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The Cults of Sainte Foy and the Cultural Work of Saints

Kathleen Ashley

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Bringing together artifacts, texts, and practices within an interpretive framework that stresses the cultural work performed by saints, Kathleen Ashley presents a comparative study of the cults of the medieval Sainte Foy at a number of the sites where she was especially venerated.

This book analyzes how each cult site produced the saint it needed, appropriating or creating whatever was required to that end. Ashley's approach is thoroughly interdisciplinary, incorporating visual, religious, medieval, and women's and gender studies as well as literary studies and social history. She uses the theoretical framework of "cultural work" to analyze how the cult of Sainte Foy was sponsored and received by specific groups in different locales in Europe. The book is comprehensive in terms of historical as well as geographical range, tracing the history of the cult from the early Middle Ages into the present day. It also includes historiographical analysis, examining the way the cults of Sainte Foy have been represented in various historical accounts. Ashley's narrative challenges the boundary between "elite" and "popular" culture and complicates the traditional vernacular vs. Latin language binary. A chief aim of the study is to show how "art" objects always operated in conjunction with other cultural texts to construct a saint's cult. The volume is heavily illustrated, showing artifacts such as stained-glass windows and wall paintings which are not readily available from any other source.

This book will be of special interest to scholars in art history, medieval history, gender studies, and religion.

Kathleen Ashley is Professor of English (Emerita) at the University of Southern Maine, USA.

Cover info: Conques, Treasury, Coffer of Boniface (detail).
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Preface and acknowledgements

Preface

The title of this book foregrounds its central claim: that there was not *one* cult of the saint but multiple "cults of Sainte Foy." Scholars of medieval sanctity have tended to submerge local variations within an overarching interpretive framework they call "the cult of Sainte Foy." The language used for hagiographic discourse produces the effect of similarity and continuity, with difference as incidental. Gregory of Tours' claim in his *Life of the Fathers* (c. 591) that we should speak of the "life" not the "lives" of saints led to the widespread assumption in early scholarship that holy lives were modeled upon the same paradigm, which may have discouraged the search for variety and difference.[1] Citing Gregory of Tours, Thomas Heffernan emphasizes "the conservative ethos of the genre" [of saints' life] that "tends to play down differences while extolling socially accepted paradigms of sanctity."[2] Heffernan describes the lives of saints as "sacred stories designed to teach the faithful to imitate actions which the community had decided were paradigmatic. Christ's behavior in the Gospels was the single authenticating norm for all action."[3] Gregory chooses the singular term "life" because, Heffernan says, "sanctity is derived from the sacred, which is radically singular."[4]

Certainly, previous generations assumed that any saint's cult consisted of a stable package of attributes – iconography, themes and texts – that would be activated by references to the saint in every place or time.[5] When the saint's cult was established in a new location, the invariant package could be put to use to create a functioning cult complete with architectural spaces, artifacts, texts and liturgical practices. By contrast, this study of the child martyr Sainte Foy shares the assumption of most current scholars that saints' cults are not static or invariant; it assumes there is meaningful variation in any saint's cult – representing the saint in diverse ways depending on temporal or geographical location, but above all on patronage and reception at a given site.[6] Thus it makes sense to speak in the plural of the "cults of Foy," not of a singular "cult of Foy."

The Cults of Sainte Foy and the Cultural Work of Saints is a comparative study of this saint's cults throughout Europe, where she was especially venerated during the Middle Ages. From the saint's martyrdom site at Agen in southwestern France, the cult moved eastward to Conques, where it became a miracle-working shrine in the tenth and eleventh centuries, generating an eleventh-century collection of Foy's miracle stories, an outpouring of donations and plans for a new church. By the twelfth century, the veneration of Sainte Foy had spread across France to England, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Spain. Some sites put the saint at the center of their religious observances, while others integrated Foy into a complex of many saints

worshipped in the liturgical year. Representations of Sainte Foy underwent transformation in response to local variations. The Agen martyr was refigured in Conques as a miracle worker on behalf of the Benedictine abbey, while in the Alsace she became part of the imperial agenda of the Hohenstaufen dynasty. In Normandy and England, too, Foy's early cult depended on noble family patronage, but when family support ceased the cult was left to find new patronage and a new identity. In many places, when the original appropriation of the cult was no longer viable, the cult ceased – leaving only the saint's name in that location.

Some former Foy foundations are known through brief documentary references, but many others retain works of art and literature that continue to fascinate us. Art works include the well-preserved twelfth-century tympanum of the Conques abbey church, the thirteenth-century wall painting of a miracle performed for the aristocratic founders of the priory at Horsham St Faith, England, and the early Renaissance stained-glass windows showing the life and death of Foy in the Conches parish church, Normandy. Texts from Foy's cult preserved in libraries across Europe reveal other significant adaptations to new sites, including major revisions of the original miracle collection and *passio* or the creation of new narratives and liturgies. Attention to the history and practice at an individual locale reveals the embeddedness of each cult in its geography and society. At most locations, the cult did not survive into the modern period, but others such as Foy's home shrine at Conques still draw pilgrims. This is, then, a reception study that looks at the way each cult site selected attributes and stories to produce the saint and the cultic practices it needed.[7]

Although it traces the cults of Sainte Foy across the centuries and across the medieval map, the aim of the study is not an exhaustive compilation of available information about texts and artifacts in the style of nineteenth-century scholarship – as found in the valuable compendium of Bouillet and Servières.[8] Rather, the study will be informed by an explicit theoretical framework that asks what *cultural work* the saint performed in different times and places. The impetus for creative adaption was the specific work the cult materials were intended to do in their new ritual setting. Jane Tompkins in a study of nineteenth-century American fiction, *Sensational Designs*, has given a clear description of what is implied by asking about cultural work that a text may be doing:

> Rather than asking, "what does this text mean?" or, "how does it work?" I ask, "what kind of work is this novel trying to do?" My assumption in each instance has been that the text is engaged in solving a problem or a set of problems specific to the time in which it was written, and that therefore the way to identify its purpose is not to compare it to other examples of the genre, but to relate it to the historical circumstances and the contemporary cultural discourse to which it seems most closely linked.[9]

Historian Gabrielle Spiegel in her influential analyses of the intersection between critical theory and historiography argues that "texts incorporate social as well as linguistic realities."[10] While alert to the challenge of combining postmodern language theory with historical analysis, she resists total acceptance of the belief that language "constructs" the world rather than "reflecting" it and asks for a way of conceptualizing the "social agency" of texts:

> What gets lost in the concentration on meaning in place of experience is the sense of social agency, of men and women struggling with the contingencies and

complexities of their lives in terms of the fates that history deals out to them and transforming the worlds they inherit and pass to future generations.[11]

In an attempt to conceptualize the varied motivations behind differences in the implementation of the cult and representations of the saint, discussion in the first four chapters will be organized around four separate kinds of cultural work that Sainte Foy (and by extension other saints) may be seen to perform: establishing the hegemony of the primary cult site (Chapter One), reinforcing ecclesiastical ideologies and agendas (Chapter Two), expressing the identities and commitments of individuals (Chapter Three), and celebrating noble patrons (Chapter Four).

The argument does not rely on conventional modes of analysis. It may, for example, downplay categories such as genre, or the binaries of Latin vs. vernacular texts or of official vs. popular practices that usually structure discussion of medieval culture. Nor does it respect the territorial boundaries that nationalism created but remains open to the possibility that none of these categories is monolithic. By disrupting the expected categories of analysis – including strict chronology – we can identify clusters of materials engaged in the same kind of cultural work.[12]

While the traditional approach to this and other saints' cults usually focuses on one period of historical interest (in Foy's case the eleventh and twelfth centuries), this study looks at cult history beyond the Middle Ages. Foy's cult remained vibrant in many places throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The nineteenth century saw a crucial revitalization of the cult in Conques, an initiative felt in many former cult sites across France.

Narrow disciplinary methodologies are also challenged by taking a thoroughly interdisciplinary approach in which varied kinds of evidence – texts, images, artifacts and practices are brought to bear on the theoretical question of cultural work performed by the saint. Chapter Five explores the probability that several kinds of cultural work would be functioning at one site, either simultaneously or sequentially, as a demonstration of the Foy cult's true "popular" appeal.

In this study, visual images are interpreted as cultural texts.[13] The detailed wall painting in the refectory at Horsham St Faith priory, Norfolk, that depicts Sainte Foy's liberation from captivity of founders Sybil de Cheyney and Robert Fitzwalter arguably played an important role in the monastic experience at that site.[14] Likewise, the magnificent stained-glass windows recounting in image and text the life and passion of Foy in the choir at Conches, Normandy, appear designed for maximum visibility and lisibility by the laity in that parish church. A chief aim of this study is to show how visual objects operated in conjunction with other cultural texts in a discursive context to construct a saint's cult through which people worked to make sense of and thus control their worlds. Foy's cult in its evolving identities and diverse dimensions illustrates just how creatively "hagiocentric" medieval Catholicism was.[15]

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I owe a long-standing debt of gratitude to Pierre Lançon, historian, archivist, and librarian at the Société des Lettres de l'Aveyron in Rodez and the Centre de Documentation historique in Conques, for his unstinting support over three decades in gathering bibliographic materials about Conques and its cult. On each of my visits to Conques, he gave me full access to the library holdings, enabled me to copy whatever I needed and alerted me to recent French scholarship. Without his assistance, this book

could never have been written, and I hope it will repay him – at least in part – for his scholarly generosity.

Fellow medievalist Marilyn Deegan has provided comradeship in the search for Sainte Foy from the beginning of my research. Starting in 1992, she took many of the photographs at Conques and various Foy sites elsewhere and shared in my fascination with the female child saint. Her superb technical skills and keen eye for detail have been crucial to this project, and she has proved herself a reliably delightful travel companion. I am also grateful to Jean-Pierre Rousset, dedicated photographer of art and landscape on pilgrimage routes through France, for sharing his photos of the Boniface coffer reliquary in the Conques Treasury.

On my early trips to Foy sites in France and Spain, I received travel support from the Dean and College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Southern Maine, as well as from Faculty Senate Research Funds, for which I am grateful. The library staff at the university typically does not receive thanks for their behind-the-scenes work of locating and borrowing the books and articles on which an American medievalist relies for her research, but I fully acknowledge that this book could not have been written without their cheerful and professional support. I especially thank Crystal Wilder and Edward Moore for years of help with this and other scholarly projects.

At various stages of research, I presented findings (some with Pamela Sheingorn) at medieval conferences held at Barnard College, NY; University of the South in Sewanee, TN; the Translation Conference in Conques, France; the University of California at Santa Barbara, CA; the Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo, MI; the Medieval Academy in Boston, MA; the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary; the Medieval Congress in Leeds, England; New College in Sarasota, FLA; and the Hagiography Conference in Dubrovnik, Croatia. I also gave invited lectures on the cults of Foy at the University of Houston, Bates College, Colby College, SUNY-Binghamton, Davidson College, the European Center for the Study of Romanesque Culture in Conques, and the Conference on Wall Painting in Lisbon, Portugal. My thanks to all those who responded to my presentations.

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the baroque art of Sainte-Foy-Tarentaise church in the Alps. Vinnie Marsicano found me liturgical materials still held in the St. Gall Stiftsbibliothek and hosted a wonderful visit to the church of Santa Fede in the countryside north of Torino. Longtime friends Gail Gibson and Theresa Coletti, with the collaboration of Carole Hill, Richard Beadle, Rebecca Pinner, and Elaine Rushin, organized a delightful personal tour of medieval churches in East Anglia that enriched my understanding of late medieval religious culture there. As a result of a fortuitous encounter in Dubrovnik, Faye Taylor and Fernand Peloux kindly shared their unpublished work on saints relevant to the cult of Foy. Ann Coltman gave me timely assistance reading a German study of the St. Gall cult and, in the final stages of preparing my digital file, Joanne Thompson's trained art historical eye and digitizing expertise was invaluable. Katie Armstrong of Routledge/Taylor and Francis has been a model of supportive patience while I was trying to finish the manuscript, and her editorial efficiency once she received it was remarkable. To these and many other friends and colleagues who contributed to my project, I give my heartfelt thanks. Sharing my discoveries about the cults of Foy has been one of the joys of this research.

Finally, I must register an immeasurable debt of gratitude to Pamela Sheingorn, who first enticed me into hagiography studies and eventually became my valued collaborator in studies of Saint Foy. Shortly after becoming acquainted, we discovered a mutual interest in the figure of Saint Anne – which led to a co-edited volume of essays about Anne's popular cult in the later Middle Ages.[16] Pam had spent many years translating the Latin miracles of Foy into English, and once the translation project was headed for publication,[17] she invited me to join in analyzing those fascinating narratives about the child martyr saint. Our work yielded a co-authored book *Writing Faith*[18] and several articles on the cult of Foy. I have since added to my hagiographic studies a book and articles on the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela,[19] but I have no doubt it is to Pam that I owe my initial entry into the rich and rewarding field of saints.

Notes

1 Gregory of Tours uses the singular "life" in his title *Liber vitae patrum*, and in the preface comments, "It is asked by some whether we ought to say life or lives of the saints. A. Gellius and several philosophers have preferred to say lives. But Pliny in the third book of the Art of Grammar says 'the ancients have said "the lives" of each of us; but grammarians did not think that [the word] life has a plural.' Hence it is clear that it is better to say 'life of the Fathers' rather than 'lives' because, although there is a diversity of merits and deeds of power, nevertheless, the one life of the body nourishes all in the world." Quoted by John Kitchen, *Saints' Lives and the Rhetoric of Gender: Male and Female in Merovingian Hagiography* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 96. Kitchen argues that scholars have misinterpreted this quotation and offers an in-depth analysis of "the complexity of Gregory's view regarding the unity and diversity of sanctity" (in Life of the Fathers), 97; see his full discussion 58–98.

2 Thomas Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 14.

3 Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, 5.

4 Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, 7.

5 Most compendia of saints are based on the implicit assumption that the legend and attributes of each saint remain stable, with few historical modifications; see, for example, Rosa Giorgi, *Saints in Art*, ed. Stefano Zuffi, trans. Thomas Michael Hartmann (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2002).

6 Without using the theoretical language of "cultural work" and "appropriation" with which this study frames its analysis, other scholars document the shifts in hagiographic emphasis of various saints, their cults, and their recipients. Citing the work of Thomas Head and Sharon Farmer, Patrick J. Geary discusses the "intentionality behind hagiographic production," in *Living With the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, 11–29; "We must rediscover the meaning of hagiographic texts to their producers, the contexts of production and distribution, and the uses of the texts" (27). For St. Edmund of Bury, see Simon Yarrow's "case study" in *Saints and Their Communities: Miracle Stories in Twelfth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 24–62; also Rebecca Pinner, *The Cult of St. Edmund in Medieval East Anglia* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2015), who uses an interdisciplinary approach through descriptions of the cult of Edmund in many kinds of writing (not just hagiography), in iconography, and in material culture to trace successive generations of devotees who redefine the saint's identity; he could be "martir, mayde and kynge" depending on the reception context. Similarly, without theorizing "appropriation," Tracey R. Sands shows the political implications of restored images of saints in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century churches in Gotland on the Baltic Sea, where Danish identities were erased to create Swedish identities for the saints; "Saints and the Politics of Gotland Identities," in *Symbolic Identity and the Cultural Memory of Saints*, ed. Nils Holger Petersen, Anu Mand, Sebastian Salvado and Tracey R. Sands (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018),189–219. In the "Introduction" to the collection *Symbolic Identity and the Cultural Memory of Saints*, Nils Holger Petersen acknowledges "reception history" whereby "transformations of local or regional identities take place in connection with local appropriations of transmitted materials, ideas and/or structures" (2). Similarly, Barbara Abou-El-Haj offers a case study of three pictorial hagiographies of St. Amand d'Elnone produced between 1066 and 1180 that show the "changing content" of the lives "as the monastery sought to renew its cult while it adapted to new pressures of feudal arrangements in a developing exchange economy"; *The Medieval Cult of Saints: Formations and Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 61. For an art historically focused overview of the complex issues regarding patronage, production and agency, see Jill Caskey, "Whodunnit? Patronage, the Canon, and the Problematics of Agency in Romanesque and Gothic Art," in *A Companion to Medieval Art*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 193–212.

7 A useful list of "Typical components of a saint's cult in the medieval period" (based on the work of Graham Jones) is given by Samantha Riches in "Hagiography in Context: Images, Miracles, Shrines and Festivals," in *A Companion to Middle English Hagiography*, ed. Sarah Salih (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2010), 45–46.

8 Auguste Bouillet and Louis Servières, *Sainte Foy, vierge et martyre* (Rodez: E. Carrrère, 1900).

9 Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 38.

10 Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), xviii.

11 Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text." in *The Past as Text*, 21.

12 A brief list of many functions of saints' cults is offered by Stephen Wilson in the "Introduction" to his edited volume, *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, repr. 1987), 1–53. For this study, I identify and analyze kinds of "cultural work" pertinent to understanding Sainte Foy's cults.

13 The discourse of cultural studies uses the term "cultural text" for almost all forms of social expression, but in the interests of clarity (given its interdisciplinary scope) my analysis hereafter mostly uses "text" for written pieces.

14 Because a majority of her cult sites are in France, I will refer to the saint by her French name, Sainte Foy. Names in other languages (Fides, Faith, Fe, Fede) will be used when necessary.

15 The term is Patrick J. Geary's, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 217.

16 Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, eds. *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990).
17 Pamela Sheingorn, ed. and trans., *The Book of Sainte Foy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).
18 Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, *Writing Faith*: *Text, Sign, & History in the Miracles of Sainte Foy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
19 Kathleen Ashley and Marilyn Deegan, *Being a Pilgrim: Art and Ritual on the Medieval Routes to Santiago* (Farnham, Surrey: Lund Humphries, 2009).

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Introduction

Appropriation and the cultural work of saints

The broadest intellectual framework for this examination of Foy's cults is provided by cultural studies, especially the version formulated by Stuart Hall, which defines cultural production as the entire range of a society's arts, beliefs, institutions, and communication.[1] Within such a framework, a connection between material objects and symbolic meaning is emphasized, and cultural practices are shown in relation to socio-historical structures of power. To the emphasis of cultural historians on power, I have added insights of anthropologists about the multiplicity of functions one ritual object or practice might have.

Taking what Mieke Bal calls "a reception-oriented perspective of cultural critique" enables a focus on "the interaction between the visual and verbal 'behavior' of those who deal with, process, or consume" texts of all kinds.[2] Bal's semiotic approach calls for "letting go of a unified concept of meaning" and recognizing the "validity of alternative or conflicting interpretations."[3] For example, the Last Judgment carved on the tympanum at Conques may have been intended by the abbey as a template through which orthodox thought and pious behavior would be conveyed to its viewers, but reception theory suggests that the tympanum could have been variously received by those entering the church. Thus, after analyzing the various cultural tasks that Sainte Foy's cult could perform – whether for the monastery at Conques, the institutions of the universal Church, individuals, lay patrons, or as part of popular spirituality – the study suggests that on occasion all may be operating around the same site simultaneously for different participants.[4]

My analysis seeks to avoid a positivist interpretation that privileges one kind of evidence. For example, in the relationship between historical research and material artifacts, written documents are often seen as sources that "explain" objects by positioning them within a stable context. Instead, visual semiotics can be a guide in "problematizing" and "reformulating" the idea of context, which Norman Bryson suggests should be one of art history's "central and continuing" activities.[5] Textual semiotics, too, invite us to see the meaning of a piece of writing as always in play. We must be alert to revisions of the text itself, to shifts in the discourse surrounding the text, and to new relationships with other elements in its cultural context.

A key concept for the semiotic reception paradigm that frames this study of Foy's cults is appropriation. "Appropriation" is a term that gained currency in cultural studies through the writings of Roger Chartier,[6] Michel de Certeau,[7] and Peter Burke to designate the complex processes of cultural transmission.[8] This study follows Roger Chartier in describing appropriation as a "social history of the various interpretations, brought back to their fundamental determinants (which are social, institutional and

cultural) and lodged in the specific practices that produce them."[9] When existing texts, artifacts and behaviors are adopted, contemporary theories of interpretation have emphasized that they do not necessarily carry their meanings over intact into the new cultural situation.[10] Rather, in the transmission and adoption there is *adaption*; new meanings may be added or extant ones removed, as the text, image, object or behavior is reshaped for its new context and new function.[11] Processes of revision and reshaping include translation, addition, omission, and layering, as well as potentially subversive modes of poaching, *bricolage*, and parody. A favored mode of appropriation in religious culture is to take an observable "fact" and develop a meaningful legend around it. Even the placement of an unchanged original into an entirely new framework or setting can transform meaning for the new users.[12]

Close observation of the development of a saint's cult like that of Sainte Foy reveals many different parties interested in appropriating the cultural cache of the saint and, in the process, potentially transforming aspects of the cult and its meaning. The impetus for such creative adaptation was the differing cultural work the cult was intended to do in new socio-political and ritual settings. As Véronique Plesch and I suggested in discussing the cultural processes of "appropriation," we should remain aware of both a diachronic and a synchronic dimension to the process. Acts of appropriation usually "unfold through time, allowing for multiple mutations and transformations," while a synchronic approach reveals a "spectrum of appropriation, from situations in which almost nothing is retained of an original meaning and/or function to those in which an original continues virtually unchanged."[13] As a result, in studying the appropriation of Sainte Foy we are watching cultural production in action.

Whereas some cultural theorists have emphasized the ways in which institutions simply seek to reproduce their own power, changes in the cults of Sainte Foy suggest that creativity and variation are inherent in acts of appropriation across space and through time. To focus on the "cultural work" done by texts and objects in various ritual and historical settings is to open up possibilities, including contestation or conflict.[14] Postcolonial theorist Françoise Lionnet's concept of "transculturation" seems particularly useful in understanding the processes of transformation in space:

> The prefix "trans-" suggests the act of traversing, of going through existing cultural territories. Its specifically spatial connotations demarcate a pattern of movement across cultural arenas and physical topographies which corresponds to the notion of "appropriation," a concept more promising than those of acculturation and assimilation because it implies active intervention rather than passive victimization.[15]

The examination of Foy's cults in the following chapters shows many different agents actively appropriating the saint for their own purposes in their own locale.

As Claire Sponsler emphasizes, appropriation is a continuing temporal as well as spatial process. Whereas the tendency in earlier medieval studies was to focus on *origins* – to attempt to reconstruct a foundational moment, a lost original or sources – Sponsler looks at diachronic processes in order to understand objects "in transit through culture."

> If it can be assumed that whether in the form of scribal copying of a manuscript, the translation of relics from one shrine to another, the co-opting of a ceremonial

> role, the redrafting of an iconographic image, or the reading of a text, medieval cultural productions were to a remarkable degree in transit, then the challenge for scholars, so often confronted with the seemingly static end-product – finished manuscript, enshrined relic, enacted performance, or completed painting – is to find a way of accessing the shifting processes of appropriation that produced those results now apparently fixed in ink or paint or stone.[16]

The golden reliquary statue of Sainte Foy still on display at Conques cannot be placed at one moment of origin or creation and might be considered the perfect icon of appropriation as a continuing temporal process. As Madeline Caviness says, "She is a composite work, an assemblage built on a Roman core with accretions of gemstones throughout the Middle Ages that constitute a material record of reception."[17] Architectural historians, too, have recently argued for a diachronic approach to buildings that recognizes how transformations over the *longue durée* respond to changing needs of users.[18] With Sponsler's prompting not to privilege cultural production only at the point of origin but to recognize appropriation as an ongoing process, this study will look at cults of Sainte Foy at multiple places, in diverse objects and texts, and where possible at successive moments in time.

However, identifying the cultural forces at work in a given medieval site is often difficult when comprehensive data is lacking, which is an all too familiar situation for medieval researchers. Typically, an artifact or building survives with little contextual information, as for example the Romanesque Santa Fede church, near Cavagnolo, Italy.[19] Conversely, written records exist for many now-vanished objects, institutions or practices. Analyzing the varieties of cultural work done by Sainte Foy depends on fragmentary survivals of cult texts, architecture, art works and documents.

Each chapter of this study makes its case by assembling the available visual and textual evidence – some richly detailed and some isolated and decontextualized. The survivals at Conques are exceptional for a medieval saint's cult and together provide solid illustration in Chapter One of the growth and functioning of a cult center until the present day. By contrast, numerous sites mentioned in Chapter Two on the spread of the cult across Europe are known from a mention in a text, the survival of an object, or because an ecclesiastical property has retained the name of Foy – but not much else remains to write a history of the cult there. The appropriation of the saint to individual life stories discussed in Chapter Three is made possible by a few well-preserved writings whose authors are known, even if the larger cultic context is not always well-documented. The impact of noble patronage on the Foy cult can be reconstructed in places like Horsham St Faith or Sélestat, where buildings, cultic materials, and textual culture exist to support the arguments in Chapter Four, while similar donations by families may be known only by a trace left in the Conques cartulary.[20] The appropriation model posits a continuing process of adaption and change, but – except for the richly documented history of the cult at Conques – we must piece together the few extant artifacts, texts, and documents for each site, which at best offer snapshots in time of the work done by the cult in that place.

Above all, the concept of appropriation draws attention to motivation in the process – "to make one's own," the meaning of the Latin verb *appropriare*.[21] The medieval monks at Conques appropriated the legend and relics of Sainte Foy from Agen and decisively made the saint their own abbey patron, a process repeated in the late nineteenth century when the bishop of Rodez re-created the cult of the famous

saint at Conques. Officials of the universal Church took Foy as one of their martyred holy figures to be celebrated in their liturgical practices and visual commemorations in the Middle Ages and beyond. Some individuals claimed a close personal relationship to Foy, while noble families made efforts to show the saint's special patronage of their interests. Finally, we can see the processes by which the saint was associated with a particular city or region – for example Burgundy, where she was adopted by religious authorities in Val-Suzon and Dijon and also by popular religious culture. Appropriation of the cult by multiple parties in the same location could be mutually reinforcing or conflictual, but either case demonstrates the potency of Sainte Foy as a cultural symbol.

Notes

1 Stuart Hall et al., *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972–79* (London: Hutchinson, 1980). For an analysis of the early formation of "cultural studies," see Stuart Hall's *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*, ed. with introd. Jennifer Daryl Slack and Lawrence Grossberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016); see also David Chaney's *The Cultural Turn: Scene-Setting Essays on Contemporary Cultural Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 1–88. Theories associated with cultural studies were primarily developed by analysts of modern societies, but they have been adopted – and occasionally challenged – by numerous scholars of medieval society.
2 Mieke Bal, *Reading "Rembrandt": Beyond the Word-Image Opposition* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 8.
3 Bal, *Reading "Rembrandt"*, 13.
4 This is the final point made in Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, "The Performed Book: Textuality and Social Space in the Cult of Sainte Foy," in *Romard: The Ritual Life of Medieval Europe*, vol. 52/53, ed. Robert L.A. Clark (London and Ontario: First Circle Publishing, 2014), 233–55.
5 Norman Bryson, "Art in Context," in *Studies in Historical Change*, ed. Ralph Cohen (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 19.
6 Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).
7 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
8 Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). The term "appropriation" has been used most pervasively in postcolonial theorizing; see *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1998), 19–20: "By appropriating the imperial language, its discursive forms and its modes of representation, post-colonial societies are able … to intervene more readily in the dominant discourse, to interpolate their own cultural realities, or use that dominant language to describe those realities to a wide audience of readers" (20). The editors of *Key Concepts* also cite the opposing (more negative) definition of the term "appropriation" as describing a strategy by which "the dominant imperial power incorporates as its own the territory or culture that it surveys and invades" (19). For an example of the second meaning of appropriation, see D. Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administrat*ion (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993). In discussing Foy's cult, I will be closer to the first, more open, definition of "appropriation."
9 Chartier, *Cultural History*, 13.
10 Within art history, the concept of "*spolia*" – referring to classical artifacts re-used in a later setting – has been the focus of discussion. "Spolia" is given many meanings, from the purely pragmatic reuse of building materials to a deliberate conversion of pagan to Christian meaning. Alternatively, it may imply that the object or material re-used from a prestigious original setting carries with it some of the original historical significance. For a broad overview of "The Concept of *Spolia*" see Dale Kinney in *A Companion to Medieval Art*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 233–52.

11 For a fuller theoretical discussion of the concept of appropriation and its applicability to medieval and early modern cultural production, see the Special Issue of the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, ed. with "Introduction" by Kathleen Ashley and Véronique Plesch, "The Cultural Processes of 'Appropriation,'" 32 (Winter 2002).

12 Julia M.H. Smith, for example, analyzes the transfer of relics of Saints Chrysanthus and Daria from Rome to Münstereifel (a dependency of Prüm) in the mid-ninth century, asking "what happened upon their arrival in Frankish churches with which they had no historical association and where their cult reflected no collective memory?" She suggests it could generate new memories, new written expressions, and a new commemorative identity that "could effect a radical redistribution of sacred authority. By translation into a distant shrine, a Roman saint was transformed, altered and refigured." "Old Saints, New Cults: Roman Relics in Carolingian Francia," in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in Honour of Donald A. Bullough*, ed. by Julia M.H. Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 326. Her full discussion of the two saints in new locations is 326–29.

13 Ashley and Plesch, "Introduction" to "The Cultural Processes of 'Appropriation,'" 10. As noted above, without explicitly using a theory of "appropriation," many recent hagiographic studies show how a saint's representation has been reshaped or re-signified in different contexts. However, relatively few medieval scholars extend their hagiographic analyses past the late Middle Ages. One stellar examination of the diachronic dimension is Mathew Kuefler, *The Making and Unmaking of a Saint: Hagiography and Memory in the Cult of Gerald of Aurillac* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014). In the final two chapters (Ch. 5 and 6), Kuefler follows the vicissitudes of the cult of Gerald through the early modern period and the nineteenth century, copiously illustrating new representations of the saint. With a focus on the diachronic dimension, too, Kay Brainerd Slocum traces the historiographic reception of St. Thomas of Canterbury in *The Cult of Thomas Becket: History and Historiography through Eight Centuries* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019).

14 Susan Boynton, for example, uses the formulation that the liturgy is not just a *product* but a *practice*, with a range of functions that may develop new possibilities; *Shaping a Monastic Identity: Liturgy and History at the Imperial Abbey of Farfa, 1000–1125* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 3.

15 Françoise Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 13.

16 Claire Sponsler, "In Transit: Theorizing Cultural Appropriation in Medieval Europe," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32 (2002): 20–21.

17 Madeline Harrison Caviness, "Reception of Images by Medieval Viewers," *A Companion to Medieval Art*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 69–70.

18 Nicola Camerlenghi, "The *Longue Durée* and the Life of Buildings," in *New Approaches to Medieval Architecture*, ed. Robert Bork et al. (Farnham, Surrey: Routledge, 2011), 11–20.

19 For the lack of documentation about the early cult and church, see P. Bartolomeo Bardessono, *Santa Fede di Cavagnolo (Torino)* (Cavagnolo: Arte Storia Presenza Marista, 1995). Also, Chiara Devoti and Monica Naretto, *L'abbaziale di Santa Fede a Cavagnolo Po* (Savigliano, Cuneo: L'Artistica Edit, 2015), 29, 31, 39, 60. A seventeenth-century "pancarte" cited by Gustave Desjardins, ed., *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Conques en Rouergue* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1879, repr. 2017), cxix–cxx, names "prioratus Sanctae Fidis de Visterno seu Cavancholio" as a dependency of the Conques abbey. The post-medieval history of the Cavagnolo Foy priory has been recounted by Auguste Bouillet and Louis Servières, *Sainte Foy, vierge et martyre* (Rodez: E. Carrère, 1900), 367–70.

20 Desjardins, *Cartulaire*.

21 Ashley and Plesch, "Introduction," 3.

1 Conques

Creation of a ritual center

For the contemporary scholar, Conques – the site of Sainte Foy's shrine from the ninth to the twenty-first century – provides an unparalleled example of the creation and maintenance of a saint's cult center (Figs. 1.1 and 1.2). Because so many material components of Foy's cult survive, whether in Conques or traceable to it, and because Conques has been the site of religious activity for well over a millennium, it might appear an easy subject to analyze. However, the diversity and richness of the art, architecture and textual evidence remaining have resulted in disciplinary divisions that prevent a broad overall view of how a saint's cult center functions.

The Romanesque abbey church with its well-preserved tympanum, capital carvings, rich treasury, and unique reliquary statue of Foy, as well as Conques' still-pristine location on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, guarantee its interest to medieval art historians. The eleventh-century *Liber miraculorum sancte fidis* (Book of Sainte Foy's Miracles) offers vivid narratives to hagiographers, while the cartulary and other eleventh- and twelfth-century documents and chronicles fascinate historians of southern French society. The unique *Chanson de Sainte Foi*, written in the southern *langue d'oc*, has been a key text for Romance linguists. Almost all this discipline-specific scholarship to date has identified the eleventh and twelfth centuries as the apogee of Foy's cult, either stating or implying that the cult declined thereafter.

After the acquisition of the saint's relics in the ninth century, the cult of Sainte Foy was firmly established in Conques through written texts, arts and architecture, and rituals produced during the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries. This is where most scholars end their histories, but a more expansive diachronic approach taken by this study shows that the cult survived from the thirteenth to the twenty-first century through successive lesser-known appropriations – both in Conques and elsewhere. While there were cult developments throughout history at many sites, this chapter will focus on those designed to maintain Conques' status as Sainte Foy's cult center.

As her cult grew in Conques, Sainte Foy was primarily designated as the patron of a *place*; she is the "*puissante patronne*" of the abbey, its monks, and all who acknowledge her powers of intercession. One gains access to the saint's power (*virtus*) by going to her shrine at Conques, the *loca sanctorum*, so pilgrimages would be of primary importance to the cult – as Bishop Bourret understood when he acted to reanimate the cult in the late nineteenth century. The "localization of the holy," as Peter Brown puts it, goes back to late-antique Christianity, with pilgrimage as the remedy for bridging the distance to the shrine in order to be in the presence of the martyr.[1]

Bernard of Angers' eleventh-century miracle stories depict Conques above all as the regional destination of a pilgrimage taken by those seeking Foy's intervention.