

The Arts and Rituals of Pilgrimage





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Eventum:

A Journal of Medieval Arts and Rituals and its First Issue

Abstract

This first introductory article presents the brand new, interdisciplinary, and diamond open access journal *Eventum*, along with the specific theme of Issue 1: "The Arts and Rituals of Pilgrimage". It describes the rationale and scope of the journal in association with the three key terms of its subtitle, in reverse order: 'rituals', 'arts', and 'medieval'. As for the topic of the present issue, which explores the arts and rituals of the medieval and postmedieval practice of pilgrimage, some important points are noted in relation to the issue's five subsequent articles.

Keywords

Eventum; Journal of Medieval Arts and Rituals; first issue; pilgrimage

Eventum: A Journal of Medieval Arts and Rituals is a major deliverable of the H2020 project "Network for Medieval Arts and Rituals" (NetMAR, 2021–23; Grant Agreement no. 951875). Eventum, an annual diamond open access journal of medieval and postmedieval or medievalist research, is modelled on Interfaces: A Journal of Medieval European Literatures (https://riviste.unimi.it/interfaces), from the Centre for Medieval Literature (University of Southern Denmark, Denmark and University of York, UK), and shares its model's commitment to new high-quality scholarship that is international, transparent, egalitarian, non-profit, and widely available. The language of Eventum is English, the dominant lingua franca of international research. The journal will publish both thematic and non-thematic issues falling within its scope as elucidated below.

The gender-balanced (this issue's contributors are three women and three men) and often gender-informed research (one third of the issue's articles deal with gender issues) promoted by Eventum is situated at the crossing of various humanities disciplines: history, archaeology, art and architectural history, philology, literature, linguistics, philosophy, theology, anthropology, musicology, and theatre studies. In short, this new journal reaches out to international scholars from all these fields including late antique, medieval, early modern, modern, and postmodern studies, studies in medievalism, ritual studies, performance studies, cultural studies, and cultural heritage studies, inviting contributions from around the world. Contributors from early to late career stages are asked to explore the interrelations of arts and rituals in one or more medieval cultures or to examine the heritage of medieval arts and rituals in later periods of the Western world. For Eventum's purposes, the term 'medieval' is used in a broad sense, covering Byzantine, Western European, Coptic, Syriac, Hebrew, Arabic, Armenian, Georgian, and Slavic cultures from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries.

Eventum aspires to become a channel for innovative approaches by bringing all types of medieval arts (visual, literary, and performing) and rituals (religious, semi-religious, and secular) under one roof and by inaugurating a forum of broader discussions across medieval cultures and later ones continuing the medieval legacy. At the same time, Eventum seeks to form future scholarship by introducing novel, interdisciplinary, and connecting research projects and methods for the study of past and contemporary cultures. By revealing, stimulating, and putting in dialogue the intersections of medieval arts and rituals, Eventum expects to significantly contribute towards a better understanding of the workings of medieval and later cultures, and to disclose aspects of those cultures that could not otherwise be seen. The (comparative) study of medieval rituals and ritual arts can thus provide priceless information about their creation, recreation, patronage, and reception, and especially about the interconnection of artworks and their value and significance as they were or are performed for and perceived by medieval, later, and contemporary audiences.

In sum, *Eventum* is dedicated to the artistic aspects of medieval rituals, the ritual dimensions of medieval arts, and the intersections between visual, literary, and performance works within the framework of

rituals. *Eventum* aims to reposition the arts and rituals of medieval traditions and to foster research on: (1) all types of medieval arts *in* and *as* rituals; and (2) the initiators, participants, spaces, forms, structures, and artistic elements of all types of medieval rituals. At the same time, *Eventum* provides a platform for the examination of the relationship between medieval, postmedieval, and contemporary arts and rituals, bringing to the fore the rich cultural heritage of the Middle Ages for a better understanding of both the past and the present.

Rituals

Although ritual is a universal category, it cannot be defined universally. This is the reason why the ritual theorist Catherine Bell speaks not of ritual, but of *ritualization* – the "way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities" (Bell 74). The "strategies of ritualization", continues Bell, "are particularly rooted in the body. [...] Essential to ritualization is the circular production of a ritualized body which in turn produces ritualized practices" (Bell 93). By introducing ritualization, Bell provides a corrective to current universalizing definitions of ritual which describe it as formal, fixed, unchanging, and repetitive while ignoring other important aspects of rituals, such as the embodiment, interaction, agency, and creativity that often cancel out formality, fixity, unchangeability, and repetition.

1. See, e.g., Bradley, "Ritual, Time"; idem, *Ritual and Domestic Life*; Insoll.

Although 'ritual' and 'ritualization' are modern terms, they concern practices and ways of acting that are as old as human civilization. Across time and cultures, rituals (in the plural) and forms of ritualization have been innumerable, diverse, and complex, serving varied purposes: political, religious, institutional, community, and familial. Thus, rituals cannot be properly described and fathomed unless they are placed within their specific historical, social, and cultural contexts. Even if *Eventum* does not constrain its authors to a given definition of ritual, the Latin word that is used for the journal's title – *Eventum* – suggests a certain direction for approaching medieval rituals and their later uses and transformations.

According to the Oxford Latin Dictionary, the word 'eventum' means, among other things, "a happening, event, experience". Rather than employing the most common, masculine version of the word - 'eventus' - we opted for the neuter 'eventum', which is a gender-neutral word in a male-dominated language, to propose the treatment of rituals as ritualized events and, more precisely, as "special events", in Jan G. Platvoet's words. Following Platvoet, Eventum invites its authors to take as their point of departure a "provisional" definition of rituals, describing them as "special event[s], [often] performed at special place[s] and/or time[s], for special occasion[s] and/or with special message[s]" (Platvoet 42). Seen in this light, rituals can also be described as examples of occasionalism, in Peter Burke's terms. For Burke, occasionalism – the emphasis on the occasion that at each time determines human behaviour - includes "different temporalities in an individual life, in different domains" involving rituals and festivals (Burke 45).²

2. I am most grateful to Nils Holger Petersen for bringing Burke's notion of "occasionalism" to my attention and for providing valuable feedback on an earlier version of this article.

As special events or occasions, rituals are inextricably related to their treatment as creative performances entailing different types of arts – visual arts, literature, and the performing arts – with the intention of evoking specific emotions and influencing the ritual participants' perceptions. The treatment of rituals as events, namely as spaces of performance, experience, creativity, and transformation, is not new but goes back to Victor Turner's work on anthropological ritual in the late 1950s (Turner, *Schism*). It is, however, in his later work that Turner highlights rituals as liminal events, which he treats as critical, generative, and creative performances by associating them with theatre and play.³

3. See, e.g., Turner, Ritual Process; idem, Dramas; idem, From Ritual; idem, "Liminality"; idem, "Anthropology".

In short, *Eventum* focuses on the strong performative and creative dimensions of rituals. By bringing together medieval rituals and arts, the journal's subtitle (*A Journal of Medieval Arts and Rituals*) proposes the treatment of rituals also as Gesamtkunstwerks (universal artworks or total artworks). Richard Wagner's notion of the "Gesamtkunstwerk", which he developed in two writings – *Art and Revolution* (*Die Kunst und die Revolution*, 1849) and *The Artwork of the Future* (*Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, 1850) – represents a unification of the arts and their interaction into a combined work that is situated at the boundaries of art, religion, and politics. The total work of art is thus

conceived not just as a synthesis of the arts, but as a form of artful performance that provokes the viewers' involvement, communality, and transformation.

Like Wagner's "Gesamtkunstwerk", medieval rituals were simultaneously artful performances and syntheses of different art forms with effects upon participants. As the *sine qua non* of rituals, arts were in constant negotiation with ceremonial imperatives and artistic values. While church and state representatives or wealthy individuals turned to various artists to realize a ritual and maximize its effects, the latter had to create works that were both artistic and functional, provoking powerful experiences in participants. Religious and profane rituals often intersected, since they served similar purposes, such as the establishment of a social bond among participants and the validation of authority.

Arts

As the previous discussion has made clear, medieval arts were inseparable from rituals. In the Middle Ages, rituals could not be realized without the involvement of arts, while arts arose together with rituals. As is the case with the term 'rituals', the equally modern term 'arts' represents universal creative behaviours that go back to the beginnings of human civilization. Arts and rituals originated from the same human needs and interests, and they co-developed throughout the centuries (Dissanayake, *Homo Aestheticus*).

4. See, e.g., Dissanayake, "Art as a Human Universal"; Dutton; Kristeller.

For the field of arts, a parallel notion with Bell's ritualization is Ellen Dissanayake's "artification": "to make something art". Undertaking an ethological or bio-evolutionary approach, Dissanayake considers all types of arts, including crafts and decoration, in all societies and all times, describing them as behaviours that are as intrinsic to human nature as language, toolmaking, play, ritual, and symbolization. In a series of publications (*What Is Art For?*; *Homo Aestheticus*; *Art and Intimacy*; and "Art as a Human Universal"), Dissanayake, like Bell and Platvoet in the field of rituals, describes art-making ("artifying") as a process of "making special". For Dissanayake, arts are created through the transformation of ordinary objects, materials, movements, sounds, and words, which are made *extra*ordinary to render socially

significant activities, such as rituals, memorable and gratifying. Dissanayake's artification is valid also for the Middle Ages. In Umberto Eco's words,

[medieval] art belonged to the realm of making. [...] Thus, the two principal features of the medieval theory of art were intellectualism and objectivism: art was the science [...] of constructing objects according to their own laws. Art was not expression, but construction, an operation aiming at a certain result. (Eco 93)

The term "arts", therefore, in the title of this new journal is a broad term referring to the productions of craftsmen and craftswomen, builders, architects, painters, sculptors, mosaic-makers, orators, poets, musicians, singers, dancers, and mimes. The productive activities of all these people, who were aware of the rules for artifying, served different (ritual) purposes and aimed at achieving specific results, such as the participants' spiritual and emotional responses.

Medieval (and Medievalisms)

The use of the term "medieval" to refer to the period between antiquity and modern times in the tripartite division of human history into ancient, medieval, and modern goes back to the fifteenth century and the time of Petrarch (Mommsen).⁵ It was, however, from the seventeenth century onwards that the word gained wider use in historiography (Reuter). Even though there is a general scholarly agreement that the term 'medieval' is problematic - it does not represent a homogenized era, but one characterized by chronological, geographical, social, and cultural divisions - the word remains in use for reasons of convenience. It is in its conventional, descriptive, and broad sense that *Eventum*, too, understands the word 'medieval'. As far as the duration of the Middle Ages is concerned, on the other hand, there is much disagreement among medievalists (Robinson). In its attempt to include as many regions and cultures as possible, Eventum has a wide chronological range, covering twelve centuries, from c. 300 to c. 1500, and a large geographical area, including the Mediterranean, Black, Baltic, and North Seas.

Yet *Eventum* does not invite only studies on medieval arts and rituals, but also research on their appropriations, adaptations, and

5. For the use of various Latin terms – media tempora, media tempestas, media antiquitas, media aetas, and medium aevum – to refer to what we call today the 'Middle Ages' from the fifteenth century onwards, see, e.g., Burr, "Anent"; idem, "How the Midde Ages"; Gordon; Lehmann; and Pitz.

performances in postmedieval cultures in a variety of fields, including social and political theory, philosophy, theology, visual arts, crafts, literature, graphic novels, theatre, music, computer games, forms of reenactment, and tourist sites. Being both a medieval studies journal and a journal of studies in medievalism, *Eventum* adopts Richard Utz's fifth and sixth manifestos of medievalism.

Medievalism and medieval studies have a mutually beneficial relationship, and a thorough understanding of the broader cultural phenomenon of medievalism enhances academic medievalists' tool kits by increasing their theoretical sophistication, critical self-awareness, and social impact. (Manifesto 5; Utz 85)

Furthermore, studies in medievalism allow "a more truly codisciplinary, inclusive, democratic, and humanistic engagement with what we call, for better or worse, the Middle Ages" (Manifesto 6; Utz 87).

This Issue

Pilgrimage – an actual or spiritual visit to a short- or long-distance sacred site – is a religious practice originating in antiquity that is still active in various forms. From its beginnings, pilgrimage has been open to everyone: men and women, young and old, rich and poor, healthy and unhealthy, literate and illiterate. Pilgrimage has been chosen as the theme of the first issue of *Eventum* because it constitutes the ritual *par excellence* of the Middle Ages. Rich evidence from various traditions shows that medieval pilgrimage was not only a ritual in itself, but that it also involved other rituals, operating in fact through them. Medieval pilgrims engaged in a series of rituals before, during, and after their religious journey(s). Furthermore, they participated in rituals that were performed at pilgrimage sites: sanctuaries, shrines, cult churches, cathedrals, monasteries, and other holy places.

The practice of pilgrimage was itself a central motif of literature and visual arts. Architects designed buildings with the intention of promoting pilgrimage and by taking into consideration patrons and pilgrims' needs and expectations. Similar ends were served also

- 6. For antiquity, see, e.g., Collar and Kristensen; Elsner; Elsner and Rutherford; Munt. Concerning medieval pilgrimage, see, e.g., Birch; Chareyron; Howard; Kaldellis; Vikan; Whalen. As for contemporary pilgrimage, see Albera and Eade; Coleman; Margry; Ron and Timothy.
- 7. See, e.g., Birch; Craig; Skyrms.
- 8. See, e.g., Elad 51-82; Hahn; Meri.
- 9. See, e.g., Dyas; Frank; Harris; Howard; Nuechterlein; Zaleski.

by the other artists involved: painters, sculptors, musicians, rhetors, and actors. Pilgrims, for their part, cultivated their own arts: music, dancing, singing, and writing, which they shared with their fellow pilgrims, the local communities of pilgrimage sites, and audiences back home. At the same time, pilgrims took back to their home towns the arts and art objects they learnt about and acquired along the pilgrimage route and at the pilgrim sites.¹⁰

10. See, e.g., Ashley and Deegan; Bader.

The articles in this issue were developed from selected papers delivered during two scholarly events entitled the "The Arts and Rituals of Pilgrimage" that were organized at the Centre for Medieval Arts & Rituals of the University of Cyprus within the framework of the NetMAR project: an international workshop (26–28 May 2022) and an international conference (1–2 December 2022). Most of the issue's authors structure their analysis around one or more of the following axes:

- (1) Pilgrimage Settings: the specific material and topographical contexts that pilgrimage rituals and arts acquire on a particular pilgrimage route; namely, how space and the division of space determine the forms and performances of pilgrimage rituals and arts, and how the latter define and transform their settings.
- (2) Structures of Pilgrimage Rituals and Arts: this axis concerns the conception of pilgrimage rituals and arts. More specifically, under discussion are the shapes, themes, and structures of pilgrimage rituals and arts, and the ways in which rituals inform and are informed by arts in pilgrimage, as well as how different artistic works interact with each other during or in reference to a certain pilgrimage ritual.
- (3) Pilgrimage Experiences: the focus here turns to the pilgrims themselves, their expectations and needs, their ideas, and their experiences. Of interest also are the meanings of pilgrimage rituals and arts for pilgrims of different origin, gender, and status; the ways in which pilgrimage rituals and arts affect different pilgrims, either individually or collectively, and what they aim to achieve for them.
- (4) Afterlives of Pilgrimage Rituals and Arts: under investigation within the framework of this axis are postmedieval pilgrimage rituals and arts from the fifteenth century onwards.

In the article entitled "Revisiting the Pilgrimage Site of St John Lampadistis: Art and Ritual Space", Ourania Perdiki reconstructs the routes taken by medieval pilgrims to the shrine of the Cypriot saint John Lampadistis, located in the Marathasa valley. Perdiki considers the complex architectural space of the shrine and the saint's tomb, relics, and *vita*-icons and how these determined the pilgrims' religious experiences. Moving to pilgrimage routes in Central Europe during the Middle Ages, Gerhard Jaritz ("Postmortem Proxy Pilgrimages from Central Europe in the Late Middle Ages: The Examples of Vienna and Pressburg (Bratislava)"), discusses postmortem proxy pilgrimages to Vienna and Pressburg by considering chronological, financial, and gendered aspects and patterns.

Focusing on the late fourth-century pilgrimage account produced by Egeria ("Egeria's 'Panoramic Now': Time and Temporality in Late Antique Pilgrimage"), Georgia Frank examines how the female pilgrim's somatic, interpersonal, and sensory experiences and feelings shaped her understanding of temporality. As is shown, Egeria's itinerary in association with liturgy shaped her understandings of the biblical past. The relation between a past and a present in pilgrimage contexts is also examined by Simon Coleman and Evgenia Mesaritou in their article, titled "Sacred Saliences? Afterlives of Archaeology in the Restoration of Medieval Shrines". Focusing on the restoration of material culture associated with pilgrimages, the authors discuss how a temporally distant period might be reanimated in the present, through a comparative examination of two pilgrimage sites (Walsingham in England and the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas in Cyprus), both characterized by disruptive historical caesuras that define salient periods of destruction of valued eras from the past.

Before being replicated in Walsingham through the Virgin's order, the Holy House where the Annunciation took place in Nazareth took flight to and landed in Loreto (Italy), which became a major Roman Catholic pilgrimage site. The Marian litanies (*litaniae lauretanae*) that developed at the site became sources of inspiration for modern composers, including Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who, after participating in the site's litanies, composed two settings (in 1771 and 1774). In "W. A. Mozart's *Litaniae lauretanae* Compositions and the Loreto Pilgrimage", Nils Holger Petersen analyzes parts of the two settings in the light of the Loreto pilgrimages' historical

background and the litany's ritual and musical uses. Mozart's settings emerge as musical reenactments of ritual experience.

All in all, the articles of this first issue of *Eventum* reveal that the power and efficacy of medieval and postmedieval pilgrimage emanated not only from its associated rituals, but also from its arts. In fact, visual, literary, and performing arts are the *sine qua non* of pilgrimage. For example, church music and church furnishings – such as icons, panels, sculptures, tapestries, precious books, and other liturgical objects – were not independent artistic expressions (as most scholars tend to treat them) but parts of ecclesiastical rituals for which they were created and used. In short, the transformative experience that pilgrims sought through pilgrimage was achieved through the interaction of arts and rituals.

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