-Maritime	Église Sainte-Radegonde	13th
Prailles	Deux-Sèvres	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde	1876
Riantec	Morbihan	Église Sainte-Radegonde	12th
Rodez	Aveyron	Église Sainte-Radegonde	1302
Sainte-Anne-Saint-Priest	Haute-Vienne	Église du prieuré Sainte-Radegonde de Villevalaix	12th
Saint-Félix	Lot	Église Sainte-Radegonde	11th
Sainte-Radegonde	Aveyron	Église Sainte-Radegonde	12th, fortified 14th
Sainte-Radegonde	Saône-et-Loire	Église Sainte-Radegonde	unknown
Sainte-Radegonde	Dordogne	Église Sainte-Radegonde	unknown
Sainte-Radegonde des Pommiers	Deux-Sèvres	Église Sainte-Radegonde	6th
Sainte-Radegonde (village) Molinet (parish)	Allier	Chapelle de Sainte-Radegonde	17th
Sainte-Radegonde par Fleurance	Gers	Église Sainte-Radegonde	1200
Sainte-Radegonde-des-Noyers	Vendée	Église Sainte-Radegonde	12th
Sainte-Radegonde-en-Gâtine	Vienne	Église Sainte-Radegonde	1300
Sainte-Radégonde-la-Vineuse/Marais-Sainte-Radegonde	Vendée	Église Sainte-Radégonde-la-Vineuse	12th
Saint-Martin-de-Sanzay	Deux-Sèvres	Chapelle de Sainte-Radegonde	1870
Saint-Michel-des-Andaines	Orne (Normandy)	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde at Prieuré de saint Ortaire	18th
Saint-Philbert-sur-Risle	Eure	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde at Église Saint-Philbert	15th
Saint-Vincent-sur-Laye	Vendée	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde des Coquilles	12th, rebuilt 1870
Saint-Yvoine	Puy-de-Dôme	Église Sainte-Radegonde	unknown
Saix	Vienne	Église Sainte-Radegonde	12th
Sauzé-Vaussais	Deux-Sèvres	Église Sainte-Radegonde de Sauzé-Vaussais	1854
Sérandon	Corrèze	Église Sainte-Radegonde	12th, add 15th
Servant	Puy-de-Dôme	Église Sainte-Radegonde-et-Saint-Bonnet	12th, add 19th
Talmont-sur-Gironde	Charente-Maritime	Église Sainte-Radegonde	12th
Theil-Rabier	Charente	Église Sainte-Radegonde	12th, add 13th
Tréméven	Côtes-du-Nord	Église Sainte-Radegonde et Saint-Méen	19th
Vasles	Deux-Sèvres	Église Sainte-Radegonde	12th, destroyed 1900

Vausseroux	Deux-Sèvres	Église Sainte-Radegonde	1847
Vennes	Doubs	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde	1541, rebuilt 1854
Villars	Dordogne	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde	15th, rebuilt 1836
Villeneuve-sur-Lot	Lot-et-Garonne	Église Sainte-Radegonde	11/12th, add 19th
Vouillée	Vienne	Église Sainte-Radegonde	1099
Yversay	Vienne	Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde	12/13th

## Institutions Dedicated to Radegund in England

<b>Location</b>	<b>Institution Name</b>	<b>Foundation Date</b>
Grayingham, Lincolnshire	Church of Saint Radegund	1150
Cambridge, now Jesus College	Priory of Saint Radegund	1157/1161
Bradsole, near Dover in Kent	Saint Radegund's Abbey	1191
Whitwell, in Hampshire on the Isle of Wight	Church of Saint Mary and Saint Radegund	12th
Exeter, Devon	Chapel of Saint Radegund, west wall of Exeter Cathedral	1220
Longleat, Somerset	Priory of Saint Radegund	1235
Postling, Kent	Church of Saint Mary and Saint Radegund	1260
Scruton, North Yorkshire	Saint Radegund's Church	12th
Maplebeck, Nottinghamshire	Church of Saint Radegund	13th
Warwickshire, in the West Midlands	Thelsford Priory	12/13th, destroyed
London	Chapel of Saint Radegund in Old St Paul's Cathedral	1350, destroyed 1666
Usk, Wales	Chapel of Saint Radegund at the Priory Church of St Mary	unknown
Canterbury, Kent	Site of St Radegund's Hospice and Bath	unknown
Gloucester, Gloucestershire	Chapel of Saint Radegund in Gloucester Cathedral	unknown
Glastonbury, Somerset	Relic of Saint Radegund at Glastonbury Abbey	unknown, now ruined

## Radegund's Cult in Sicily

<b>Location</b>	<b>Institution Name</b>	<b>Foundation Date</b>
Palermo	Cappella Palatina - mosaic	1143
Palermo	Cattedrale di Santa Maria Nuova di Monreale - mosaic	1183

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### **Cited Manuscripts**

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College

MS. 391 – St. Wulfstan's Portiforium. c.1060.

Cambridge University Library

MS. Dd.4.17 – Book of Hours: Sarum Use. Fourteenth century.

London, The British Library

MS. Harley 649 – Vita Sancti Radegundis. Twelfth century.

MS. 24686 – The Alphonso Psalter. c.1284-1316.

München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

Clm 3810 – Passionale. Tenth century.

Oxford, Bodleian Library

MS. Harley 579 – Leofric Missal. c.970.

MS. Hatton 113 – St. Wulfstan's Homiliary. Eleventh century.

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale

MS. lat. 5275 – Vita sanctae Radegundis, Reginae. Eleventh century.

MS. nal. 2261 – Vitae sanctorum. Eleventh or twelfth century.

MS. lat. 16734 – Legendarium cisterciense: Vitae et passiones. Twelfth century.

MS. lat. 17005 – Vitae sanctorum. Twelfth century.

MS. lat. 11758 – Vies de saints. Thirteenth century.

MS. Français 1784 – La Vie de tres glorieuse royne madame sainte Radegonde. Fourteenth century.

MS. lat. 8886 – Pontificale-missale Johannis, ducis Bituricensis. c.1404-1407.

M.S nal. 1363 – État des joyaux, ornements, livres et autres objets remis à Arnoul Belin, trésorier de la Sainte-Chapelle du palais de Bourges, par Robinet d'Estampes, garde des joyaux du duc de Berry. c.1404-1407.

MS. Français 5718 – Vie, miracles et office de sainte Radegonde. c.470-1480.

Poitiers, Bibliothèque Municipale

MS 26 (377) – fol. 1v. *Radegundis de advenis*. 1358.

MS. 250 (136) – Vie de Sainte-Radegonde. Twelfth century.

MS. 252 – Vie de sainte-Radegonde: et miracles de la même sainte par Hildebert, Fortunat et Baudonivia. Thirteenth century.

MS. 253 – Lectionnaire de Sainte-Radegonde. Fifteenth century.

Poitiers, Trésor de la Cathédrale Saint-Pierre

MS. unnumbered – Bréviaire d'Anne de Prie. Fifteenth century.

Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale

MS. 1436 – Vie de sainte Radegonde. Fifteenth century.

### **Published Primary Sources**

Abess Caesaria. "Letter from Abbess Caesaria of Saint Jean of Arles to Radegund." *Monumenta Germaniae historica*. Vol. 7. *Epistolae Aevi Merovingici Collectae*.

*Actus pontificum Cennomannis in urbe degentium*, ed. Ambroise Ledru. Au siège de la Société, 1902.

Ambrose. *Concerning Widows*. Translated by H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Second Series. Vol. 10. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896.

Ambrose. "Concerning Widows." *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Second Series. Vol. 10. Translated by H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co. 1896. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3408.htm>.

Amodru, Lionel. "Rapport fait au nom de la commission d'hygiène publique sur les mesures à prendre pour arrêter les progrès de la tuberculose." *Journal Officiel: Annexes de la Chambre des députés*. Session of June 21, 1901.

Augouard, Mgr. Prospère. *36 années au Congo*. Poitiers: Société française d'imprimerie et de librairie: en vente au profit de la Mission du Haut-Congo français chez M. l'abbé Augouard, 1914.

*L'Avenir de Vienne*. "A M. le Maire," August 9, 1887.

----- "Un 'Couronnement.'" August 6, 1887.

----- “Un ‘Couronnement’ avorté.” August 7, 1887.

Barthélémy, Vincent. *Panegyrique de Ste Radegonde, autrefois Reine de France & de Turinge, contenant sa vie & ses miracles*. Paris: Chez Charles Fosset, 1686.

Batut, Monseigneur Jean-Pierre. “Homélie Donnée 22 août 2021 - Pèlerinage à sainte Radegonde à Cour-sur-Loire.” Diocèse de Blois (website), <https://www.catholique-blois.net/eveque/homelies/homelie-pour-la-sainte-radegonde-2021>

Baudonvia. “Vita Radegundis.” *Acta sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur, vel a catholicis scriptoribus celebrantur quae ex latinis et graecis, aliarumque gentium antiquis monumentis*. Edited by Johannes Bolland, Jean Baptiste Carnandet, and Godefridus Henschenius. Bruxelles: Culture et civilisation, 1965.

-----“Vita Radegundis.” *Acta Sanctorum : the Full Text Database*. Chadwyck-Healey, 2002.

Bede. *The Complete Works of Venerable Bede, in the original Latin, collated with the Manuscripts, and various printed editions, and accompanied by a new English translation of the Historical Works, and a Life of the Author*. Edited and translated by Rev. J.A. Giles. London: Whittaker and Co., 1843.

Bouchet, Jean, *Les annales d'Aquitaine: Faicts et gestes en sommaire des roys de France et d'Angleterre, pays de Naples & de Milan*. Abraham Mounin Imprimeur & Libraire, 1557.

----- *Histoire et cronicque de Clotaire premier de ce nom VII roy des Francoys et monarque des gules, et de sa tresillustre espouse madame saincte Radegonde*. Paris: les Frères de Marnef ; Poitiers: Enguilbert I de Marnef, 1517.

Bradshaw, Henry. *Here begynneth the lyfe of saynt Radegunde*. London: Rycharde Pynson, 1525. Huntington Library. San Marino (Los Angeles), California. STC 3507.

----- *The Lyfe of Saynt Radegund*. Edited from the copy in Jesus College Library by Frederick Brittain. Cambridge University Press, 1926.

Briand, Emile. *Les fêtes du treizième centenaire et du couronnement de Ste Radegonde à Poitiers: documents relatifs à ces fêtes*. Poitiers: Imprimerie de Paul Oudin, 1887.

Bussierre, Marie-Théodore de. *Histoire de Sainte Radegonde, reine et de la cour de Neustrie sous les rois Clotaire 1er et Chilperic*. Paris and Lyon: J.-B. Pelagaud, 1849.

Chrysostom, John. “On Virginité” ; “Against Remarriage.” *Studies in Women and Religion*. Vol 9. Translated by Sally Rieger Shore. Introduction by Elizabeth A. Clark. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983.

Pope Clement I. *Les constitutions apostoliques (Constitutiones Apostolorum)*. Edited by Marcel Metzger. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1985.

*Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina. "Concilia Galliae."* Turnholti: Typographi Brepols, 1953.

*La Croix.* "Poitiers." August 17, 1887.

----- "Le Souvenir de Mgr Augouard." October 8, 1922.

Davis, R.H. C. and Marjorie Chibnall, eds. *The Gesta Guillelmi of William of Poitiers.* Oxford, 1998.

Delisle, Léopold. *Rouleau des morts du 9e au 15e siècle.* Recueillis et publiés pour la Société de l'Histoire de France: Paris, 1866.

Le Département Vienne. *Plan de développement touristique 2018-2021.*  
<https://www.lavienne86.fr/fileadmin/medias/Publications/Plan-de-developpement-touristique-2018-2021.pdf>

Diocèse Orthodoxe de Saintes et Thouars, Tours, et Angers. Champs des étoiles à Ste Radegonde (website). Last modified August 15, 2017. <http://orthodoxe-ouest.eklablog.fr/champs-des-etoiles-a-ste-radegonde-a131031008>

Le diocèse de Poitiers. Solennité de sainte Radegonde, Actualités diocésaines (website).  
<https://www.poitiers.catholique.fr/?s=radegonde>

"Discrimination in the European Union." *Special Eurobarometer 493 Report.* European Union: European Commission. October 2019. Retrieved May 4, 2022,  
<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2251>

Dumonteil, Joseph. *Histoire de la vie incomparable de sainte Radegonde.* Rodez: Paul Desclaux et Amans Grandsaigne, 1627.

Eschoyez, L'Abbé Charles. *Origines de l'abbaye royale de Sainte-Croix.* Poitiers: Henri Oudin, Imprimeur-Libraire, 1865.

Favreau, Robert and Venantius Honorius Clementianus Fortunatus. *La Vie de Sainte Radegonde Par Fortunat.* Bibliothèque Municipale de Poitiers: Editions du Seuil, 1995.

----- Jean Michaud, and Edmond-René Labande. *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale : Poitou-Charentes, Ville de Poitiers.* Paris: CNRS Editions, 1974 : 95-96.

Ferrante, Joan, ed. *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters* (website). Columbia Center for Teaching and Learning. <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/915.html>.

Figarol to the archdeacon, May 1853,  
[http://aspetinf.chez.com/assoc/bull/bull\\_10\\_art/bull\\_10\\_art1.htm](http://aspetinf.chez.com/assoc/bull/bull_10_art/bull_10_art1.htm)

Filleau, Jean. *La Preuve historique des litanies de la grande reine de France Sainte Radegonde.* Poitiers: Chez Abraham Mounin, Imprimeur & Libraire, 1643.

- Fortunatus, Venantius Honorius Clementianus. *Venanti Fortunati Opera Poetica*. Edited by Fridericus Leo. Berlin: Weidmann, 1881.
- “Vita Radegundis.” *Acta sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur, vel a catholicis scriptoribus celebrantur quae ex latinis et graecis, aliarumque gentium antiquis monumentis*. Edited by Johannes Bolland, Jean Baptiste Carnandet, and Godefridus Henschenius. Bruxelles: Culture et civilisation. 1965.
- “Vita Radegundis.” *Acta Sanctorum : the Full Text Database*. Chadwyck-Healey, 2002.
- *Vita di San Martino di Tours*. Edited by Giovanni Palermo. Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1985.
- France, Anatole. *La Légende de Sainte Radegonde Reine de France*. Paris: Société Anatole France, 1969.
- *L’Orme du Mail*. Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1897.
- Freppel, Mgr. Charles-Émile. “Discours prononcé dans la Cathédrale de Poitiers à l’occasion du centenaire de Sainte Radegonde et du couronnement de sa statue au nom du Pape, le 14 Aout 1887.” *Œuvres Pastorales et Oratoires de Monseigneur Freppel*. Vol. 10. Paris: Maison A. Jouby et Roger, 1888.
- Fry, Timothy. *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes*. Translated and edited by Timothy Fry, Imogene Baker, Timothy Horner et al. The Liturgical Press: Minnesota, 1981.
- Gregory of Nazianzus. *Orations*. Translated by C.G. Browne and J.E. Swallow. *A Secret Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Second Series. Volume 7. Oxford, 1894.
- Gregory of Tours. *The History of the Franks*. Translated with an introduction by Lewis Thorpe. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1974.
- “About the Nun Monegund.” *Lives and Miracles*. Translated by Giselle de Nie. Harvard University Press, 2015.
- *Gregory of Tours: Glory of the Confessors*. Edited and translated by Raymond Van Dam. Liverpool University Press, 1988.
- *Vita Monegundis, vidua sanctimonialis, Turonibus in Gallia*. In *Acta Sanctorum: the Full Text Database*. Chadwyck-Healey, 2002.
- Guide Tourisme de France 2022. Église Sainte-Radegonde de Cartigny. Monuments édifices remarquables (website). Copyright Yalta Production, Janvier 2013 / Février 2021, <https://www.guide-tourisme-france.com/VISITER/eglise-sainte-radegonde--cartigny-37461.htm>



Guiffrey, Jules, ed. *Inventaires de Jean, duc de Berry (1401-1416)*. Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1894.

Hefele, Karl Joseph von. *A History of the Councils of the Church, from the Original Documents*. New York: AMS Press. 1972.

Hildebert. "Vita Radegundis." Ed. D. Antonii Beaugendre, monachi Benedictini, qui Parisiis Opera Hildeberti & Marbodi anno 1708 imprimi curavit, columna 885 & sequentibus. *Acta sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur, vel a catholicis scriptoribus celebrantur quae ex latinis et graecis, aliarumque gentium antiquis monumentis*. Bruxelles: Culture et civilisation, 1965.

----- *De S. Radegunde regina, postmodum moniali, pictavii in Galii*. In *Acta Sanctorum: the Full Text Database*. Chadwyck-Healey, 2002.

----- "De tribus inimicis." *Patrologia Latina* 171, col. 1128-1129.

----- Letters. Collected and translated by Joan Ferrante of Columbia University for *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu.

Letters from Hildebert to Adela of Blois.

(1101), PL171 ep.3.2 c284

(1104), PL171 ep.3.8 c288-89

*Hildeberti Cenomannensis episcopi, Carmina Minora*. Edited by A. Brian Scott. Leipzig: Teubner, 1969. No. 10, 15.

(1101), PL171 ep.1.3 c144-45

(1120), PL171 ep.1.4, c145-48

Letters from Hildebert to Queen Matilda of England

(c.1100-18), PL171 ep.3.11 c289-90

(c.1100-18), PL171 ep.1.7, c153-55.

(c.1100-18), PL171 c1444-45

(c.1100-18), PL171 ep.1.9 c160-62

(c.1100-18), PL171 ep.3.11 c289-90

(c.1100-18), PL171 ep.3.12, c290

Letter from Hildebert to Empress Matilda

*Hildeberti Cenomannensis episcopi, Carmina Minora*. Edited by A. Brian Scott. Leipzig: Teubner, 1969. No. 35(4); also PL190, c.1408-09

Letter from Hildebert to Muriel of Wilton

(1099-1100), *Hildeberti Cenomannensis episcopi, Carmina Minora*. Edited by A. Brian Scott. Leipzig: Teubner, 1969. No. 17-18, 26.

----- "Vita Beate Marie Egiptiace." *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis*, 209. Turnhout: Brepols, 2004.

Jerome. "Letters 23, 39, 66, 108, 127." *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Second Series. Vol. 6. Translated by W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis and W.G. Martley. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co. 1893. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001.htm>.

John Chrysostom. *Ad eandem de non iterando conjugio* (Against Remarriage). Translated by Sally Rieger Shore. *Studies in Women and Religion*. Volume 9. Leriston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983.

"Journal des Abbesses de Sainte-Croix de Poitiers." Edited by P. de Monsabert. *Revue Mabillon* 5 (1909): 145-168.

"Lot 23: Vie et Legende de Madame Saincte Radegonde." *Catalogue of Ninety-One Manuscripts on Vellum Illuminated by English (Anglo-Saxon), Byzantine, French, Flemish, Dutch, Burgundian, German, Italian and Spanish Artists, of The VIIth to the XVIIth Century, chiefly from The Famous Hamilton Collection, and till lately in the possession of The Royal Museum of Berlin*. Auction 23 May 1889 by Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge: London, 1889.

Macy, Gary. *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Madigan, Kevin, and Carolyn Osiek. *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

*Manuscrits et livres précieux retrouvés en Allemagne*. Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, exposition organisée par la Commission de récupération artistique, 1949.

Mathieu Marguerite, trans and ed. *Guillaume de Pouille: La Geste de Robert Guiscard*. Palermo: Instituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici, 1962.

McCarthy, Mother Maria Caritas. *The Rule for Nuns of St. Caesarius of Arles*. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1960.

McNamara, Jo Ann, John E. Halborg, and E. Gordon Whatley. *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992.

Life of Genovefa, virgin of Paris (423-502), Life of Clothild, queen of the Franks (d. 544), Lives of Rade Gund, queen of the Franks and abbess of Poitiers (ca. 525-587), Life of Sadalberga, abbess of Laon (ca. 605-670), Life of Balthild, queen of Neustria (d. ca. 680).

- Metzger, Marcel, and Pope Clement I. *Les constitutions apostoliques (Constitutiones Apostolorum)*. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1985.
- Ministère de la Culture (website). La Plateforme ouverte du patrimoine, <https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/>
- “Autel latéral et son retable avec tableau: Sainte Radegonde.” Last modified August 1, 2019. <https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/palissy/PM41001068>
- “Ensemble de trois bannières de procession: Vierge à l'Enfant, Vierge de l'Assomption et Sainte Radegonde.” Last modified August 1, 2019. <https://www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/palissy/PM41001071>
- The Missal of Robert of Jumièges*. Edited by H. A. Wilson. London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1896.
- Moquot, Etienne. *La vie de Sainte Radegonde jadis royne de France et fondatrice du royal monastere de Sainte-Croix de Poitiers*. Poitiers: A. Mesnier, Imprimeur du Roy, demeurant devant les Cordeliers, 1621.
- Office de Tourisme de Grand Poitiers du 26/02/2022 au 31/03/2022. Visit Poitiers (website). <https://visitpoitiers.fr/evenement/visites-guidees-de-poitiers/>
- Okokana, Bruno. “Patrimoine historique national: le ministre de la Culture et des Arts, Jean Claude Gakosso, inaugure le monument Sainte Radegonde d'Oyo.” *Les Dépêches de Brazzaville*. June 2, 2014.
- d'Orfeuille, René. “Le couronnement de Ste. Radegonde.” *L'Univers*. August 16-17, 1887.
- Palermo, Giovanni and Venantius Honorius Clementianus Fortunatus. *Vita di San Martino di Tours*. Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1985.
- Palladius. *Historia Lausiaca. Palladius: the Lausiac History*. Translated by Robert T. Meyer. Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1965.
- Pareige, Nolwenn. “On remue ciel et terre pour les étoiles de Sainte-Radegonde.” *La Nouvelle République*, August 15, 2014. <https://www.lanouvellerepublique.fr/deux-sevres/commune/sainte-radegonde/on-remue-ciel-et-terre-pour-les-etoiles-de-sainte-radegonde>
- Paroisse Saint Vincent des Coteaux de Saumur. Chacé. Eglise Sainte-Radegonde (website). <http://paroisse.vincent.saumur.chez-alice.fr/Chace.htm>
- Parsons, J. “The Edict of Nantes with its secret articles and brevets.” *The Edict of Nantes: Five Essays and a New Translation*. Edited by Richard L. Goodbar. Bloomington, Minn.: The National Huguenot Society, 1998: 41-70.
- Petit formulaire de l'archiconfrérie des mères chrétiennes: contenant les réglemens et statuts de l'archiconfrérie, l'ordinaire de la messe, des méditations et les messes*

- propres pour les douze fêtes de l'archiconfrérie, la messe pour les défunts, etc.*  
Nouvelle Edition. Orléans: Blanchard, Libraire-Éditeur, 1868.
- Pie, Louis-Édouard-François-Desiré. *Oeuvres de Mgr Louis-Édouard-François-Desiré Pie, Evêque de Poitiers*. 9 Vols. Paris: H. Oudin, 1887.
- Pipelier, Nicolas. "La Genétouze. Sainte-Radegonde et le miracle des Avoines." *Le Journal de Pays de la Loire*, August 19, 2017. [https://actu.fr/pays-de-la-loire/genetouze\\_85098/la-genetouze-sainte-radegonde-le-miracle-avoines\\_11535319.html](https://actu.fr/pays-de-la-loire/genetouze_85098/la-genetouze-sainte-radegonde-le-miracle-avoines_11535319.html)
- Ribadénéira, Pedro de. *Les vies des saints et fêtes de toute l'année, par le r. p. Ribadénéira. Traduction française, revue et augmentée des fêtes nouvelles, des vies des saints et bienheureux nouveaux par m. l'abbé É. Daras*. Paris: L. Vivès, 1858.
- Roches, Madeleine and Catherine Roches. *From Mother and Daughter: Poems, Dialogues, and Letters of Les Dames des Roches*. Edited and translated by Anne R. Larsen. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- "Sainte-Radegonde, Reine de France, Patronne des poitrinaires." Prayer Card. Tours : Imprimerie Tourangelle, c. 1896.
- Le Semeur Algerien*. "A nos lecteurs." May 7, 1911.
- "Les Infirmières de France." November 5, 1916.
- Severus, Sulpicius. *Sulpicius Severus' Vita Martini*. Edited by Philip Burton. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Site officiel de la commune de Sainte-Radegonde-des-Pommiers. La légende des champs des étoiles (website). [http://www.ville-sainte-radegonde.fr/crbst\\_9.html](http://www.ville-sainte-radegonde.fr/crbst_9.html)
- Tabary, Octave. "Le Parti socialiste et la lutte contre la tuberculose." *Le Mouvement socialiste*. October 15, 1901.
- Téléchargements. La Résidence Radegonde. Copyrighted 2022, <https://www.residencesainteradegonde.fr/telechargements-pa-13.htm>
- Theodoret. *Ecclesiastical History*. Translated by Jackson Blomfield. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Second Series. Vol. 3. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892.
- Ville de Chinon*. "Laissez-vous conter La Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde." Distributed August 2017.
- Ville de Poitiers. La Boutique de Musée Sainte-Croix (website). [https://www.poitiers.fr/c\\_231\\_924\\_La\\_boutique\\_en\\_ligne.html](https://www.poitiers.fr/c_231_924_La_boutique_en_ligne.html)
- Vita sanctae chrothildis*. Monumenta Germaniae historica inde ab anno Christi quingentesimo usque ad annum millesimum et quingentesimum: Scriptorum rerum

- Merovingicarum. Vol. 2. Edited by Bruno Krusch. Hannover: Hansche Buchhandlung, 1888.
- Wilson, H. A, ed. *The Missal of Robert of Jumièges*. London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1896.
- The Works of Saint Augustine*. Translated by Ray Kearney. Edited by David G. Hunter and John E. Rotelle. New York: New City Press and Augustinian Heritage Institute, 1999.

## Secondary Sources

- Aigrain, L'Abbé René. *Sainte Radegonde*. Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1918.
- Andrault, Jean-Pierre. *Poitiers à l'âge baroque, 1594-1652: une capitale de province et son corps de ville*. Poitiers: Société des antiquaires de l'Ouest, 2003.
- Appleford, Amy. *Learning to Die in London, 1380-1540*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.
- Avril, François. "Un portrait inédit de la reine Charlotte de Savoie." *Études sur la Bibliothèque Nationale et Témoignages Réunis en Hommage à Thérèse Kleindienst*. Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1985: 255-262.
- Bardet, Jean-Pierre, ed. *Etat et société en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles: Mélanges offerts à Yves Durand*. Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000.
- Barnes, David. *The Making of a Social Disease: Tuberculosis in Nineteenth-Century France*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Barroso, Amanda and Juliana Menasce Horowitz. "The pandemic has highlighted many challenges for mothers, but they aren't necessarily new." *The Pew Research Center*, March 17, 2021, <https://pewrsr.ch/2OXoY6l>.
- Barrow, G.W.S. *The acts of Malcolm IV, king of Scots 1153-1165: together with Scottish royal acts prior to 1153 not included in Sir Archibald Lawries "Early Scottish charters"*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960.
- *The kingdom of the Scots: Government, Church and Society from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Century*. London: Edward Arnold, 1973.
- Baunard, Mgr Louis. *Histoire du Cardinal Pie*. 2 Vols. Poitiers: H. Oudin, 1886.
- Beaucourt, Gaston du Fresne de. *Histoire de Charles VII*. Vol 4 and 6. Paris: Librairie de la Société Bibliographique, 1881.
- Beech, George. "England and Aquitaine in the Century Before the Norman Conquest." *Anglo-Saxon England* 19. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

- Bellenger, A. and H. de Gastel. "Quelques Notes sur Sainte-Radegonde." *Bulletins de la Société Dunoise: Archéologie, Histoire, Sciences et Arts (1885-1887)*, Vol. 5. Chateaudun: Libraire Louis Poullier, Rue d'Angoulême, 1888.
- Benedict, Philip. "Divided Memories? Historical Calendars, Commemorative Processions and the Recollection of the Wars of Religion During the Ancien Régime." *French History* 22, no. 4 (2008): 381–405.
- *Rouen During the Wars of Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Berger, Pamela. *The Goddess Obscured: Transformation of the Grain Protectress from Goddess to Saint*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1985.
- Bergin, Joseph. *The Politics of Religion in Early Modern France*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.
- Bernstein, Hilary. *Between Crown and Community: Politics and Civic Culture in Sixteenth-Century Poitiers*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- "The Reformed Terreur Panique of 1562: Debating Miracles and Memory in Seventeenth-Century Le Mans." *French History* 34, no. 4 (2020): 475–492.
- Bèze, Théodore de. *Histoire ecclésiastique des églises réformées au royaume de France*. Paris: Libraire Fischbacher, 1883-89.
- Brennan, Brian. "Piety and Politics in Nineteenth Century Poitiers: The Cult of St Radegund." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47, no. 1 (January 1996): 65-81.
- "St. Radegund and the Early development of Her Cult at Poitiers." *Journal of Religious History* 13, no. 4 (1985): 340-354.
- "The Revival of the Cult of Martin of Tours in the Third Republic." *Church History* 66, no. 3 (1997): 489–501.
- "Visiting 'Peter in Chains': French Pilgrimage to Rome, 1873-93," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51, no. 4 (October 2000): 741-766.
- Briand, L'Abbé Émile. *Histoire de sainte Radegonde, reine de France, et des sanctuaires et pèlerinages en son honneur*. Paris, Poitiers: Libraire Religieuse H. Oudin, 1898.
- Britnell, Jennifer. *Jean Bouchet*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the University of Durham, 1986.
- Brissaud, Jean-Marc. *Clovis, roy des Francs: l'album du XVe centenaire*. Éditions nationales, Saint-Cloud, 1996.
- Brody, Saul Nathaniel. *The Disease of the Soul: Leprosy in Medieval Literature*. Ithaca N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1974.

- Brown-Price, Aimee. *Pierre Puvis de Chavannes*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.
- *Pierre Puvis de Chavannes*. Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 1994.
- Borsook, Eve. *Messages in Mosaic: The Royal Programmes of Norman Sicily, 1130-1187*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.
- Brittain, Fred. *Saint Radegund: Patroness of Jesus College, Cambridge*. Cambridge: Bowes & Bowes, 1925.
- Brodbeck, Sulamith. *Les saints de la Cathédrale de Monreale en Sicile : iconographie, hagiographie et pouvoir royal à la fin du XIIe siècle*. Rome: École française de Rome, 2010.
- "Monreale from its Origin to the End of the Middle Ages." *A Companion to Medieval Palermo: The History of a Mediterranean City from 600 to 1500*. Edited by Annliese Nef. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Brown, Peter. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015.
- Brundage, James A. *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Busserolle, J.X. Carré de. "Dictionnaire Géographique, Historique, et Biographique d'Indre-et-Loire et de l'Ancienne Province de Touraine." *Mémoires de la Société archéologique de Touraine* 31, no. 80. Touraine: Société archéologique de Touraine, 1883.
- Cagny, Paul de. *Histoire de l'arrondissement de Péronne*. Quentin, 1869.
- Cain Miller, Claire. "The Pandemic Created a Child-Care Crisis. Mothers Bore the Burden." *The New York Times*, May 17, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/05/17/upshot/women-workforce-employment-covid.html>.
- Carrasco, Magdalena. "Sanctity and Experience in Pictorial Hagiography." *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*. Edited by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- Carrez, P.L. *Étude sur le château de Sarry, ancienne campagne des évêques de Châlons-sur-Marne*. Châlons: Martin Frères, 1899.
- Chabrier, Christina Ferree. "Polychromatic Piety: Saints According to Anatole France." *Medieval Saints in Late Nineteenth Century French Culture: Eight Essays*. Edited by Elizabeth Emery and Laurie Postlewate. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004.
- Chevalier, Bernard. *Tours, ville royale, 1356-1520: origine et développement d'une capitale à la fin du Moyen Age*. Chambray: C.L.D., 1983.

- Clark, Christopher. "The New Catholicism and the European Culture Wars." *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Edited by Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Cloke, Gillian. *This Female Man of God: Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, AD 350-450*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Coates, Simon. "Regendering Radegund? Fortunatus, Baudonivia and the Problem of Female Sanctity in Merovingian Gaul." *Gender and Christian Religion: Papers Read at the 1996 Summer Meeting and the 1997 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*. Edited by the Ecclesiastical History Society, and R. N. Swanson. Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 1998.
- Collins, Arthur. *Collins's Peerage of England: Genealogical, Biographical, and Historical*. Vol. 7. London: F. C. and J. Rivington, Otridge and son, 1812.
- Consolino, F. E. "Due agiografi per una regina: Radegonda di Turingia tra Fortunato e Baudonivia." *Studi storici* 29 (1988): 143-159.
- Constable, Giles. *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought: The Interpretation of Mary and Martha, The Ideal of the Imitation of Christ, The Orders of Society*. Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Coon, Lynda L. *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.
- Coudanne, Louise. "Le temps de réformes." In *Histoire de Sainte-Croix de Poitiers : Quatorze siècles de vie monastique*. Edited by Yvonne Labande-Mailfert. Poitiers: Société des antiquaires de l'Ouest, 1986.
- Coulanges, Numa-Denis Fustel de. "L'organisation de la justice dans l'Antiquité et les temps modernes. III. La justice royal au Moyen Âge." *Revue des Deux Mondes* 94 (July–August 1871).
- Coumert, Magali. *Origines des peuples: les récits du Haut Moyen Âge occidental (550-850)*. Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 2007.
- Coutelle, Antoine. "Espace urbain et commémoration à Poitiers au XVIIe siècle: « la procession générale en mémoire du siège levé par l'admiral devant ceste ville. »" *Terres marines: Études en hommage à Dominique Guillemet*, ed. F. Chavaud and J. Péret. Rennes, 2005.
- Crouzet, Denis. *Les guerriers de Dieu: la violence au temps des troubles de religion (vers 1525-1610)*. Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1990.
- Curry, Anne. *The Hundred Years' War, 1337-1453*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003.



- Curtis, Sarah A. "Charitable Ladies: Gender, Class and Religion in Mid Nineteenth-Century Paris." *Past & Present* 177, no. 1 (2002): 121–156.
- Cushing, Kathleen. "Events That Led to Sainthood: Sanctity and the Reformers in the Eleventh Century." *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting*. Edited by Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Dalarun, Jacques. "The Clerical Gaze." In *A History of Women in the West*. Vol. 2. *Silences of the Middle Ages*. Edited by Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992.
- "Hagiographie et métaphore: fonctionnalité des modèles féminins dans l'oeuvre d'Hildegard de Bavière." *Le Culte Des Saints Aux IXe - XIIIe Siècles*. Université De Poitiers, Sous La Direction De Robert Favreau, 1995.
- "La Madeleine dans l'ouest de la France au tournant des XIe-XIIe Siècles." *Mélanges de L'Ecole Française de Rome. Moyen-Age* 104, no. 1 (1992): 71–119.
- Darrow, Margaret H. "French Volunteer Nursing and the Myth of War Experience in World War I." *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 1 (1996): 80–106.
- Daughton, J. P. *An Empire Divided : Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- D'Auria, Matthew. *The Shaping of French National Identity: Narrating the Nation's Past, 1715–1830*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- Davidoff, Leonore and Catherine Hall. *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middleclass, 1780–1850*. London: Hutchinson, 1987.
- Davies, Peter. "The Front National and Catholicism: From Intégrisme to Joan of Arc and Clovis." *Religion Compass* 4, no. 9 (2010): 576–587.
- Davis, Natalie Zemon. "The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth Century France." *Past & Present* 59, no. 1 (1973): 51–91.
- Day, Veronique. "Recycling Radegund: Identity and ambition in the Breviary of Anne de Prie." *Excavating the Medieval Image: Manuscripts, Artists, Audiences*. Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2004.
- Delooz, Pierre. "Pour une étude sociologique de la sainteté canonisée dans l'Eglise catholique." *Archives de Sociologie des religions* 13, no.1 (1962): 17-43.
- Demus, Otto. *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily*. London: Routledge & Paul, 1949.
- Déservillers, Le Compte P. de. *Hildegard et son temps: un évêque au douzième siècle*. Paris: Bourguet, Calas et Cie, 1876.

- Diefendorf, Barbara. *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- "The Scars of Religious War in Histories of French Cities (1600–1750)." *French History* 34, no. 4 (2020): 453–474.
- Dieudonné, A. *Hildebert De Lavardin, Évêque Du Mans, Archevêque De Tours (1056-1133): Sa Vie, Ses Lettres*. Paris: A. Picard et fils, 1898.
- Drell, Joanna. *Kinship and Conquest: Family Strategies in the Principality of Salerno During the Norman Period*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002.
- Duby, Georges. *The Knight, The Lady, and The Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*. Translated by Barbara Bray. New York: Pantheon, 1983.
- Edwards, Jennifer C. "My Sister for Abbess: Fifteenth-Century Disputes Over the Abbey of Sainte-Croix, Poitiers." *Journal of Medieval History* 40, no. 1 (2014): 85-107.
- *Superior Women: Medieval Female Authority in Poitiers' Abbey of Sainte-Croix*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Effros, Bonnie. *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Elliot, Dyan. *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell: Metaphor and Embodiment in the Lives of Pious Women, 200-1500*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.
- *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Elm, Susanna. *Virgins of God: the Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Emery, Elizabeth and Laura Morowitz. *Consuming the Past: The Medieval Revival in Fin-de-Siècle France*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003.
- and Laurie Postlewaite, eds. *Medieval Saints in Late Nineteenth Century French Culture: Eight Essays*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004.
- Evangelisti, Silvia. "Wives, Widows, and Brides of Christ: Marriage and the Convent in the Historiography of Early Modern Italy." *The Historical Journal* 43, no. 1 (2000): 233–247.
- Farmer, Sharon. *Communities of Saint Martin: Legend and Ritual in Medieval Tours*. Cornell University Press, 2019.

- "The Leper in the Master Bedroom: Thinking Through a Thirteenth-Century Exemplum." *Framing the Family: Narrative and Representation in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods*. Edited by Rosalynn Voaden and Diane Wolfthal, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* 280. Tempe, Ariz.: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005.
- "Persuasive Voices: Clerical Images of Medieval Wives." *Speculum* 61 (1986): 517-543.
- Favreau, Robert. "Le culte de sainte Radegonde à Poitiers au Moyen Age." *Les religieuses dans le cloître et dans le monde des origines à nos jours: Actes du deuxième colloque international du C.E.R.C.O.R., Poitiers*. Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint Etienne, 1994: 91-110.
- and Marie-Thérèse Camus, *Églises de Poitiers: parcours et visites*. Poitiers: Association Gilbert de la Porrée, 2006.
- "Manuscrits poitevins des vies de sainte Radegonde." *Revue Historique Du Centre-Ouest / Société Des Antiquaires De L'Ouest* 5, no. 2 (2006): 337-339.
- *Sainte-Radegonde*. Poitiers: Association les amis de Sainte Radegonde, 1999.
- Ford, Caroline. "Violence and the Sacred in Nineteenth-Century France." *French Historical Studies* 21, no. 1 (1998): 101-112.
- Fox-Davies, Arthur Charles. *A Complete Guide to Heraldry*. England: J.C. & E.C. Jack, 1925.
- Frazier, Alison K.. *Possible Lives: Authors and Saints in Renaissance Italy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Frith, John. "History of Tuberculosis. Part 1 - Phthisis, Consumption and the White Plague." *Journal of Military and Veterans' Health* 22, no. 2 (2014): 29-35.
- Gäbe, Sabine. "Radegundis: sancta, regina, ancilla. Zum Heiligkeitsideal der Radegundisviten von Fortunat und Baudonivia." *Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte* 16, no. 1 (1989): 1-30.
- Garnier, M.J. *Dictionnaire Topographique du Département de la Somme*. In *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de Picardie*. Troisième Série, Tome I. Paris: Librairie de J.B. Dumoulin, 1867.
- Geary, Patrick. *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1978.
- George, Judith W. *Venantius Fortunatus: a Latin poet in Merovingian Gaul*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

- Gies, Frances and Joseph. *Marriage and the Family in the Middle Ages*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987.
- Ginot, Émile. *Le manuscrit de sainte Radegonde de Poitiers et ses peintures de XIe siècle*. Paris: SFRMP, 1920.
- Glenn, Jason. "Two Lives of Saint Radegund." *The Middle Ages in Texts and Texture: reflections on Medieval sources*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.
- Goyau, Georges. *Monseigneur Augouard*. Paris: Librairie Plon, Les Petits-Fils de Plon et Nourrit, 1926.
- Graceffa, Agnès. "Writing the History of Merovingian Gaul: An Historiographical Survey." *The Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World*. Edited by Bonnie Effros and Isabel Moreira. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Gray, Arthur. *Jesus College*. London: F.E. Robinson, 1902.
- Grell, Chantal. "Le baptême de Clovis aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles." *Versalia : revue de la Société des amis de Versailles* 1, no. 1 (1998): 48–59
- Griffiths, Fiona J. "Like the Sister of Aaron' Medieval Religious Women as Makers and Donors of Liturgical Textiles." In *Female Vita Religiosa between Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages: Structures, Developments and Spatial Contexts*. Edited by Gert Melville and Müller Anne. Vita Regularis. Abhandlungen, Band 47. Berlin: Lit., 2011.
- "Women and Reform in the Central Middle Ages." *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*. Edited by Judith Bennett and Ruth Karras. Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Guillen, Pierre. *L'Expansion, 1881–1898*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1985.
- Hamon, Auguste. *Jean Bouchet: Un Grand Rhétoricien Poitevin*. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970.
- Hall, Stuart. "When Was 'the Post-Colonial'? Thinking at the Limit." *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*. Edited by Chambers, Iain and Lidia Curti. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Heene, Katrien. *The Legacy of Paradise: Marriage, Motherhood, and Woman in Carolingian Edifying Literature*. Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1997.
- Helvétius, Anne-Marie. "Réécriture hagiographique et réforme monastique: les premières Vitae de saint Humbert de Maroilles (Xe-XIe siècles). Avec l'édition de la Vita Humberti prima." In *La Réécriture Hagiographique Dans L'occident Médiéval : Transformations Formelles et Idéologiques*. Edited by Monique Goulet, Martin

- Heinzelmann, and Deutsches Historisches Institut Paris, France. Beihefte Zu Francia, Bd. 58. Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2003: 195-230.
- Henriet, Patrick. "Les Trois Voies de la Réforme dans l'Hagiographie Erémétique du XII<sup>e</sup> Siècle: Enquête sur la Vita Bernardi Tironensis (BHL 1251)." *Médiévales* 62, *Réforme(s) et Hagiographie dans l'Occident Latin: Vie-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. (Printemps 2012): 105-121.
- Henry, Joni. "Humanist Hagiography in England, c. 1480 - c. 1520" *Literature Compass* 10, no. 7 (2013): 535–543.
- Herbermann, Charles George et al., ed. *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*. Vol. 15. Encyclopedia Press, 1913.
- Hildreth, Martha. *Doctors, Bureaucrats & Public Health in France, 1888–1902*. New York : Garland, 1987.
- "Medical Rivalries and Medical Politics in France: The Physicians' Union Movement and the Medical Assistance Law of 1893." *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 42, no. 1 (1987): 5–29.
- Hillman, Jennifer. "Lay Female Devotional Lives in the Counter Reformation." *Church History and Religious Culture* 97, no. 3-4 (2017): 369–380.
- Hilton, Lisa. *Queens Consort: England's Medieval Queens from Eleanor of Aquitaine to Elizabeth of York*. New York, NY: Pegasus Books, 2010.
- Hindman, Sandra, and Gabrielle M. Spiegel. "The Fleur-de-Lis Frontispieces to Guillaume de Nangis's Chronique Abrégée: Political Iconography in Late Fifteenth-Century France." *Viator (Berkeley)* 12 (1981): 381–408.
- Hoare, Sir Richard Colt. *The History of Modern Wiltshire*. Vol. 1. London: J. Nichols and son, 1822.
- d'Hollander, Paul. "The Church in the Street in Nineteenth-Century France." *Journal of the Western Society for French History* 32 (2004).  
<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/w/ws fh/0642292.0032.011?view=text;rgn=main>
- Hornbeck II, J. Patrick. *What is a Lollard? Dissent and Belief in Late Medieval England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Houben, Hubert. *Roger II of Sicily: A Ruler Between East and West*. Translated by Graham A. Loud and Diane Milburn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Huneycutt, Lois L.. *Matilda of Scotland: A Study in Medieval Queenship*. Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2003.

- James, Edward Boucher. *Letters Archaeological and Historical Relating to the Isle of Wight, by the Late Rev. E. Boucher James, Collected and Arranged by His Widow*. England: H. Fowde, 1896.
- James, Edward. "The Merovingians from the French Revolution to the Third Republic." *Early Medieval Europe* 20, no. 4 (2012): 450–471.
- Jansen, Philippe. "La part du Midi dans la naissance de la nation française: Beaune (Colette), Naissance de la Nation France, Paris, Gallimard, Bibliothèque des Histoires, 1985." *Annales du Midi* 99, no. 177 (1987): 138–140.
- Jesus College Cambridge. "Jesus College Cambridge: St. Radegund" (website). copyright 2019. <https://www.jesus.cam.ac.uk/college/about-us/history/people-note/st-radegund>
- Jonas, Raymond A. "Restoring a Sacred Center: Pilgrimage, Politics, and the Sacré-Coeur." *Réflexions Historiques* 20, no. 1 (1994): 95-123.
- Kantorowicz, Ernst H. "The 'King's Advent' and the Enigmatic Panels in the Doors of Santa Sabina." *The Art Bulletin* 26, no. 4 (1944): 207–231.
- King, John N.. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Kitchen, John. *Saints' Lives and the Rhetoric of Gender: Male and Female in Merovingian Hagiography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Kitzinger, Ernst. "The Mosaics of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo, An Essay on the Choice and Arrangement of Subjects." *The Art Bulletin* (January 1949): 269–292.
- Kleinmann, Dorothé. *Radegonde: Une Sainte Européenne, vénération et lieux de vénération dans les pays germanophones*. Loudun: PSR éditions, 2000.
- Korpiola, Mia, and Anu Lahtinen. *Cultures of Death and Dying in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, 2015.
- Kuefler, Mathew. *The Making and Unmaking of a Saint: Hagiography and Memory in the Cult of Gerald of Aurillac*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.
- Kuuliala, Jenni, Rose-Marie Peake, and Päivi Räisänen-Schröder. "Hagiography and Lived Religion." *Lived Religion and Everyday Life in Early Modern Hagiographic Material*. Edited by Jenni Kuuliala Rose-Marie Peake, and Räisänen Päivi. Palgrave Studies in the History of Experience. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019: 1-26.
- Labande-Mailfert, Yvonne. *Histoire de l'abbaye Sainte-Croix de Poitiers: quatorze siècles de vie monastique*. Edited by Edmond-René Labande. Poitiers: Société des antiquaires de l'Ouest, 1986.

- Lansing, Carol. *Passion and Order: Restraint of Grief in the Medieval Italian Communes*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018.
- La Liborlière, Bellin de. *Vieux souvenirs du Poitiers d'avant 1789; suivis de notices spéciales sur la Grand'Gueule, et l'ancienne université de Poitiers*. Poitiers: Brissaud, 1983.
- Largeault, L'Abbe Alfred. "Etat des vases sacré, ornements, linges, livres, etc. de l'église collégiale de Sainte-Radegonde de Poitiers 1791." *Revue d'archéologie poitevine* 7 (Juillet 1898), Poitiers: H. Oudine: 198 – 207.
- Laverret, Michel. "L'iconographie de sainte Radegonde dans les manuscrits," *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de L'Ouest et des Mudées de Poitiers* 2, no. 2 (1988): 85–112.
- Leclercq, Jean. "La sainte Radegonde de Venance Fortunat et celle de Baudovinie : Essai d'hagiographie comparée." *Fructus centesimus: mélanges offerts à Gerard J.M. Bartelink à l'occasion de son soixante-cinquième anniversaire*. Steenbrugis: In abbatia S. Petri, 1989.
- Ledoux-Lebard, René. *La Lutte antituberculeuse en France, par le Dr H. Dehau*. Paris: Hachette, 1906.
- Lerolle, Christophe. "Courant, Chapelle Sainte-Radegonde." *Eglises-en-Charent-Maritime*. Last modified November 26, 2020.  
[http://ch.lerolle.free.fr/eglises17/courant\\_chapelle\\_sainte-radegonde.php](http://ch.lerolle.free.fr/eglises17/courant_chapelle_sainte-radegonde.php)
- Levy, Allison M.. *Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Aldershot, Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2003.
- Lifshitz, Felice. *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria: Historiographic Discourse and Sainly Relics, 684-1090*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1995.
- Lillich, Meredith Parsons. *The Armor of Light: Stained Glass in Western France, 1250-1325*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- Locke, Robert. *French Legitimists and the Politics of Moral Order in the Early Third Republic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Loisel, Jean-Jacques. "Sainte Radegonde entre Loire et Cher." July 20, 2012,  
[https://www.vendomois.fr/societeArcheologique/ressources/livres/radegonde\\_auto%C3%A9d26-8-12\\_statue\\_m%C3%A9zi%C3%A8re](https://www.vendomois.fr/societeArcheologique/ressources/livres/radegonde_auto%C3%A9d26-8-12_statue_m%C3%A9zi%C3%A8re)
- Lomax, Elizabeth. "Hereditary or Acquired Disease? Early Nineteenth Century Debates on the Cause of Infantile Scrofula and Tuberculosis." *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 32, no. 4 (1977): 356–374.

- Lombard-Jourdan, Anne. "L'invention du 'roi fondateur' à Paris au XIIe siècle: de l'obligation morale au thème sculptural." *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* 155, no. 2 (1997): 485–542.
- "‘Munjoie!’, Montjoie et monjoie: Histoire d'un mot." *Nouvelle revue d'onomastique* 21-22, no. 1 (1993): 159–180.
- LoPrete, Kimberly A. *Adela of Blois: Countess and Lord (C.1067-1137)*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007.
- Mackie, S. J. *A Descriptive and Historical Account of Folkestone and Its Neighborhood*. Folkestone: J. English, 1883.
- Macy, Gary. *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Makowski, Elizabeth M. "The Conjugal Debt and Medieval Canon Law." *Journal of Medieval History* 3, No. 2 (1977): 99-114.
- Mâle, Emile. *Religious Art in France: The Thirteenth Century, A Study of Medieval Iconography and Its Sources*. Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1984.
- Mango, Cyril, and Ernest J. W. Hawkins. "The Hermitage of St. Neophytos and Its Wall Paintings." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 20 (1966): 119–206.
- Marccadé, Jacques. "L'Age classique." In *Histoire de Sainte-Croix de Poitiers: Quatorze siècles de vie monastique*. Edited by Yvonne Labande-Mailfert. Poitiers: Société des antiquaires de l'Ouest, 1986.
- Marignan, Albert. *Études sur la civilisation française*. Paris: É. Bouillon, 1899.
- McKitterick, Rosamond. *History and Memory in the Carolingian World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- McNamara, JoAnn. "The Herrenfrage: The Restructuring of the Gender System 1050-1150." *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
- "Imitatio Helenae: Sainthood as an Attribute of Queenship in the Early Middle Ages." *Saints: Studies in Hagiography*. Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1996: 51-80.
- "A Legacy of Miracles: Hagiography and Nunneries in Merovingian Gaul." *Women of the Medieval World*. Edited by Julius Kirschner and Suzanne Wemple. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985.
- "The Need to Give." *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*. Edited by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991.



- *A New Song: Celibate Women in the First Three Christian Centuries*. New York: Institute for Research in History, 1983.
- Mérindol, Christian de. "Le Culte de sainte Radegonde et la monarchie française à la fin du Moyen Age." *Les Religieuses dans le cloître et dans le monde des origines à nos jours*. Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 1994.
- Michalski, Sergiusz. *The Reformation and the Visual Arts: the Protestant Image Question in Western and Eastern Europe*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Miller, Maureen. "Masculinity, Reform, and Clerical Culture: Narratives of Episcopal Holiness in the Gregorian Era." *Church History* 72, no. 1 (2003): 25–52.
- "New Religious Movements and Reform." *A Companion to the Medieval World*. Edited by Carol Lansing and Edward English. Blackwell Companions to European History. Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Miller, Tanya Stabler. *The Beguines of Medieval Paris: Gender, Patronage, and Spiritual Authority*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.
- Mitchell, Allan. *The Divided Path: The German Influence on Social Reform in France After 1870*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.
- Moos, Peter von. *Hildebert Von Lavardin, 1056-1133*. Pariser Historische Studien, Bd. 3. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1965.
- Nelson, Eric. "Remembering the Martyrdom of Saint Francis of Paola: History, Memory and Minim Identity in Seventeenth-Century France." *History and Memory* 26, no. 2 (2014): 76–105.
- *The Legacy of Iconoclasm: Religious War and the Relic Landscape of Tours, Blois and Vendôme, 1550-1750*. St. Andrews: Centre for French History and Culture of the University of St. Andrews, 2013.
- Neville, Pamela. "Richard Pynson, Kings Printer (1506 -1529): Printing and Propaganda in Early Tudor England." Ph.D. diss., London University, 1990.
- Norberg, Kathryn. "The Counter Reformation and Women: Religious and Lay." *Catholicism in Early Modern History: A Guide to Research*. Edited by John W. O'Malley. St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1988.
- Nuss, Daniel. *Die Hagiographischen Werke Hildeberts Von Lavardin, Baudris Von Bourgueil Und Marbods Von Rennes: Heiligkeit Im Zeichen Der Kirchenreform Und Der Reecriture*. Beiträge Zur Hagiographie, Bd. 12. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden gmbh, 2013.
- Offen, Karen, *Debating the Woman Question in the French Third Republic, 1870-1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

- *The Woman Question in France, 1400–1870*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Page, William, ed. “Houses of Premonstratensian Canons: The Abbey of Bradsole or St. Radegund.” In *A History of the County of Kent: Volume 2*. London, 1926. British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/kent/vol2/pp172-175>
- Pastoureau, Michel. *Heraldry: Its Origins and Meaning*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2010.
- Pepin, Ronald E. *Saint Mary of Egypt: Three Medieval Lives in Verse*. Cistercian Studies Series, No. 209. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 2005.
- Petit, Rev. J. L. “The Church of Saint Radegonde, Near Tours.” *The Archaeological Journal* 44, no. 161. Royal Archaeological Institute, 1887.
- Pickard, Charlotte. “The Noble Leper: Responses to Leprosy in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries.” *Anglo-Norman Studies XLI: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 2018*. Edited by Elisabeth van Houts. NED-New edition. Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2019.
- Pon, Georges. "Un corps martyrisé. L'exemple de sainte Radegonde." *Corps outragés, corps ravagés: de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge*. Edited by Badiou, Lydie, Véronique Mehl, and Myriam Soria Audebert. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011.
- Pugh, R. B. and Elizabeth Crittall, eds. “Houses of Augustinian Canons: Priory of Longleat.” In *A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 3*. London, 1956. British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/wilts/vol3/pp302-303>
- Quérard, Joseph-Marie. *La France littéraire, ou Dictionnaire bibliographique des savants, historiens et gens de lettres de la France, ainsi que des littérateurs étrangers qui ont écrit en français, plus particulièrement pendant les XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, Vol. 12. Firmin Didot, père et fils, 1859.
- Reames, Sherry L. *The Legenda Aurea: A Reexamination of Its Paradoxical History*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.
- *Middle English Legends of Women Saints*. Kalamazoo: Published for TEAMS in association with the University of Rochester by Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2003.
- Rédet, Louis. *Dictionnaire topographique du département de la Vienne comprenant les noms de lieu anciens et modernes*. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1881.
- Remensnyder, Amy G. *Remembering Kings Past: Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- Richards, Jeffrey. *Sex, Dissidence and Damnation: Minority Groups in the Middle Ages*. London and New York: 1991.

- Rosser, Susan. "Aethelthryth: A Conventional Saint?" *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 79, no. 3 (1997): 15-24.
- Salvini, Joseph. "Un demi-millénaire: la délivrance de la Normandie en 1450 et le culte de sainte Radegonde." *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest et des musées de Poitiers* Ser. 4, vol. 1 (1950/51): 489-494.
- Sandler, Lucy F. *Gothic Manuscripts, 1285-1385*. London: H. Miller Publishers, 1986.
- Sanok, Catherine. *Her Life Historical: Exemplarity and Female Saints' Lives in Late Medieval England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.
- Sawyer, Jeffrey K. *Printed Poison: Pamphlet Propaganda, Faction Politics, and the Public Sphere in Early Seventeenth-Century France*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Scheffer, Marie-Eve. "Chinon, la chapelle Sainte-Radegonde." Conseil général d'Indre-Loire, 2010.
- Schultheiss, Katrin. *Bodies and Souls: Politics and the Professionalization of Nursing in France, 1880-1922*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Schmitz, Karl. "Ursprung und Geschichte der Devotionsformeln bis zu ihrer Aufnahme in die fränkische Königsurkunde." PhD diss., Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Bonn, 1913.
- Searle, Eleanor. "Women and the Legitimation of Succession at the Norman Conquest." *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies* 328. Pasadena: Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences California Institute of Technology, 1980.
- Sébillot, Paul. *Le Folklore de France: Tome Troisième, La Faune et la Flore*. Editions Imago, 1984.
- Shaw, Jennifer. *Dream States: Puvis de Chavannes, Modernism, and the Fantasy of France*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002.
- "Imagining the Motherland: Puvis de Chavannes, Modernism, and the Fantasy of France." *The Art Bulletin* 79, no. 4 (1997): 586-610.
- Sluhovsky, Moshe. *Patroness of Paris: Rituals of Devotion in Early Modern France*. Koninklijke Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands, 1998.
- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1, no. 1 (1975): 1-29.

- Smith, Julia M.H. "The Problem of Female Sanctity in Carolingian Europe c. 780-920." *Past & Present* 146, no. 1 (1995): 3–37.
- Spiegel, Gabrielle M. "Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative." *History and theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History* 22, no. 1 (1983): 43–53.
- Strasser, Ulrike. "Aut Muritus Aut Maritus? Women's Lives in Counter-Reformation Munich (1579-1651)." PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1997.
- Sumption, Jonathan. *The Hundred Years War*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- Taylor, Anna Lisa. *Epic Lives and Monasticism in the Middle Ages, 800-1050*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Terrio, Susan J. "Crucible of the Millennium?: The Clovis Affair in Contemporary France." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, no. 3 (1999): 438–457.
- TF1 Info*. "Emmanuel Macron giflé : à quoi fait référence "Montjoie Saint Denis", devise créée par l'agresseur ?" June 8, 2021. <https://www.tf1info.fr/politique/video-emmanuel-macron-gifle-a-quoi-fait-reference-montjoie-saint-denis-devise-criee-par-l-agresseur-2188206.html>
- Thibaudeau, Antoine-René-Hyacinthe. *Histoire du Poitou*. 3 Volumes. Robin, 1839.
- Thomas, Hugh. *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation and Identity 1066-1220*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- *The Norman Conquest: England after William the Conqueror*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008.
- Thomasson, Emma. "Gender equality takes one step forward, three back during COVID." *Reuters*, December 2, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/funds/gender-equality-takes-one-step-forward-three-back-during-covid-2021-12-02/>.
- Thompson, Kathleen. *Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France: The County of the Perche, 1000-1226*. Suffolk: Royal Historical Society, 2002.
- Toubert, Pierre. "Essai sur les modèles hagiographiques de la réforme Grégorienne." *Etudes sur l'Italie Médiévale IXe-XIIe s.* London: Valorium Reprints, 1976: 806-840.
- Tourlet, Ernest Henry. *Histoire du collège de Chinon*. Chinon: Imprimerie Delaunay-Dehaies, 1904.
- Van Dam, Raymond. *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993.

- Vanheule, Koen. "Reformist Hagiography: the Life of St Roding of Beaulieu and the Struggle for Power in Early Eleventh-century Lotharingia." *Journal of Medieval History* 42, 5: 511-534.
- Van Houts, Elisabeth. "Intermarriage in Eleventh-Century England." *Normandy and its Neighbours, 900-1250: Essays for David Bates*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2011.
- Vigier, Fabrice. "Une politique du pèlerinage? Les sanctuaires catholiques du diocèse de Poitiers au XVIIe siècle." Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014, <http://books.openedition.org/pur/65072>
- Wandel, Lee Palmer. *Voracious Idols and Violent Hands: Iconoclasm in Reformation Zurich, Strasbourg, and Basel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Weber, Alison, ed. *Devout Laywomen in the Early Modern Catholic World*. Routledge: 2016.
- Wehlau, Ruth. "Literal and Symbolic: The Language of Asceticism in Two Lives of St Radegund." *Florilegium* 19 (2002): 75-89.
- Welch, Christina, and Rohan Brown. "From Villainous Letch and Sinful Outcast, to 'Especially Beloved of God': Complicating the Medieval Leper through Gender and Social Status." *Historical Reflections* 42, no. 1 (2016): 48–60.
- Wemple, Suzanne Fonay. *Women in Frankish society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500 to 900*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.
- "Female Spirituality and Mysticism in Frankish Monasteries: Radegund, Balthild and Aldegund." *Medieval Religious Women 2* (1987) Edited by Lillian Thomas Shank and John A. Nichols. Kalamazoo, 1987.
- Wiesner-Hanks, Merry. *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Wilkinson, Alexander. *Mary Queen of Scots and French Public Opinion, 1542-1600*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan division of St. Martin's Press, 2004.
- Winbolt, S. E. "St. Radegund's Abbey, Dover." *Archaeologia Cantiana, Transactions of the Kent Archaeological Society* 43, 1931.
- Winstead, Karen A. *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997.
- Wood, Anthony. *Athenae Oxonienses*. Vol. 2. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Knaplock, Midwinter and Tonson, 1721.
- Worcester, Thomas. "'Neither Married nor Cloistered': Blessed Isabelle in Catholic Reformation France." *The Sixteenth century journal* 30, no. 2 (1999): 457–472.

Wormald, Francis. *English Kalendars Before A.D. 1100*. London: Harrison and Sons, Ltd., printers, 1934.

Worsley, Sir Richard. *The History of the Isle of Wight*. London: A. Hamilton, 1781.

Yeo, Eileen Janes. "The Creation of 'Motherhood' and Women's Responses in Britain and France, 1750-1914." *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (1999): 201–218.