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The Merchant Scene of Biblical Drama: Rehabilitating the Female Input

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Abstract: This paper examines a ground-breaking innovation to medieval Easter plays: the creation of the extra-biblical merchant scene, in which the Marys purchase spices prior to their *Visitatio Sepulchri*. The patron of its earliest known representation was the female religious leader Uta von Kirchberg. An illuminated roundel in the *Uta Codex* she commissioned towards the end of her term as abbess of Niedermünster (1002–25), depicts the Holy women purchasing spices from a spice merchant. Until the twelfth century, this remained the only representation of an Easter merchant scene, visual or textual. The only textual Easter merchant scene predating the thirteenth century is within the twelfth-century Latin/Catalan *Ludus Paschalis* of Vic Cathedral, near Barcelona, a highly influential Easter text whose transnational impact has been traced in numerous later Easter texts across Europe, including many with merchant scenes. Around 2000, musicologists David Wulstan and Constant Mews suggested the renowned composer and poet Heloise (c. 1090s–1164) as its author. Widely accepted by musicologists, their attribution’s significance for the female impact on the merchant scene is barely acknowledged. Here, I ask: ‘how did women influence the creation, promotion and development of the merchant scene’s visual, textual and performative manifestations?’ By repeatedly re-attributing responsibility for decisive input into the development of the merchant scene from anonymous male scribes to identified female religious leaders, my interdisciplinary analysis moves women to the centre of this creative process.

Keywords: Uta von Kirchberg; Heloise d’Argenteuil; Kunhuta of Bohemia; Vic *Ludus Paschalis*; *Visitatio Sepulchri*; merchant scene

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1 Introduction

Two tenth-century images demonstrate the standard medieval representation of biblical spices. A mosaic in Ravenna's Basilica di Sant'Apollinare depicts the three kings bringing their gold, frankincense and myrrh to Bethlehem; in the *Visitatio Sepulchri* illumination of the *Codex Egberti*, the three Marys carry their apothecary pots to the tomb.¹ Here, the iconography of the Christmas and Easter stories overlap. Both for the Holy Women present at Christ's tomb in all four gospels and for the Magi who celebrate his birth only in the gospel of Matthew, the defining props are spice containers. Unlike the Easter Holy Women, the Christmas Kings are foreign men, not local women. As they brought their spices from distant lands, detailing how they obtained them would have inappropriately extended the biblical Christmas story. In sharp contrast, I suggest, the local and immediate origins of the Easter Holy Women's spices strongly invited iconographic and performative enhancement of the liturgy.

This may have influenced a ground-breaking extra-biblical innovation: the creation of the merchant scene of biblical iconography and drama, in which the Marys purchase spices prior to their *Visitatio Sepulchri*.² Already by the twelfth

1 Trier, Stadtbibliothek, MS 24, fol. 86v.

2 Jarmila F. Veltruský summarizes the most significant French and German merchant scenes (*A Sacred Farce from Medieval Bohemia: Masticár* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1985], 78–117). For an extensively referenced summary table of named apothecaries, spice merchants and other healthcare professionals in 70 religious performance texts (1100–1600), see M A Katritzky, "Text and Performance: Medieval Religious Stage Quacks and the Commedia dell'arte," in *Transformationen des Religiösen. Performativität und Textualität im geistlichen Spiel*, eds. Ingrid Kasten and Erika Fischer-Lichte (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007): 99–126, 117–126. See also: Curt F. Bühler and Carl Selmer, "The Melk Salbenkrämerspiel: an Unpublished Middle High German Mercator Play," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 63 (1948): 21–63; Michel Mathieu, "Le personnage du marchand de parfums dans le théâtre médiéval en France," *Le moyen âge, revue d'histoire et de philologie* 1 (1968): 39–71; Sigfrid Hofmann, "Salbenkauf der Frauen," in *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, IV, ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum SJ, column 12 (Rome/Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 1972); Roman Jakobson, "Medieval mock mystery (the old Czech Unguentarius)," in *Selected writings*, ed. Stephen Rudy, VI.2, 666–90 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985); Martin W. Walsh, "Rubin and Mercator. Grotesque comedy in the German Easter Play," *Comparative drama* 36 (2002): 187–202; Wolfgang Augustyn, "Frauen am Grab," in *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, ed. Otto Schmitt (München: Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte & C H Beck, 2009 & 2010): Lieferung 113, columns 556–640 & Lieferung 114, column 641; M A Katritzky, "Lucas van Leyden's 'Toothdrawer', 1523: Passion play merchant scenes and the religious origins of quack depictions," in *Peiraikos' Erben: Die Genese der Genremalerei bis 1550*, eds. Jürgen Müller and Birgit Ulrike Münch (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, Trierer Beiträge zu den historischen Kulturwissenschaften 14, 2015): 125–148; Cornelia Herberichs, "Plädoyer für den Mercator. Zur hermeneutischen Funktion der Salbenkauf-Szene in bildlichen Darstellungen des Mittelalters," in *Liturgie und Literatur: historische Fallstudien*, eds. Cornelia Herberichs, Norbert Kössinger and Stephanie Seidl (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 235–285; M A Katritzky,

century, some versions of Easter liturgy were being expanded into biblical drama by non-biblical additions. Prominent amongst these was the merchant scene, featuring one or more apothecaries, spice merchants or itinerant healers selling unguents and spices to the Marys prior to their *Visitatio Sepulchri*. Uta von Kirchberg, patron of its earliest known visual or textual representation, was the intellectually dynamic and highly educated female religious leader responsible for reforming the wealthy convent of Niedermünster in Regensburg, Bavaria, to Benedictine rule; the *Uta Codex* she commissioned towards the end of her term as abbess (1002–1025) is the sensational monument to her erudition.³ Two of its exceptional illustrations, illuminated roundels at the top of the same folio, depict the Holy women not once, but twice.⁴ On the right, the Holy Women carry their apothecary pots to the tomb; on the left, they purchase their spices at the trestle table of a young spice merchant. Commissioned by and for women, the left-hand *Uta Codex* roundel is the only pre-twelfth-century representation of an Easter spice-merchant scene, visual or textual.

The only textual Easter merchant scene predating the thirteenth century is within *Ludus Paschalis* (*Verses pascales de tres Maries*) (LOO 823).⁵ The transnational impact of this highly influential twelfth-century Latin/Catalan Easter text has been traced in Easter texts right across medieval Europe, including many featuring merchant scenes. From around 2000, musicologists David Wulstan and Constant Mews have repeatedly suggested a new attribution for the *Vic Ludus Paschalis* text. Rejecting earlier suggestions that the original author of this transcription is a Catalan monk or Peter Abelard (c.1079–1142), they powerfully argue for its authorship by Abelard's student and wife, the renowned composer and poet Heloise d'Argenteuil

“Les représentations du charlatan pendant la première modernité et leur origine dans la scène du marchand du théâtre religieux,” in *Théâtre et charlatans dans l'Europe moderne. Registres collection des études théâtrales*, eds. Beya Dhraïef, Éric Négrel and Jennifer Ruimi (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2018): 99–116; M A Katritzky, “The Itinerant Healer as a Stage Role: Its Origins in Religious Drama,” in *Enacting the Bible in Medieval and Early Modern Drama*, eds. Eva von Contzen and Chanita Goodblatt (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020): 81–103.

3 Adam S Cohen, “Abbess Uta of Regensburg and Patterns of Female Patronage around 1000,” *Aurora* 4 (2003): 34–49, 48.

4 *Two Marys buying spices from a spice-merchant*, c.1020, München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, *Uta Codex* (MS cod. lat. mon.13 601, fol. 41v; reproduced: Katritzky, “Lucas van Leyden's ‘Toothdrawer’,” Figure 2); Hofmann, “Salbenkauf der Frauen”; Adam S. Cohen, *The Uta Codex: Art, Philosophy, and Reform in Eleventh-Century Germany* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2000); Augustyn, “Frauen am Grab,” column 606.

5 Vic, Episcopal Archive, Arx. Cap., ms.105 (CXI), fols 58v–62r; Peter Dronke, *Nine Medieval Latin Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 83–109; Latin & English. Walther Lipphardt, *Lateinische Osterfeiern und Osterspiele*, 9 vols (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975–90) is cited in-text as LOO + ceremony number.

(c.1090s–1164).⁶ Although this attribution is widely accepted by musicologists, its radical significance for the female contribution to the merchant scene is barely acknowledged even within their own narrow specialism.

My archival analysis of the merchant scene illuminates fundamental questions for our understanding of biblical drama: can we reach a better understanding of how – and why – women influenced the creation, promotion and development of its visual, textual and performative manifestations? Was biblical drama birthed out of male-dominated liturgy by a largely women-led addition of non-biblical material? Despite the increasingly rich debate on medieval performance and gender, there is little sense of the crucial contribution of female and mixed gender⁷ monastic communities to the creation and development of pre-Reformation visual, textual and performative merchant scene representations. Female religious leaders significantly contributed to the highly efficient transnational cultural networks of the medieval Catholic Church, in terms of circulating images and texts of their biblical drama. My interdisciplinary reconsideration of some transnational circulations associated with the medieval merchant scene brings into sharp relief an unexpected pattern. Surprisingly often, responsibility for decisive input into the merchant scene's development originates not from male religious communities, but from female-led convents and double monasteries. This significant shift rehabilitates religious women from the periphery to the very centre of the creative processes shaping biblical drama out of medieval Easter ceremonies.

2 Women and Biblical Drama

The female impact on the development of biblical drama has long attracted scholarly attention. Despite recognition of the performative activities of certain highly-educated leaders of wealthy convents, such as Canoness Hrotsvit of the royal abbey at Gandersheim (c.935–1000),⁸ or the Benedictine abbesses Hildegard of Bingen

⁶ For these dates, see Brenda M. Cook, *Astralabe: The Life and Times of the Son of Heloise and Abelard*. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan/Springer, 2023), 29–30.

⁷ Many pre-Reformation religious communities functioned as double, that is mixed gender, monasteries, with houses for both monks and nuns. As noted by Constant J. Mews, “in 1139, the II Lateran Council decreed that religious women had to follow one of only three Rules, those of Benedict, Augustine or Basil” (“Between authenticity and interpretation: On The letter collection of Peter Abelard and Heloise and the *Epistolae duorum amantium*.” *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 76 (2014): 823–42, 828).

⁸ Phyllis R Brown and Stephen L Wailes, *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl.960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

(1098–1179)⁹ and Barking nunnery's Lady Katherine of Sutton (abbess 1363–76),¹⁰ the default twentieth-century academic view was that female participation in the creation or performance of medieval religious drama was rare and exceptional. More recently, the broader impact of women on biblical drama is attracting more focused scholarly recognition, and gender-sensitive scholarship is increasingly reversing the endemic under-recognition of the substantial female contribution.¹¹

Both in the religious and civic spheres, women contributed in many capacities to medieval religious performances. By the late fifteenth century, Italian convents

9 Michael C Gardiner, *Hildegard von Bingen's Ordo Virtutum: A Musical and Metaphysical Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2019).

10 Nancy Cotton, "Katherine of Sutton: The First English Woman Playwright," *Educational Theatre Journal* 30.4 (1978): 475–481.

11 See especially: Ursula Hennig, "Die Beteiligung von Frauen an lateinischen Osterfeiern," in *Geist und Zeit, Wirkungen des Mittelalters in Literatur und Sprache. Festschrift für Roswitha Wisniewski zu ihrem 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Carola L. Gottzmann and Herbert Kolb (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1991): 211–227; Elissa B. Weaver, *Convent Theatre in Early Modern Italy: Spiritual Fun and Learning for Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Kate Matthews, "Textual Spaces/Playing Places: An Exploration of Convent Drama in the Abbey of Origny-Sainte-Benoîte," *European Medieval Drama* 7 (2003): 69–86; June L. Mecham, *Sacred Vision, Sacred Voice: Performative Devotion and Female Piety at the Convent of Wienhausen, circa 1350–1500* (University of Kansas DISS, 2004); M A Katritzky, *Women, Medicine and Theatre 1500–1750 Literary Mountebanks and Performing Quacks* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Michael J. Norton and Amelia J. Carr, "Liturgical Manuscripts, Liturgical Practice, and the Women of Klosterneuburg," *Traditio* 66 (2011): 67–169; June L. Mecham, *Sacred Communities, Shared Devotions: Gender, Material Culture, and Monasticism in Late Medieval Germany*, eds. Alison I. Beach, Constance H. Berman and Lisa M. Bitel (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014); Johannes Janota, "Und gheen myt der Antiphon vor dy eptischen.' Zur Gestaltung der lateinischen Osterfeiern in Frauenklöstern und -stiften," in Elke Huwiler, ed., *Das Theater des Spätmittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit: kulturelle Verhandlungen in einer Zeit des Wandels* (Heidelberg: Synchron, 2015), 45–63; Carla Dauven-van Knippenberg, "Die Klosterfrauen von Wienhausen feiern Auferstehung," in Elke Huwiler, ed., *Das Theater des Spätmittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit: kulturelle Verhandlungen in einer Zeit des Wandels* (Heidelberg: Synchron, 2015), 65–79; Johannes Janota, "Osterfeier oder Osterspiel? Zur Klärung der Terminologie," in Elke Huwiler, Elisabeth Meyer and Arend Quak, eds., *Wat nyeus verfraeyt dat herte ende verlicht den sin. Studien zum Schauspiel des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit. Festschrift für Karla Dauven-van Knippenberg* (Leiden: Brill/Rodopi, 2015), 1–31; Tanja Matern, "Vere vidi Dominum vivere. Die Christophanie der Maria Magdalena und die Osterfeiern des Typs III aus norddeutschen Frauenklöstern," in Elke Huwiler, Elisabeth Meyer and Arend Quak, eds., *Wat nyeus verfraeyt dat herte ende verlicht den sin. Studien zum Schauspiel des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit. Festschrift für Karla Dauven-van Knippenberg* (Leiden: Brill/Rodopi, 2015), 53–85; Margot E. Fassler, "Women and Their Sequences: An Overview and a Case Study," *Speculum* 94.3 (2019): 625–673; M A Katritzky, "Margaret Cavendish's Female Fairground Performers," in *The Palgrave Handbook of the History of Women on Stage*, eds. Jan Sewell and Clare Smout (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020): 151–175. Convents in England, France and the Low Countries are the focus of Elisabeth Dutton's research project on Medieval Convent Drama (University of Fribourg; with Olivia Robinson and Matthew Cheung-Salisbury; <http://medievalconventdrama.org>).

routinely fostered a flourishing theatrical tradition, staging *sacre rappresentazioni* sometimes written by women, often focusing on female saints, and increasingly acted solely by the convents' own novices and schoolgirls.¹² Widely forbidden from speaking inside medieval churches, as early as the thirteenth century some women took non-speaking parts in religious performative ceremonies; exceptionally, as in Vigil Raber's 1514 Bolzano *Passion*,¹³ even for the majority of female roles of civic religious productions. Indications that women could feature in medieval biblical plays even within churches include the thirteenth tale of Dil Ulenspiegel. Here, the fictional medieval German trickster Ulenspiegel, as director of the customary *Visitatio Sepulchri* episode, casts the local village priest and his female housekeeper as Christ and the angel at the tomb, and himself and two male peasants as the three Marys. A woodcut in the Strasbourg 1515 edition¹⁴ performatively enhances this enactment with costumes, props and an architectural structure large enough to hold performers, representing Jerusalem's Holy Sepulchre.¹⁵

Demands of childbearing and domestic duties, issues of stamina and strength of voice, and religiously and politically motivated resistance to female participation, were crucial blocks to performing for medieval women. Even more decisive was their lack of education. All-female monastic communities were precious sanctuaries for female study and cultural self-expression. Exceptionally, within the convent system girls were taught to read; some even received training in Latin and rhetoric and access to the rigorous church sponsored musical training routinely available to gifted boys of every social class. The public ceremonies of medieval convents, where amateur all-female performing had a venerable tradition, often demonstrated surprisingly free early use of the vernacular, perhaps intended to facilitate the participation of women. Hrotsvit's Terence-inspired, late tenth-century performative texts focus on the lives, faith and martyrdom of early female Christians, mostly within the Roman Empire. Although there are no explicit records of nuns of Hrotsvit's convent performing as Easter Holy Women, a "Graciosa Domina Abbatissa" of Gandersheim is recorded as participating in the convent's *Depositio Crucis*.¹⁶

12 Weaver, *Convent Theatre*.

13 Discussed below.

14 Sig. D2^r; Wolfgang Lindow (ed.), *Ein kurtzweilig Lesen von Dil Ulenspiegel. Nach dem Druck von 1515 mit 87 Holzschnitten* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1966), 33–41. See also Katritzky, *Women, Medicine and Theatre*, 32–34; Stefan Engels, "Das Andere der *Visitatio sepulchri* in Liturgie und Geistlichem Spiel," *European Medieval Drama* 21 (2017): 101–122, 117–19.

15 Sainte-Benoite-d'Origny's medieval *Visitatio* indicates the use of a similar structure (Matthews 2003, 79); a surviving structure of this type, the Mauritius Rotunda of Constance Cathedral, is noted below.

16 Mattern, "Vere vidi," 63, 65.

While documented performances of named women are exceptional, tertiaries, novices, nuns, canonesses, deaconesses and abbesses represented the Easter Holy women or other female characters in medieval double and female monastic communities all over Europe.¹⁷ These include Troyes (late thirteenth century: LOO 170), Prague (fourteenth century: LOO 798–805), Andernach (LOO 355a) and Essen (fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: LOO 564), Gerresheim (fifteenth century: LOO 574), Gernrode at Quedlinburg (LOO 786, 786a) and Nottuln near Münster (c.1500: LOO 795), Obermünster in Regensburg (late sixteenth century: LOO 796), Münster (c.1600: LOO 793), Neuenheerse at Paderborn (c.1700: LOO 624) and Neuss (1751: LOO 625). Further female religious communities with extant *Visitatio* manuscripts include Baden-Baden (Lichtenthal), Gandersheim, Helmstedt (Marienberg), Medingen, Prague and Wienhausen.¹⁸ Written under the direct supervision of Hildegard of Bingen, who may herself have participated in mixed-gender performances at her convent, the codices preserving her *Ordo virtutum* (*Service of the Virtues*, c.1151) represent the closest surviving example of medieval drama as autograph manuscript.¹⁹ During her term as abbess (1363–76), Katherine of Sutton comprehensively revised Barking Convent's Easter ceremonies to make them more accessible to lay audiences, producing as well as writing a *Visitatio* (LOO 770) and other Latin ceremonies for performance at their Easter services by local priests and her nuns.²⁰

3 The Merchant Scene

The liturgical basis for the *Visitatio Sepulchri* is provided by the four Gospel accounts of the Marys visiting the tomb of Christ.²¹ Their accounts provide a wealth of mismatched detail. The Gospels specify neither the sources nor containers of these spices. However, the Easter spices and their containers were significant props, both for the iconography and in performance. Increasingly, I believe, a credible context for their source was sought. Medieval images and texts provided this context by

17 Cotton, "Katherine of Sutton," 479–80; Hennig, "Die Beteiligung," 227; Mecham, *Sacred Communities*, 25–6, 28–9; Mattern, "Vere vidi," 62–5, 79–80; Janota, "Und gheen myt."

18 Mecham, *Sacred vision*, 107.

19 Constant J Mews, "Liturgy and identity at the Paraclete: Heloise, Abelard and the Evolution of Cistercian Reform" in *The Poetic and Musical Legacy of Heloise and Abelard: An Anthology of Essays by Various Authors*, eds. Marc Stewart and David Wulstan (Ottawa: Institute of Mediæval Music, 2003): 19–33, 24; Carol Symes, "The History of Medieval Theatre/Theatre of Medieval History: Dramatic Documents and the Performance of the Past." *History Compass* 7.3 (2009): 1040–41.

20 Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), I, 384; Cotton, "Katherine of Sutton," 477; Hennig, "Die Beteiligung," 224–5; Mecham, *Sacred Vision*, 127–29.

21 All biblical translations are cited from KJV.

creating the merchant scene, a new, non-biblical episode featuring one or more apothecaries, spice merchants or itinerant healers. Merchant scenes also occur outside the Easter story: in connection with episodes such as the spice merchant's procurement of his commercial licence from Pontius Pilate (vernacular *Muri Fragment*),²² or spice-purchasing by Mary Magdalen before the Crucifixion (Benediktbeurer *Grosses Passionsspiel*,²³ *Wiener Passionsfragment*).²⁴ Sometimes there are two merchant scenes (Muri; Pfäferser;²⁵ Erlau III;²⁶ Villinger;²⁷ Semur;²⁸ Gréban, *Le Mystère de la Passion*²⁹), or even three (Berliner/Rheinisch).³⁰ Rarely, they feature Easter spices (Pfäferser) or grave cloths (Gréban) being purchased by Nicodemus as well as the more usual spice-purchasing scene of the Holy Women. Central to the development of the Easter merchant scene are the Gospel passages relating to the preserving spices with which the body of Christ was to have been anointed, and the identity of those who brought them to Christ's tomb. Matthew (28:1) notes Mary Magdalen and another Mary at the tomb without mentioning the spices. According to John (19:38–42; 20:1), Nicodemus, accompanied by Mary Magdalen, brought and used 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes; Luke (23:55–6; 24:1; 24:10) notes “spices and ointments” brought by Mary Magdalen, Joanna, Mary mother of James, and other women. Mark (16:1–2) alone records the actual purchase of spices, naming three Marys as their bearers: “And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James [Maria Jacobi], and [Maria] Salome, had bought sweet spices,

22 Mid-thirteenth century; Rudolf Meier, *Das Innsbrucker Osterspiel, Das Osterspiel von Muri, Mittelhochdeutsch und Neuhochdeutsch* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1962).

23 Eduard Hartl, ed., *Das Benediktbeurer Passionsspiel, das St. Galler Passionsspiel, nach den Handschriften herausgegeben* (Halle an der Saale: Niemeyer, 1952), 12–23.

24 Richard Froning, ed., *Das Drama des Mittelalters. Die lateinischen Osterfeiern und ihre Entwicklung in Deutschland. Die Osterspiele, die Passionsspiele, Weihnachts- und Dreikönigsspiele, Fastnachtspiele* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), I, 315.

25 Early fourteenth century; Klaus Amann, *Das Pfäferser Passionsspielfragment. Edition, Untersuchung, Kommentar* (Innsbruck: Innsbruck University Press, 2010), 85.

26 Wolfgang Suppan and Johannes Janota, *Texte und Melodien der “Erlauer Spiele”* (Tutzing: Schneider, 1990), 54–81.

27 Eduard Hartl, *Das Drama des Mittelalters. Passionsspiele II: Das Donaueschinger Passionsspiel* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966).

28 Peter T. Durbin and Lynette R. Muir, *The Passion de Semur* (Leeds: University of Leeds Centre for Medieval Studies, 1981).

29 Arnoul Gréban, *Le Mystère de la Passion de notre sauveur Jésus-Christ*, eds. Micheline de Combarieu du Gres and Jean Subrenat (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 142. For manuscript illuminations of c.1470 depicting Gréban's spice merchant scenes, see *Le Mystère de la Passion*, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, BNF ms. 6431, f. 202v (*Nicodème achetant des aromates*), f. 213v (*Les Saintes Femmes achetant des aromates*). Reproduced: Katritzky, “Les représentations du charlatan”, Figure 10a and b).

30 Hans Rueff, *Das Rheinische Osterspiel. Der Berliner Handschrift MS. Germ. Fol. 1219, mit Untersuchungen zur Textgeschichte des deutschen Osterspiels* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1925).

that they might come and anoint him". None of the Gospels explicates where or from whom these spices were bought; their confusion of imprecisely matching details and characters has considerably shaped the merchant scene's development.

The imprecision of the liturgical sources, and the liturgy's controversial relationship to church ceremony and religious drama,³¹ cannot be disregarded in enquiries into the development of the non-biblical Easter merchant scene. Modern academic agendas, many nationalistically motivated, split enquiries into religious ceremony and biblical drama between medievalists, musicologists, Church historians, theatre and literary specialists and anthropologists. Further divergences continue to be introduced. Earlier scholars' broad acceptance of the merchant scene as fundamentally non-liturgical³² is increasingly rejected as "problematic, even obsolete".³³ The results of closer investigation of the structured, performative, "theatricalization" of Latin liturgical chant, through combination with vernacular, non-biblical dialogue of the type characteristic of bilingual merchant scenes also remain inconclusive.³⁴ Although the Latin liturgy of the *Visitatio Sepulchri* was not composed as drama, its presentation within church services was performatively enhanced from the tenth century onwards, when edited sections of liturgical text were lightly divided between individual spoken or sung parts. Michael Norton questions the framing of liturgical ceremony as drama, even use of the term "liturgical drama."³⁵ Neither Norton's approach nor Stefan Engels' more nuanced discussion³⁶ considers the merchant scene. Petersen acknowledges that the existence of such extra-biblical episodes undermines attempts to neatly categorize *Visitatio Sepulchri* texts as *either* liturgy *or* drama, while ignoring their gendered significance.³⁷ The progression from Latin liturgy to *Quem quaeritis* trope, followed by

31 Michael L. Norton, *Liturgical Drama and the Reimagining of Medieval Theater* (Kalamazoo: MIP 2017); Nils Holger Petersen, "Liturgical Music and Drama," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Literature and Music*, ed. Delia da Sousa Correa (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020): I, 63–77; Nils Holger Petersen, "Framing Medieval Latin Liturgy through the Marginal," *Religions* 13.95 (2022): 1–20, 9 (<https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13020095>).

32 Hansjürgen Linke, "Osterfeier und Osterspiel. Vorschläge zur sachlich-terminologischen Klärung einiger Abgrenzungsprobleme," in *Osterspiele: Texte und Musik. Akten des 2. Symposiums der Sterzinger Osterspiele (12. – 16. April 1992)*, ed. Max Siller (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1994): 121–33, 128.

33 Janota, "Osterfeier," 11.

34 Jan-Dirk Müller, "Die lateinischen Gesänge im *Innsbrucker Osterspiel* zwischen Theater und Liturgie," in *Liturgie und Literatur: historische Fallstudien*, eds. Cornelia Herberichs, Norbert Kössinger and Stephanie Seidl (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 213–234.

35 Michael L. Norton, "Observations on the Tours *Ludus Paschalis*," in *The Jeu d'Adam: MS Tours 927 and the Provenance of the Play*, ed. Christophe Chaguinian (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2017): 177–258, 180; Norton, *Liturgical Drama*, 128.

36 Engels, "Das Andere,": 101–122.

37 Petersen. "Framing,": 14.

Easter ceremony, then scripted vernacular Passion plays, was not a linear historical process of total displacement. Later genres only partially replaced earlier ones, which continued to develop alongside and with reference to them.³⁸ Rather than representing clearcut separate categories, liturgy, music and drama shared centuries of complex overlap. Meaningful consideration of the Easter merchant scene requires a comprehensively transnational and inclusive view of pre-modern performance culture, unprejudiced by modern disciplinary assumptions. In a foundational text on medieval performance, Carol Symes: “calls not only for a new narrative of theatre history but a new methodology for studying it”, seeking to recalibrate modern approaches to medieval drama distorted by disciplinary, nationalistic and Darwinian agendas with the illuminating insight that “performance was central to every aspect of medieval life”.³⁹

Taken out of the immediate context of their religious services, Easter ceremonies could become more independent of the liturgy. This facilitated their creative expansion with the addition of episodes with little or no biblical authority. Already by the twelfth century, supported and encouraged by female religious leaders, some versions of the *Visitatio Sepulchri* liturgy were being expanded with such non-biblical additions. One of the earliest and most theatrically significant of these was the merchant scene, featuring one or more apothecaries or spice merchants. Professional healers, not featured in the biblical Easter story or Church liturgy, are recorded in several medieval performative contexts, notably Easter ceremonies. Only seldom did a monastic community commission a completely new text. The scribes who transcribed (and sometimes translated) performative texts often saved themselves the trouble of writing out full speeches, even of indicating liturgical songs beyond their first line.⁴⁰ Once the merchant scene became well established, it was rarely fully transcribed. Detailed merchant scenes, such as that of the fifteenth-century Erlauer *Visitatio sepulchri in nocte resurrectionis* (from Kärnten, Austria),⁴¹ are exceptional in combining traditional merchant scene elements with freshly minted comic routines. Many Easter texts adapted existing merchant scenes or omitted them altogether.

38 Carol Symes, “The Appearance of Early Vernacular Plays: Forms, Functions, and the Future of Medieval Theater,” *Speculum* 77.3 (2002): 778–831, 826.

39 Symes, “The History of Medieval Theatre,” 1033, 1036–7. On “theatre in its broadest sense, comprising any performative activities that propound possible paths of human interaction,” see Pavel Drábek and M A Katritzky, “Introduction,” in *Transnational Connections in Early Modern Theatre*, eds M A Katritzky and Pavel Drábek (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020): 1–19, 6–7.

40 Renate Amstutz, “*Ludus de decem virginibus*”: Recovery of the sung liturgical core of the Thuringian “*Zehnjungfrauenspiel*” (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2002), 171–73.

41 Suppan and Janota, *Texte*, 54–81.

Although surviving texts only rarely feature extensive merchant scene dialogue, there is considerable evidence for their popularity. Sometimes, supporting documentation indicates merchant scenes for playtexts without them, as with the apothecary Renward Cysat's 1583 Lucern *Passion*. His stage plans list the roles of the apothecary ("Apothegker") and his boy ("knaben") and depict their stall.⁴² Although lacking a merchant scene, a Latin sentence at the appropriate place in Lienhard Pfarrkircher's 1486 South Tirolean *Passion* emphasizes its importance and popularity, advising that: "here one can introduce the doctor and his servant, if desired."⁴³ Similarly, although no merchant scene is indicated either in the playtext or stage sketch for Vigil Raber's 1514 Bolzano *Passion*, its cast lists name four spice merchants by role: two males, "Medicus" and "Servus medicy," and two females, "Uxor Medici" and "Puella medici." The recorded names of their actors demonstrate that for this production, Raber (whose workshop was run jointly with his wife), exceptionally cast women in almost every female role.⁴⁴

In 2015, Johannes Janota's longterm research into Latin Easter ceremonies took a new direction, focusing on divergences, if any, between the approaches of male and female monastic communities. The *Visitatio Sepulchri*'s special attraction for female monastic communities was already acknowledged.⁴⁵ Drawing particularly on the pioneering work of Ursula Hennig, Janota identified persistent divisions, suggesting not simply the increased performative participation of women already considered by previous scholars, but an increased emphasis on female roles. Female monastic communities, Hennig suggests and Janota confirms, were instrumental in introducing female performers and expanding female roles in Easter ceremonies.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the strategies they used to emphasise women, especially the Marys, structurally affected their Easter ceremonies. For example, some reduced the

42 Renward Cysat, *Luzerner Osterspiel (Plan, Day 2)*, 1583, ink drawing, Zentral-und Hochschulbibliothek Luzern, Sondersammlung; M. Blakemore Evans, *The Passion play of Lucerne. An historical and critical introduction* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1943), 144, 166, 219.

43 Hans-Gert Roloff, Andreas Traub and Walter Lipphardt, eds., *Die geistlichen Spiele des Sterzinger Spielarchivs*, 6 vols (Bern: Peter Lang, 1980–96), II, 155: "Hic potes introducere medicum cum servo suo, si placet."

44 Documents for the 1514 production, including Vigil Raber's *Passion* (MS VRS, Hs.III), stage sketch and cast lists, are in the Sterzinger Stadtarchiv (in Vipiteno, Italy); M A Katritzky, "What did Vigil Raber's stage really look like? Questions of authenticity and integrity in medieval theatre iconography," in *Vigil Raber: Zur 450. Wiederkehr seines Todesjahres. Akten des 4. Symposiums der Sterzinger Osterspiele (25. –27.3.2002)*, eds. Michael Gebhardt and Max Siller (Innsbruck: Wagner, 2004), 85–116; Katritzky, *Women, Medicine and Theatre*, chapters 1–3. (Transcribed (*Passion*): Roloff, Traub and Lipphardt, *Die geistlichen Spiele*, III, 7–161).

45 Mecham, *Sacred vision*, 10.

46 Hennig, "Die Beteiligung"; Janota, "Und gheen myt."

prominence of popular male-dominated episodes, such as the extra-biblical Easter race of the apostles John and Peter to the tomb of Christ, in favour of female-dominated episodes such as the *Hortulanus*, or encounter of Mary Magdalen with Christ the Gardener, an extra-biblical prequel to the post-resurrection *noli me tangere*.⁴⁷ Hardly noted in Janota's fine article is the merchant scene, another extra-biblical episode of even greater significance in the context of divergences between the Easter performances of male and female monastic communities, featuring non-biblical healers as the earliest secular figures in biblical drama.⁴⁸

4 The Merchant Scene of the *Vic Ludus Paschalis*: Authorship and Influence

In the twelfth century, the *Uta Codex*'s visual representation of the merchant scene was joined by two textual representations of the merchant scene, those of the *Vic Ludus Paschalis* (LOO 823) noted above and an earlier merchant scene based not on the Easter story, but on the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins.⁴⁹ This first textual merchant scene features in a Latin/Occitan text of c.1100, *Sponsus (Bridegroom)*, or *Mystère des Vierges sages et des Vierges folles*.⁵⁰ Its only known transcription (whose faults Wulstan ascribes to scribal language difficulties),⁵¹ was commissioned by the monks of St Martial Monastery near Limoges, for a *collectiana* whose "coincidence of early vernacular drama, early vernacular song, and early polyphony" Carol Symes identifies as: "suggestive of some fundamental link between the textual survival of complex performance pieces – whether plays or part-songs – and the individual initiative of an unusually innovative performer-scribe" strongly motivated to inspire performance.⁵² Having belatedly attempted to purchase oil for

47 John 20:15.

48 Janota, "Und gheen myt," 59.

49 Matt 25:8-10: "And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut."

50 Young, *The drama* II, 361–9; Dronke, *Latin plays*, 3–23: Latin & English. Some scholars prefer a mid-eleventh-century dating (Regula Meyer Evitt, "Supersession and conversion: The *Adversus Iudaeos* Liturgical Dramas of Saint-Martial de Limoges," *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 48.1 [2022]: 30, 38–39).

51 David Wulstan, "Heloise at Argenteuil and the Paraclete," in *The Poetic and Musical Legacy of Heloise and Abelard: An Anthology of Essays by Various Authors*, eds. Marc Stewart and David Wulstan (Ottawa: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 2003b): 67–90, 87–88.

52 Symes, "The Appearance," 792–93.

their lamps from “mercatores” or “merchaans,” oil vendors only fleetingly indicated in the gospel version, the foolish virgins of the *Sponsus* are last encountered in its terrifying final hell scene. In strong contrast to some later merchant scenes, rather than engaging in comic promotional banter, the *Sponsus* merchants soberly urge the foolish virgins to redirect their request to their five wise companions.⁵³

Grace Frank’s suggestion (boldly refuting Karl Young), that the *Sponsus* merchants probably influenced the merchant scene of the *Vic Ludus Paschalis* (LOO 823), is widely⁵⁴ (but not universally)⁵⁵ accepted. Traditional scholarship identifies the *Vic* “mercator iuvenis” who interacts with the three Marys at the tomb of Christ as “the earliest example of an extra-biblical addition to the Easter *Visitatio* play,”⁵⁶ representing “the original literary kernel of the merchant scene.”⁵⁷ Despite rejecting the *Vic* text as “drama,”⁵⁸ church historian Nils Holger Petersen is impressed by its performativity, ascribing its textual anomalies to a need to clear space for what he reads as the later addition of the merchant scene.⁵⁹ Johann Drumbli highlights the sensitive individual characterization of its three merchant scene Holy Women and contrasts their flawed human logic with the angel’s deeper insights.⁶⁰ Musicologists have intensively studied textual overlaps between the dialogue assigned to Mary Magdalen towards the end of the *Vic Ludus Paschalis*⁶¹ and the *Epithalamica*, one of several liturgical texts composed for Easter recitation by the nuns of the Cistercian Paraclete convent near Nogent-sur-Seine, whose abbess was Heloise.

Teacher, then husband and co-parent of Astralabe (c.1116/17–1153/65), then spiritual, intellectual and creative partner of Heloise, Abelard entered the Benedictine monastery of Saint Denis when they separated, while Heloise entered the convent of Argenteuil, then from 1129 served as founding abbess of the Paraclete

53 Dronke, *Latin plays*, 21.

54 Grace Frank, “Review” [of Young, *The drama*], *Modern Language Notes* 49.2 (1934): 112–14, 114; David Wulstan, “*Novi modulaminis melos*: The music of Heloise and Abelard,” *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 11.1 (2002): 1–23, 19; Wulstan, “Heloise,” 74; Wulstan, “Sources and Influences: Lyric and Drama at the ‘School of Abelard,’” in *The Poetic and Musical Legacy of Heloise and Abelard: An Anthology of Essays by Various Authors*, eds. Marc Stewart and David Wulstan (Ottawa: Institute of Mediæval Music, 2003): 113–39, 116.

55 Herberichs, “Plädoyer,” 260.

56 Lynette Muir, *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 17, 140, 261n.20.

57 Young, *The Drama* I, 682 (citing K Dürre, *Die Mercatorszene im lateinisch-liturgischen, altdeutschen und altfranzösischen religiösen Drama*, University of Göttingen DISS, 1915).

58 Petersen, “Framing,” 5, 12.

59 Petersen, “Framing,” 9–20.

60 Johann Drumbli, “Il genere e la storia. Appunti sulla tradizione drammatica nell’alto medioevo,” *Teatro e Storia* 3 (1987): 205–49, 241–43.

61 “Versus de pelegri[no]/Verses about the stranger” (Dronke, *Latin plays*, 100–1: Latin & English).

convent, founded by Abelard.⁶² Prominent amongst texts associated with Abelard and Heloise are her accepted correspondence with Peter the Venerable,⁶³ certain anonymous poems speculatively associated with Heloise,⁶⁴ Abelard's extensive accepted corpus of hymns and poems and the couple's two alleged exchanges of correspondence.⁶⁵ Sceptics in the controversial "Second Authenticity Debate" reject or treat with considerable caution attribution to Abelard and Heloise of an anonymous exchange (*Epistolae duorum amantium*) between a male teacher and his young, secular, female pupil. Many prefer to view this as genuine correspondence between unidentified medieval lovers who may or may not be Abelard and Heloise, or even as fictional letters, perhaps written as rhetorical models.⁶⁶ The "First Authenticity Debate" relates to a sequence of exchanges closely aligned with Abelard and Heloise's post-secular lives, that includes the spiritual *Problemata Heloissae* and discussions relating to the Paraclete liturgy. Their sole attribution to Abelard (or even some anonymous forger) has largely been replaced by a deeper understanding of them, as a complex collaboration between the couple.⁶⁷ Often widely shared and read out, monastic epistolary culture functioned more as social media than private

62 Constant J Mews, "Heloise," in *Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition c.1100–c.1500*, eds. Alastair Minnis and Rosalynn Voaden (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010): 267–89; Cook, *Astralabe*, 26.

63 Katherine Kong, *Lettering the Self in Medieval and Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), 71–73.

64 Constant J Mews, *The Lost Love letters of Heloise and Abelard: Perceptions of Dialogue in Twelfth-century France* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), 162–69; Mews, "Heloise," 274–75; Barbara Newman, *Making Love in the Twelfth Century: "Letters of Two Lovers" in Context* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 321n.115.

65 Including Abelard's discussion (in his letter *Sponsae Christi* to Heloise) of the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. On writings attributed to Heloise, see Mews, "Heloise," 282–86.

66 On the *Epistolae duorum amantium*, see Mews, *Love letters*; Mews, "Between authenticity and interpretation", 834–841. On the authenticity debates, highlighting stark disciplinary divergences between historical and literary approaches to the interpretation of documents, see Jan M. Ziolkowski, "Heloise, Abelard, and the *Epistolae duorum amantium*: Lost and Not Yet Found," *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 14 (2004): 171–202; Peter von Moos (ed. Gert Melville), *Abaelard und Heloise. Gesammelte Studien zum Mittelalter* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2005), I, 210–213; "Anhang: Aus einem Brief an John Marenbon, 30 Januar 2003"; John Marenbon. "Lost Love Letters? A Controversy in Retrospect." *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 15.2 (2008): 267–80; Sylvain Piron, "Heloise's literary self-fashioning and the *Epistolae duorum amantium*," in *Strategies of Remembrance. From Pindar to Hölderlin*, ed. Lucie Doležalová, 102–162. (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009); Newman, *Making Love*, x–xiii, 49, 65–78. On the *Problemata Heloissae*, see Kong, *Lettering*, 94–99.

67 Peter Abelard, *Letters of Peter Abelard, Beyond the Personal*, ed. Jan Ziolkowski (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), xxxi, xxxvii; Fassler, "Women," 632–34; Mews, "Between authenticity and interpretation", 826–7; Kaitlin Coats. "Historia Calamitatum Heloysae." *Criterion: A Journal of Literary Criticism* 7.1 (2014): Article 9 (<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/criterion/vol7/iss1/9>); Johann Beukes. "Héloïse d'Argenteuil se filosofiese uitset." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75.4 (2019), a5281. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i4.5281>; Laura Kotevska. "Writing Women into

communication. Recognizing the inevitably public status of Heloise's letters and their highly performative nature, some specialists view her contribution to this exchange as powerful autobiographical self-fashioning through "conscious identity manipulation," even as an actual artifact of medieval theatre, literally dramatizing her evolving self-definition.⁶⁸

Andrea Taschl-Erber identifies "distinct changes in the conventional patriarchal discourse" in Abelard's Magdalen reception, perhaps influenced by Heloise, emphasizing "the precedence of the women in the Easter experience, beginning with the explicitly emphasized status of Mary Magdalen as first witness."⁶⁹ In effect, Mary Magdalen's final dialogue in the *Vic Ludus Paschalis* augments her speech as reported in the Gospel of St John with lines directly corresponding to certain passages of *Epithalamica*.⁷⁰ Postdating the *Epithalamica* to the *Vic Ludus Paschalis*, Peter Dronke views it as a derivative Easter sequence by an unidentified Paraclete nun, heavily influenced by the *Vic Ludus Paschalis*'s male (as Dronke assumes) creator, identified by some as Abelard.⁷¹ Based on detailed stylistic analysis of texts and music, including both sets of letters, Wulstan and Mews hypothesize that the *Epithalamica* could have been written and composed not by Abelard or some male pupil of his, but by Heloise; and, more tentatively, that so too could the original biblical drama, known to modern scholarship only through the faulty Catalan transcription of the *Vic Ludus Paschalis*.⁷²

the History of Philosophy: Contextualism Re-Examined." *Journal of the History of Women Philosophers and Scientists* 1 (2022): 23–47.

68 Elizabeth Freeman, "Medieval women, letter writing and performance," *Lilith* 10 (2001): 58–74, 66; Symes, "The History of Medieval Theatre," 1047.

69 Andrea Taschl-Erber, "Apostle and Sinner: Medieval Receptions of Mary of Magdala," in *The High Middle Ages*, eds. Adriana Valerio and Kari Elisabeth Børresen (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015): 301–326, 313.

70 Susan Valentine, "'Inseparable companions': Mary Magdalene, Abelard, and Heloise," in *Negotiating Community and Difference in Medieval Europe: Gender, Power, Patronage, and the Authority of Religion in Latin Christendom*, eds. Katherine Allen Smith and Scott Wells (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009): 151–71, 165–66.

71 Chrysogonus Waddell, "'Epithalamica': An Easter Sequence by Peter Abelard," *Musical Quarterly* 72.2 (1986): 239–271; Dronke, *Latin Plays*, 85; Peter Dronke and Giovanni Orlandi, "New works by Abelard and Heloise?," *Filologia mediolatina: Studies in Medieval Latin Texts and their Transmission* 12 (2005): 123–77, 123–46.

72 Mews, *Love letters*, 171–2; Constant J Mews, "Heloise and Liturgical Experience at the Paraclete," *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 11.1 (2002): 25–35, 31; Wulstan "Novi," 1, 9–12, 16–19, 22; David Wulstan, "Secular Lyrics from Paris and the Paraclete," in *The Poetic and Musical Legacy of Heloise and Abelard: An Anthology of Essays by Various Authors*, eds. Marc Stewart and David Wulstan (Ottawa: Institute of Medieval Music, 2003): 34–48; Wulstan, "Heloise"; Wulstan, "Sources"; David Wulstan, "Liturgical Drama and the 'School of Abelard'," *Comparative Drama* 42.3 (2008): 347–357, 350–51, 355–56; Mews, "Heloise," 280.

Far from remaining static, Heloise and Abelard's pedagogical collaboration is increasingly viewed as a mutually beneficial interchange, during the lengthy course of which Heloise matured from receptive pupil to independent scholar: celebrated for her command of Latin, Hebrew and Greek and increasingly individual literary, musical and ethical voice.⁷³ As a committed religious leader deeply concerned to create an authentic religious way of life appropriate to female needs, from the 1130s Heloise significantly shaped the textual and musical components of the Paraclete's liturgy, to "implement her own vision of the religious life."⁷⁴ Wulstan defines Heloise as "a lyricist of great stature,"⁷⁵ and her influence on the Easter play tradition as "notable and pervasive."⁷⁶ Also citing the relative prominence the Vic *Ludus Paschalis* gives to Mary Magdalen and the possibility that Abelard's Old Testament laments are "an artistic response to Heloise's Easter dramas" (the Vic laments), Wulstan suggests Heloise, rather than Abelard, as its probable main composer.⁷⁷

By contrast, minimal scholarly attention has been directed towards certain correspondences between the Vic merchant scene (LOO 823) and the disputed *Epistolae duorum amantium*, or towards the importance of the merchant scene for performance in female monastic communities. The Vic "mercator iuvenis" sells his ointment for a talent of gold to the Holy Women, assuring them in the Catalan vernacular that applying it to corpses protects them from decay or worm damage. As the earliest speaking spice merchants in any Easter text, and initiator of a major Central European fashion for the Easter merchant scene, the Vic merchants are no unoriginal derivation from the *Sponsus* merchant. This ground-breaking vehicle for additional speeches and action holds audience interest and emphasizes the Holy Women's central status in the Easter story. The "signal innovation"⁷⁸ of the Vic *Ludus Paschalis* merchant scene deserves celebration as a highly significant new creation. Its emphatic adaptation of the performative Easter texts of male monastic

73 Mews, "Liturgy and identity"; Constant J Mews, "Heloise, the Paraclete liturgy and Mary Magdalen," in *The Poetic and Musical Legacy of Heloise and Abelard: An Anthology of Essays by Various Authors*, eds. Marc Stewart and David Wulstan (Ottawa: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 2003) 100–12; Peter Godman, *Paradoxes of Conscience in the High Middle Ages: Abelard, Heloise and the Archpoet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), xi, 127–37, 163–64; Kong, *Lettering*, 68n.39.

74 Mews, *Love letters*, 159. See also Mews, "Liturgy and Identity," 25–7; Mews, "Paraclete Liturgy," 101; Mews, "Heloise," 277–79; Kong, *Lettering*, 93; Peter Abelard, *L'Hymnaire du Paraclet*, eds. Franz Dolveck and Pascale Bourgain (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022).

75 Wulstan "Novi," 1.

76 Wulstan, "Liturgical Drama," 355.

77 Wulstan, "Heloise," 74–5. See also Mews, "Liturgical experience," 31; Juanita Feros Ruys, "*Planctus magis quam cantici*: The Generic Significance of Abelard's *planctus*," *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 11. 1 (2002): 37–44, 43–44; Mews, "Paraclete Liturgy," 101, 107.

78 Wulstan, "Heloise," 74.

communities to female liturgical concerns supports its suggested attribution to Heloise, as spiritual leader of the Paraclete Convent.

Attributed by some to Heloise, the *Vic Ludus Paschalis* influenced numerous subsequent Easter merchant scene representations. Many texts drawing on Heloise's innovative introduction of the merchant scene are associated with mixed-gender civic congregations or can no longer be firmly linked to identifiable monastic communities. These include the late twelfth-century Tours *Ludus Paschalis* (LOO 824), late thirteenth- or early fourteenth-century Gerona fragment (LOO 822), mid-fourteenth-century *Frankfurter Dirigierrolle*, *Innsbrucker Osterspiel* of 1391, early fifteenth-century *Erlauer Osterspiel* or *Alsfelder Passionsspiel* of 1501.⁷⁹ Some, such as the late thirteenth- or early fourteenth-century *Pfäferser Passionsspiel*⁸⁰ or fifteenth-century Egmond Easter text (LOO 827),⁸¹ are associated with exclusively male monastic communities. At least three, the thirteenth-century Klosterneuburg *Osterspiel* (LOO 829),⁸² Benediktbeurer (Seckau Abbey) *Osterspiel* (LOO 830) and Benediktbeurer *Grosses Passionsspiel*,⁸³ originate from double monasteries, while the early fourteenth-century Origny *Ludus Paschalis* (LOO 825)⁸⁴ was commissioned for and performed at a convent. Heloise's influences on subsequent merchant scenes document both her widespread and substantial impact on the creation and diffusion of the Easter merchant scene and the continuing female input into its development.

5 Later Merchant Scene Representations

Possibly influenced by mediated knowledge of the *Uta Codex* merchant scene image as well as by the oil buying episode of the *Sponsus* text, the *Vic Ludus Paschalis* (LOO 823) contains the only pre-1200 scripted Easter merchant scene. Additional to this single textual representation, the twelfth century produced a coherent group of Easter merchant scene images. Unlike the creator of the *Uta Codex* images, their

79 Richard Carroll Stegall, *The Tours Easter Play: A Critical Performing Edition* (University of Iowa DISS, 1974), 62; Wulstan, "Heloise," 76–78; Wulstan, "Sources," 120; Wulstan "Novi," 17; Wulstan, "Liturgical Drama," 351; Klaus Amann, "Zwischen Barcelona und St Gallen: Europäische Literaturbeziehungen am Beispiel früher 'deutscher' Passions- und Osterspiele," *Estudios Filológicos Alemanes* 15 (2008): 1–12, 4.

80 Amann, *Das Pfäferser Passionsspiel*, 23.

81 Wulstan, "Sources," 120.

82 Stegall, *The Tours Easter Play*, 62; Wulstan, "Sources," 120, 126–27.

83 Hartl, *Das Benediktbeurer Passionsspiel*; Wulstan, "Heloise," 76–78; Wulstan, "Sources," 120, 126; Wulstan "Novi," 17; Wulstan, "Liturgical Drama," 351.

84 Stegall, *The Tours Easter Play*, 62; Wulstan, "Heloise," 76–78; Wulstan, "Sources," 120; Wulstan "Novi," 17; Wulstan, "Liturgical Drama," 351.

artists were not Bavarian manuscript illuminators commissioned by women,⁸⁵ but northwest Mediterranean sculptors commissioned by men. Some of their stone carvings are still in their original sites in Catalonia and Provence, either contextualized within their iconographic cycles⁸⁶ or preserved on later religious buildings.⁸⁷ At least two, removed from Romanesque buildings, are displayed in museums.⁸⁸ There is no firm consensus on dating or diffusion;⁸⁹ some specialists identify the Provençal⁹⁰ (or specifically Arles)⁹¹ or Italian⁹² carvings as the earliest of a coherent group, others view the Catalan capitals as a separate sequence, independently inspired by some lost intermediate image(s).⁹³ My own reading of these iconographic variations supports a radiating rather than unilinear pattern of influence, exerted outwards from the Beaucaire and St Gilles friezes: recorded first locally, on the Arles

85 After the *Uta Codex* image, the next oldest known painted representations of the merchant scene are two mid-fourteenth-century manuscript illuminations [Anon Italian, *St Mary Magdalen buying spices* and *The Marys buying spices*, in St Bonaventure, *Meditations on the life of Christ*. MS CCC 410, fols 147r-v. Corpus Christi College, Oxford]. First reproduced in this context by Katritzky (“Les représentations du charlatan,” Figure 7, “The itinerant healer,” Figures 2 and 3).

86 *The Three Marys Buying Spices from Two Spice-Merchants*, Arles, Saint-Trophime (cloister pillar, NE angle), mid-twelfth-century (reproduced: Katritzky, “Lucas van Leyden’s ‘Toothdrawer,’” Figure 4); *The Three Marys Buying Spices from Two Spice-merchants*, St-Gilles-du-Gard, Abbaye de St-Gilles (tympanum frieze, west façade), mid-twelfth century (reproduced: Katritzky, “Les représentations du charlatan,” Figure 1); *The Three Marys Buying Spices from Two Spice-Merchants*, Monastery of San Cugat del Vallés nr Barcelona (cloister, South Capital 4Nb), c.1190–1220 (reproduced: Katritzky, “The itinerant healer,” Figure 1).

87 *The Three Marys Buying Spices from Two Spice-Merchants*, Beaucaire, Notre-Dame-des-Pommiers, south façade, frieze, twelfth century (reproduced: Katritzky, “Lucas van Leyden’s ‘Toothdrawer,’” Figure 3b).

88 *Two Marys Buying Spices from Two Spice-Merchants*, Paris, Musée de Cluny, inv.19002 (reproduced: Katritzky, “Lucas van Leyden’s ‘Toothdrawer,’” Figure 3c), one of a group of six capitals, of which inv.19004 is traced to the now ruined Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes, Catalonia by Xavier Barral i Altet (“Un chapiteau roman de Saint-Pierre de Rodes, au Musée de Cluny,” *Bulletin Monumental* 133.4 (1975): 321–25); *The Three Marys Buying Spices from Two Spice-Merchants*, Modena, Museo Civico (reproduced: Katritzky, “Lucas van Leyden’s ‘Toothdrawer,’” Figure 3a); Adolfo Venturi traces this to the now deconsecrated church of S. Vitale di Carpineti, Emilia-Romagna (consecrated 1145) and dates it to 1159 (“Museo Civico di Modena. Un capitello romanico,” *Le Gallerie nazionali italiane* 3 (1897), 274).

89 Julio I. González Montañés, *Drama e iconografía en el arte medieval peninsular (Siglos XI–XV)* (UNED Madrid DISS, 2002), 429–431.

90 Emile Mâle, *Religious Art in France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 138–40.

91 Marilyn Armstrong Schneider, *The Sculptures of the North Gallery of the Cloister of St-Trophime at Arles* (Columbia University DISS, 1983), 503–515.

92 Walter W. S. Cook, “The Earliest Painted Panels of Catalonia (VI),” *The Art Bulletin* 10.4 (1928): 305–65, 363.

93 Imma Lorés i Otzet, “L’escena de la venda de perfums en la Visita de les Maries al Sepulcre i el drama litúrgic Pasqual,” *Lambard. Estudis d’art medieval* 2 (1986), 129–38, 137–38.

pillar, then eastwards, on the Italian capital, finally westwards, on the Catalan capitals. By around 1200, merchant scenes were being recorded in Easter texts in the German-speaking lands, also the region of its most significant thirteenth-century visual depiction, the twelve-sided Mauritius Rotunda of c.1270, now integrated as a Romanesque chapel within the later, larger, Gothic Constance cathedral.⁹⁴ The Rotunda's inner monumental, half life-size, painted, single sandstone figures, featuring the three Marys with the spice merchant, all belong to the Easter story. Its outer figures include the three Christmas Magi, a juxtaposition iconographically linking the spice bearing figures of the Christmas and Easter stories in ways referencing and progressing sophisticated thirteenth-century performative developments.

As here in Constance, where they are integral to an ambitious illustrative scheme integrated onto a specific ecclesiastical building, or within devotional manuscripts, images relating to the merchant scene usually feature in an overtly religious context. It seems likely that such images were informed by their artists' familiarity with religious performance of their own time; some, such as the Gréban illuminations, appear within an explicitly theatrical rather than liturgical context. However, illustrated manuscripts of playtexts were produced for private devotional reading and complex performative reading practices as well as in connection with staged productions.⁹⁵ Although the extent to which the iconographic record reflects ongoing performance trends as well as iconographic conventions is highly contested, the merchant scene's extra-biblical status does suggest close links between its visual, textual and performative representations. Rare examples of monastic communities documenting it both visually and textually include the Flemish Egmond Monastery.⁹⁶ Carefully contextualized, merchant scene iconography offers a potential source of valuable – if coded – insights into its performative diffusion and the costumes and props of biblical drama.

⁹⁴ Barbara Dieterich, "Das Konstanzer Heilige Grab. Inszenierte Absenz," in *Medialität des Heils im späten Mittelalter*, eds. Carla Dauven-van Knippenberg, Cornelia Herberichs and Christian Kiening (Zürich: Chronos, 2009): 165–88, 185.

⁹⁵ Robert L. Clark and P. Sheingorn. 2002. "A Performative Reading: The Illustrated Manuscripts of Gréban's *Mystère de la Passion*," *European Medieval Drama* 6 (2002): 129–54.; Cornelia Herberichs, "Lektüren des Performativen. Zur Medialität geistliche Spiele des Mittelalters" in Ingrid Kasten, and Erika Fischer-Lichte (eds.), *Transformationen des Religiösen. Performativität und Textualität im geistlichen Spiel* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007): 169–185; Regina Toepfer, "Theater und Text in der frühen Neuzeit. Impulse des überlieferungsgeschichtlichen Konzepts für die Dramenforschung," in Dorothea Klein, Horst Brunner, and Freimut Löser (eds.), *Überlieferungsgeschichte trans disziplinär. Neue Perspektiven auf ein germanistisches Forschungsparadigma* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2016), 338–39.

⁹⁶ Easter text c.1491 (LOO 827); image: Utrecht (?) artist, *The Three Marys Buying Spices from a Spice-Merchant*, c. 1440, manuscript illumination, New York, Morgan Library, *Egmond Breviary* (M.87, fol. 202v).

A foundational (but necessarily incomplete and imperfect)⁹⁷ resource for tracing the merchant scene's textual development and geographic diffusion is Walther Lipphardt's collection of over 900 Latin and predominantly Latin performative Easter texts. Some five percent of these indicate *Visitatio Sepulchri* spice buying. The earliest, the Vic *Ludus Paschalis* (LOO 823), is one of only 14 explicitly featuring merchant scenes with one or more spice merchants.⁹⁸ Just two, the Tours *Ludus Paschalis* (LOO 824: two males) and Benediktbeurer *Osterspiel* (LOO 830: a couple), indicate more than one spice merchant; unlike the vernacular *Sponsus* excluded by Lipphardt, both are *Visitatio Sepulchri* texts.⁹⁹ The earliest known Latin/German Passion texts with merchant scenes, the Benediktbeurer *Osterspiel* (LOO 830) and *Grosses Passionsspiel*, are also the earliest religious texts in any language to feature a spice-merchant couple. Both are preserved in the *Carmina Burana*, a manuscript compiled by two scribes around 1230, and transferred to Munich's Bavarian State Library soon after its 1803 discovery at the Benedictine monastery of Benediktbeuern. A substantial *Miscellanea poetica* of performative texts, secular as well as religious, originally prepared for the double monastery of Seckau Abbey, the *Carmina Burana* includes transcriptions of songs attributed to Abelard and Heloise;¹⁰⁰ its *Osterspiel* (whose "apothecarius" and his wife sell their spices to the Easter Marys), draws extensively on Heloise's performative Easter texts.¹⁰¹ Another of the *Carmina Burana*'s biblical dramas, the *Grosses Passionsspiel*, features the merchant couple no less than three times, albeit not in connection with the Easter Marys, but visited three times before the death of Christ by Mary Magdalen. She twice buys cosmetics and perfumes from this "Mercator" or "Chramer" and "uxor sua," before repenting and returning to buy unguents to anoint the feet of Christ.¹⁰²

The spice merchant Antonius features twice in the fragmentary, mid-thirteenth century, vernacular *Muri fragment*.¹⁰³ Firstly, he puffs his medical wares and services after collecting his commercial licence from Pilate; later he appears in the

97 Pace Janota ("Und gheen myt"), 45 and Linke ("Osterfeier"), 122–23.

98 LOO 801–4, 804a, 805 [these six all St. George, Prague, fourteenth century], 822 [Gerona, thirteenth or fourteenth century], 823 [Vic Cathedral, twelfth century], 824 [Tours Cathedral, thirteenth century]; 825 [Origny-Sainte-Benoîte Convent, fourteenth century], 827 [Egmond Monastery, fifteenth century], 828 [Delft, 1496], 829 [Klosterneuburg Convent/Monastery, thirteenth century], 830 [Benediktbeurer *Osterspiel*, thirteenth century].

99 See also Katritzky, "Text and Performance," 117–26.

100 Wulstan, "Secular lyrics", 36–38, 42–43; Juanita Feros Ruys, "Hearing Mediæval Voices: Heloise and *Carmina Burana* 126," in *The Poetic and Musical Legacy of Heloise and Abelard: An Anthology of Essays by Various Authors*, eds. Marc Stewart and David Wulstan (Ottawa: Institute of Mediæval Music, 2003): 91–99; Wulstan, "Sources," 121–22.

101 Wulstan, "Liturgical Drama," 351.

102 Hartl, *Das Benediktbeurer Passionsspiel*, 12–23.

103 Aarau, Kantonsbibliothek, MsMurF, fol. 31 a.

Easter merchant scene with the three Marys on their way to the tomb.¹⁰⁴ Associated with the Benedictine Kloster Muri, near Zürich, founded as a double monastery, it is possible that its nuns, who moved out in the late twelfth century to found nearby Convent Hermetschwil, continued to influence its Easter texts. While its female input is unclear, that of the Easter texts of Klosterneuburg, Origny, Wienhausen and Prague is undisputed, although their cumulative significance for the development of the merchant scene has not previously been considered. The canonesses of the double monastery at Klosterneuburg near Vienna are thought to have influenced the content and structure of and even actively participated in their own liturgical observances, including their *Visitatio sepulchri*.¹⁰⁵ Their thirteenth-century Latin Easter text (*Incipit Ordo paschalis*) features the earliest speaking spice merchant in the German-speaking regions, a ‘Specionarius’ from whom the three Marys buy their spices (LOO 829).

A Latin/French Easter performance with a merchant scene, performed by a female monastic community supportive of female participation, was that of the noble nuns of the Benedictine convent of Origny-Sainte-Benoîte near St Quentin (LOO 825). Kate Matthews, who notes that already in the thirteenth century, some nuns took performative parts in Easter ceremonies, and even represented God in their convent’s brief, liturgically accurate Easter *Visitatio*, identifies medieval convent drama as ‘a distinct genre, with its own networks of exchange and growth’ and specifically female conventions, Origny-Sainte-Benoîte as a possible locus of exchange, and significant evidence of adaptation for female performance in its early fourteenth-century Latin/French *Ludus Paschalis*, notably by increasing and strengthening female parts and enhancing use of vernacular French in its dialogue and rubrics.¹⁰⁶ “Written, adapted and staged by women,”¹⁰⁷ the Origny *Ludus Paschalis* requires the three Marys to be represented and sung by its own nuns.¹⁰⁸ The manuscript, indicating that the *Ludus Paschalis* was written under the direction of Heluis de Conflans, perhaps the convent’s treasurer, is within the *Livre de la Trésorerie*.¹⁰⁹ This largely vernacular manuscript revising the convent’s earlier *Ordinale*, or Latin liturgy, was produced by Origny-Sainte-Benoîte’s nuns around 1314 under the supervision of Isabelle d’Acy, their abbess from 1286 to 1324.¹¹⁰ With reference to an account of c.1312–14 summarizing Origny-Sainte-Benoîte’s Easter ceremonies for Heluis de Conflans, Wright suggests that Heluis may have introduced the merchant scene to

¹⁰⁴ Meier, *Das Innsbrucker Osterspiel*, 128–35, 140–44.

¹⁰⁵ Norton and Carr, “Liturgical Manuscripts,” 2, 68–69, 122, 130–31.

¹⁰⁶ Matthews, “Textual Spaces,” 72, 80.

¹⁰⁷ Matthews, “Textual Spaces,” 69.

¹⁰⁸ Meham, *Sacred Communities*, 32–33.

¹⁰⁹ Matthews, “Textual Spaces,” 81–83.

¹¹⁰ Cotton, “Katherine of Sutton,” 480–81.

her convent and its *Ludus Paschalis*.¹¹¹ Earlier specialists recognize strong German influence in its composition and arrangement, both in its merchant scene and elsewhere; more recently it has been suggested that it closely derives from Heloise's Easter texts.¹¹²

The Cistercian convent of Wienhausen near Celle, reformed in 1469 and converted to Protestantism in 1528, was one of some half dozen wealthy Lüneburger Heideklöster, or northwest German Lüneburg Heath convents, many of whose “vast collection”¹¹³ of Passion and Easter texts incorporate extra-biblical episodes showcasing female roles. As well as the Hortulanus, of which Hedwig Röckelein notes: “In the role play of the *Visitatio sepulcri*, the nuns could identify themselves with the three Marias, among them Mary Magdalen,”¹¹⁴ these include the merchant scene, “highly prevalent” in the Lüneburg Heath convent Easter texts.¹¹⁵ The Wienhausen Latin *Easter Ceremonial*, a fragment whose origins go back to c.1400, extensively modified with post-Reformation updates, documents the continuing popularity of the merchant scene with female monastic communities into the sixteenth century.¹¹⁶ The Easter apostle race provides its concluding episode. However, here this manuscript tells a conflicted story. While the race is briefly introduced at the bottom of folio 9, none of the subsequent text survives in legible form, as the original text of the remaining folios is entirely erased. This erasure and the later introduction of the merchant scene were identified by Carla Dauven-van Knippenberg as possible post-Reformation strategies by the Wienhausen canonesses to create a more female friendly Easter ceremony for their community. They exemplify the tendency highlighted by Janota, for Easter ceremonies of female monastic communities to emphasize female roles at the expense of

111 Edith Armstrong Wright, *The Dissemination of the Liturgical Drama in France* (Bryn Mawr: Bryn Mawr College, 1936), 20, 34–35, 87–91, 124, 184–86.

112 As discussed above; Wulstan, “Heloise,” 76–8; Wulstan, “Liturgical Drama,” 351.

113 Lotem Pinchover, “Re-living Resurrection in Medieval Saxony – The Development of New Imagery of the Resurrected Christ,” in *Devotional Cross-Roads: Practicing Love of God in Medieval Jerusalem, Gaul and Saxony*, eds. Hedwig Röckelein, Galit Noga-Banai and Lotem Pinchover (Göttingen: Göttingen University Press, 2019): 211–247, 225.

114 Wienhausen Hs.36; Hedwig Röckelein, “The Cult of the Invisible – Relics in the Cistercian Houses Loccum and Wienhausen,” in *Devotional Cross-Roads: Practicing Love of God in Medieval Jerusalem, Gaul and Saxony*, eds. Hedwig Röckelein, Galit Noga-Banai and Lotem Pinchover (Göttingen: Göttingen University Press, 2019): 161–209, 178.

115 Wienhausen Hs.80; Pinchover, “Re-living Resurrection,” 225; Carla Dauven-van Knippenberg and Elisabeth Meyer, “Wienhausen Hs 80: Überlegungen zu Kontext und Performanz des Objekts.” *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 78 (2018): 75–101.

116 Wienhausen Hs.80; Dauven-van Knippenberg, “Die Klosterfrauen,” 71–73; Mecham, *Sacred Vision*, 126; Mecham, *Sacred Communities*, 18–20, 30–32, 137.

male-dominated episodes.¹¹⁷ Their “performative devotion” provided Wienhausen’s nuns with inspirational female role models for their Christian piety, enabling them to “shape as well as participate in the liturgy of the paschal season.”¹¹⁸

The merchant scene also became central to female performed Bohemian Easter ceremonies. From the twelfth century onwards, the Benedictine convent of St. George, Prague, supported a rich continuous tradition of female religious performance, including representation of the three Marys.¹¹⁹ Although spice merchants are absent from a mid-thirteenth-century Bohemian *Visitatio sepulchri* fragment,¹²⁰ and only alluded to in another dating to c.1300 (LOO 799), by the fourteenth century the merchant scene had become an established feature of the St. George *Visitatio sepulchri*.¹²¹ A rubric in one St. George text (LOO 805) suggests that the Marys were led to its spice merchant by their most celebrated abbess, Kunhuta of Bohemia (1265–1321),¹²² who perhaps introduced the merchant scene to her convent.

In contrast to these largely Latin early fourteenth-century texts, two later fourteenth-century texts¹²³ contain religious merchant scenes featuring all three languages of medieval Bohemia. Known as the Museum Fragment¹²⁴ and the Schlägl Fragment,¹²⁵ their Marys and angels speak Latin, the character Abraham vernacular Czech, and the “Mercator” and his servants, perhaps to indicate their itinerancy, Czech with a smattering of broken German.¹²⁶ Jarmila Veltruský’s hypothesis, that these two texts were inspired by vernacular fictional mountebank harangues, such as the *Dit de l’herberie* attributed to the French author Rutebeuf (active c.1245–85), who postdated Heloise by a century, continues to attract scholarly support.¹²⁷ In Europe, the universal language of transnational communications between medieval religious houses was Latin; their lively cultural exchanges relied heavily on non-

117 As discussed above. Janota, “Und gheen myt,” 59–61. See also Dauven-van Knippenberg, “Die Klosterfrauen,” 72–74.

118 Meham, *Sacred Vision*, 38, 103, 125–27, 394.

119 Hennig, “Die Beteiligung,” 223–24; Mattern, “*Vere vidi*,” 62; Janota, “Und gheen myt,” 59.

120 Prague, Národní knihovna, MS XXIII D 156, fols 5v–6r (transcribed: Petr Uličný, “Prostor a rituál: Velikonoční slavnosti v bazilice sv. Jiří na Pražském hradě,” *Studia Mediaevalia Bohemica* 4.1 (2012): 7–33, 31–2).

121 LOO 801–4, 804a, 805.

122 Prague, Národní knihovna, MS VII G 16, fols 95v–101v; Kateřina Vršecká, “Towards a Way of Reading Scenic Space in Dramatic Texts of the Czech Middle Ages,” *Theatralia* 14.1 (2011): 65–81, 72–73.

123 Veltruský, *A Sacred Farce*, 332–376 (Czech & English); Lucie Doležalová, “Multilingualism and Late Medieval Manuscript Culture,” in *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches*, eds. Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015): 160–80, 165–66.

124 Prague, Národní Muzeum, MS I A c 55 (formerly: XIV D 15).

125 Uncatalogued MS, Monastery Library, Prämonstratenserstift, Schlägl near Linz.

126 Doležalová, “Multilingualism,” 163.

127 Veltruský, *A Sacred Farce*, 9.

verbal images and Latin texts. Perhaps more convincing as a potential source than foreign, secular texts is the Latin *Visitatio Sepulchri* tradition of Bohemian female religious communities, not least the Benedictine convent of St. George, Prague.¹²⁸ The mid-fourteenth-century Museum Fragment was bound into a fourteenth-century codex written for the library of the Augustinian canonry in Roudnice nad Labem, founded in 1333, 25 miles north of Prague.¹²⁹ The Schlägl Fragment of c.1365–85 entered the library of the then Convent at Schlägl near Linz. The wide diffusion of religious, largely Latin (rather than secular, entirely vernacular) texts, such as those of St. George, Prague, suggests the dependence of the merchant scene's spread and development not just on female creative input, but also female, often Benedictine, cultural networks.

6 Conclusions

Women's participation in medieval religious drama is increasingly acknowledged and many aspects of the merchant scene, including its now widely accepted origins in the French-speaking regions, are intensively studied. The present study addresses a neglected, even unacknowledged, aspect of the merchant scene's development, the crucial and systematic creative input of women. The motivation for the foundational female contribution to establishing the merchant scene as a popular, even dominant, element in Easter performances is here identified as one of the most powerful of many strategies medieval female religious leaders implemented for modifying their observances to the spiritual and practical needs of women, namely the emphasis of female characters and female participants in their liturgical ceremonies.

Women commissioned or created the earliest known merchant scene representations. Uta von Kirchberg's ground-breaking eleventh-century *Uta Codex* contains the first merchant scene image; recent research by musicologists convincingly attributes to Heloise the twelfth-century *Ludus paschalis* text, whose pioneering recognition of the merchant scene's significance for Easter ceremonies was sufficiently influential to inspire pan-European adoption of the merchant scene in biblical drama. Leaders of female and double monastic communities continued to develop the merchant scene in their Easter performances. The influential repurposing, vernacularization and feminization of this brief biblical episode by highly educated female religious leaders in France, Catalonia, Bohemia, the German-

128 Jakub Sichálek. "České texty v roudnických rukopisech – Mastičkář a Kocovník," in *Ubi est finis huius libri deus scit: středověká knihovna augustiniánských kanovníků v Roudnici nad Labem*, eds. Michal Dragoun, Lucie Doležalová and Adéla Eberssonová, 206–229 (Praha: Scriptorium, 2015).

129 Doležalová, "Multilingualism," 165.

speaking regions and elsewhere achieved a substantial performative vehicle for explicating the origins of the Easter Holy Womens' spices and spice containers, and for extending and emphasizing the impact and importance of the Easter Holy Women. Their incorporation of this non-biblical episode into the liturgy decisively contributed to transmuting Easter performances into biblical drama. Utilizing their creativity, patronage and the powerful transnational cultural networks of the Catholic Church, female religious leaders circulated theatrical and visual representations of spice purchasing Holy Women between Europe's monastic communities, inspiring Easter performances in monasteries, double monasteries and all-female convents. My comparative analysis of numerous female-inspired medieval performative texts featuring the merchant scene has brought into much sharper focus their wide geographic spread and richly transnational character, suggesting that religious women, and especially their elite, educated leaders, played a previously unrecognized, decisive role in elevating the merchant scene to the heart of their most important annual liturgical rite, the performative Easter ceremony. In doing so, their contribution to the introduction of vernacular speech, non-biblical roles and female performers and perspectives to religious ceremony significantly influenced the development of biblical drama. These women's substantial and enduring theatrical impact requires radical re-evaluation.

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