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Bodies and Becoming

Mimesis, Mediation, and the Ingestion of the Sacred in Christianity and Islam

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In the eating encounter, all bodies are shown to be but temporary congealments of a materiality that is a process of becoming, is hustle and flow punctuated by sedimentation and substance. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*

In 2010 it was announced that a special deluxe version of Indian cricket star Sachin Tendulkar's autobiography would be produced in an edition of ten. Costing $75,000 (with the proceeds going to charity), the signature feature of each of these 852-page luxury texts would be a page produced by mixing the cricketer's blood into the paper pulp, accompanied on a separate double-page spread by Tendulkar's DNA profile, developed from his saliva. Like the relics venerated in many religious traditions (also, in theory at least, limited editions), the sanctified codex was intended to facilitate access not simply to an aura generally assumed to be lost in mass (re)production but also to the very essence and stuff of the godlike hero. The comparison may seem anachronistic or facetious, but it is worth considering the publisher's rationale for producing a "blood edition" of the *Tendulkar Opus:* "It's not everyone's cup of tea, it's not to everyone's taste and some may think it's a bit weird. But the key thing is that Sachin Tendulkar to millions of people is a religious icon. And we thought how, in a publishing form, can you get as close to your god as possible."[1]

Reworked for the era of hypercapitalism, in which the media-enhanced image of a sporting hero can assume the status of icon, even the specifics of this canny marketing exercise provide an uncanny echo of earlier devotional practices. Materialized not just *on* the page but *in* it, blood mediates presence, literalizing a homology between bodies and books, blood and ink, that will be familiar to Byzantinists, Islamicists, and Western medievalists, who could cite antecedents from the bloodstained Qur'an of the assassinated caliph Uthman (d. 656) (written with his own hand, according to some versions) through the painted blood that streaks a folio of the ninth-century Khludov Psalter.[2]

Bloodstained codices are the tip of an iceberg insofar as they avail of a material support to mediate access to valorized models, whether caliphs, saints, or sportsmen. One obvious distinction between media icons and spiritual exemplars lies, however, in the appeal to a transcendental signified. When it comes to mediating presence, the bodies and paraphernalia of spiritual exemplars are, like the materials with which they come in contact, understood as being imbued with an aura of sacrality that is both a mark of personal sanctity and a sign of divine grace whose ultimate source lies beyond the sanctified body. Moreover, if the molding of the self in relation to such models highlights the importance of mimetic identification in shaping spiritual identity, the role of transvalued (or even transubstantiated) matter in devotional practices raises more ambiguous questions regarding the boundaries between practices of identification and the nature of personal identity, between modes of imitating and means of becoming. Offering a perspective on mediation, materiality, and mimesis often at variance with the orthodoxies of post-Enlightenment modernity, devotional practices centered around animated matter call into question epistemological and ontological models of subject–object relations that have been deeply internalized and naturalized in Euro-America as a legacy of both the Reformation and the Enlightenment.[3] However arcane these issues seem, they lie at the heart of the disenchantments of modernity, a condition characterized by Jane Bennett as "an inconsistent and paradoxical combination of claims about nature and culture," which "passes itself off as the clean, enlightened alternative to a messy, primitivistic cosmology that confuses the natural with the cultural, mixes the animal with the human, mistakes the inanimate for the animate, and contaminates the moral with the prudential."[4] The endeavor, according to Bruno Latour, is dependent on practices of stratification that operate at various levels. These range from the contingent and conventional relations assumed by Saussurean linguistics through the dematerialization, idealization, and ontological disaggregation essential to the operation of the sign in modern semiotics to the common distinction between the exteriorities of material embodiment and the interiorities of immaterial piety.[5]

Past decades have been marked by increased skepticism about the transcultural and/or transhistorical relevance of such binaries, foundational as they are to culturally and historically specific epistemologies and ontologies universalized as transcendental truths. Writing recently in the wake of the global controversy over caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632), for example, the anthropologist Saba Mahmood has argued that traditional concepts of mimesis as imitation or reiteration fail to do justice to the aspirational nature of devotional practice. Rather than a relation of mimesis, Mahmood argues, the relationship between the Prophet Muhammad and the pious should instead be characterized as one of schesis, a "living relation" characterized by an identification that not only collapses temporospatial distance but affects the very stuff of personal identity. Realization of the Prophet's behavior entails em-

bodied habitation, a goal facilitated by the hadith (traditions of the Prophet), which "are lived not as commandments but as virtues; one wants to ingest, as it were, the Prophet's persona."[6] The desire to which Mahmood draws attention is literalized in Islam through the practice of *tabarruk,* the seeking of *baraka,* the immaterial blessing that radiates from the bodies of prophets or saints in life or death or from objects associated with them. Typically, baraka is absorbed through kissing, touching, or rubbing.[7] This haptic and somatic aspect of Islamic devotional practices is invoked in a remarkable preamble to a discussion of Indian religions written around 1030 CE in which the Persian scholar Abu Rayhan al-Biruni presents the investment in devotional images as a matter of class and education rather than of religious difference. Al-Biruni notes the affective power of certain types of depictions and hypothesizes about their impact on uneducated believers, including Muslims:

> These words of mine would at once receive a sufficient illustration if, for example, a picture of the Prophet (*ṣūrat al-nabī*) were made, or of Mecca and the Ka'ba, and were shown to an uneducated man or woman. Their joy in looking at the thing would bring them to kiss the picture, to rub their cheeks against it, and to roll themselves in the dust before it, as if they were seeing not the picture, but the original, and were in this way, as if they were present in the holy places, performing the rites of pilgrimage, the greater (*ḥajj*) and the lesser (*'umra*).[8]

This passage is an important one, raising significant questions about mimesis, surrogacy, and the sacred. In the present context, however, it serves to draw attention to sensory aspects of devotion otherwise documented by inscriptions inviting contact, and by patterns of wear attesting to it, on some of the Christian and Islamic devotional images that are considered here, few of which were in fact produced for the illiterate or the uneducated.

Devotional practices involving bodily engagement with the sacred range from seeing or touching to the consumption of liquids infused with the charisma of primary or secondary relics for apotropaic, prophylactic, and therapeutic purposes. Imbibing or ingesting sacred matter is by no means acceptable to all Muslims or characteristic of Islamic devotional rituals alone but is common to many religious traditions. Incorporating the charisma of the sanctified other into the very essence of the self, they amplify an underlying ambiguity between imitating and becoming that is perhaps central to all devotional practice. In doing so, they also highlight a capacity of materiality to mediate sacrality that operates both transculturally and tranhistorically, however diverse the specific forms and meanings it assumes in particular times and places. Despite this, and although they have attracted the occasional interest of anthropologists and sociologists, practices of ingestion have largely been ignored by

historians of art or material culture more broadly. The reasons for this neglect are not hard to discern, even in an era saturated by histories of reception; not only do the objects of such practices (and often the paraphernalia associated with them) fall foul of the "high/low" distinction essential to the canonization of the objects of art history but their ingestion also falls well outside the range of practices sanctioned in modernity as appropriate responses to texts and images. Yet the transubstantiated eucharist of Catholic Christianity is not the only case of devotional ingestion that survives in modernity. On the contrary, practices of ingesting sacred texts and images for prophylactic or therapeutic purposes already satisfied by mass production long before modernity not only continue to flourish but also in some cases have even been adapted for an era of mechanical reproduction. In addition to the consumption of printed images and texts (see below), the advent of photography expanded the possibilities for ingesting the sacred. Long-established practices of reciting efficacious formulas over water for ingestion find modern correlates, for example, in the consumption of water or other liquid media infused through contact with the blessings emanating from photographs of sanctified figures.[9] The ingestion of water infused with the blessing imparted by contact with an image or by the proximate recitation of an efficacious text finds numerous earlier analogies, but the alleged indexical nature of the photograph makes it especially appropriate to such therapeutic functions.

That such practices have been adapted to the technologies of modernity is perhaps not surprising given their longevity. In the eastern Mediterranean, for example, the ingestion of both images and words is attested by a wide range of artifacts and texts relating to both devotional and magical practices well before the advent of Christianity. In Egypt, several pharaonic temples, including those at Luxor and Philae, show evidence of reliefs and hieroglyphs having been scraped in order to remove powder to ingest for amuletic or prophylactic purposes already before the Roman period, leaving gashes up to 40 centimeters long on the surface of the stone. At Edfu, Philae, and many other sites, these practices continued into the Christian era, when the crosses and other Christian signs engraved alongside defaced polytheistic images became the focus of similar devotional activities. Analogous activities have been noted at medieval Christian sites in both Italy and Germany into the modern period.[10]

In Egypt and elsewhere, such practices existed on the margins of more canonical practices of ingesting sacred matter that flourished before and after the Christianization (and later Islamicization) of the eastern Mediterranean. These proliferated as part of what Patricia Cox Miller has dubbed the "material turn" in fourth-century Christianity, a development that signaled "a new subject–object relation, a relation of the human subject to the sanctifying potential of human physicality as locus and mediator of spiritual presence and power."[11] In the centuries before the advent of Islam, access to both presence and power was generally provided by images, relics, and visitation of sacred sites. The ritualized itineraries and peregrinations of pilgrims gave them

access to the sacred mimetically in the very places in which sanctified exemplars had walked.[12] Material relics extended this engagement with the sacred, diminishing the gap between matter and spirit by permitting sanctified bodies to be accessed sensually even in places and times far distant from their sites of origin.[13] If, however, mimesis as dynamic reenactment offered one means of embodying pious exemplars, the kissing, licking, or even ingestion of fragments of the sacralized bodies, or of materials transvalued by contact with them, are less easily accommodated under the rubric of mimesis, at least in its commonplace sense of re-presentation or re-staging. On the contrary, such practices point to a desire to collapse a distinction between emulator and emulated that is central to the operation of mimesis as re-presentation. In this sense, as Gary Vikan has noted, the relation of desire that unites pilgrim and sanctified model bears comparison to the ontological indeterminacy exploited in sympathetic magic, in which the relation between model and referent had less to do with imitating than with becoming.[14]

Ingestion was integral to this process of becoming. If the circulation of *eulogiae* (blessings) was intended to bring the efficacious sacrality of these blessings home to the believer in his or her own circumstances, the ingestion of sacred matter took the process to its logical conclusion, taking it into the very substance of the self. Tangible eulogiae brought by early medieval pilgrims from Christian shrines in Palestine and the eastern Mediterranean from the fifth century onward included not only cloth infused by contact and cords or strips of cloth cut to the exact measure of sacred sites, and their component rocks but also edible or ingestible substances such as bread, dew, dust, earth, hair, manna, oil, water, and frequently fruit.[15] Even mass-produced tokens composed of the dust or earth of sacred sites could facilitate the ingestion of the sacred. In the production of such tokens, images of a saint were stamped on tablets of earth from his shrine, the fusion of word, image, and sacred matter blurring the distinction between icon and relic. Their production reflects beliefs in the capacity of sanctity to be both transmitted and, perhaps more significantly, to be mediated materially, thanks to an indexical chain of contact with the saint's body that imbued even mundane or profane materials with a sacrality capable of further transmission, in effect transforming them into part of the saint's "distributed personhood."[16] Typical of such eulogiae are those produced at the shrine of the stylite saint Symeon the Younger in northern Syria in the sixth and seventh centuries (Figure 29.1); fashioned from matter taken from the sacred site (itself sanctified by contact with the saint's body), these were formed into a tablet stamped with the image of the saint, identified in an accompanying inscription.[17] Just as the oil poured over relics to infuse it with sanctity or taken as eulogiae from many other Christian pilgrimage sites in Palestine and Syria could be applied to the body, hagiographic tales describe the external application of such clay tokens. The saint's *vita* also invokes the ingestion of these tokens, however, for it describes how a monk from Symeon's Miraculous Mountain advised a

FIGURE 29.1. Pilgrim token from the shrine of Saint Symeon Stylites the Younger (d. 592), northern Syria. Clay, diameter 3.8 centimeters. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 48.1939.

praetorian prefect suffering from intestinal problems to take some of the saint's hair and the dust of his eulogia, dissolve the mixture, and both drink and wash with the water.[18] The role of the saint's hair in this hagiographical tale anticipates the reported use of similar exuviae in Islam a century or so later, when the Prophet Muhammad's hair, footprints, and even nail parings and saliva were sometimes consumed by taking them into the devotee's body, a topic to which I will return below.

The ability of the crafted image to both instantiate and mediate presence would be hotly contested in Byzantium during the eighth and ninth centuries, but there are strong indications of an increasing blurring of the ontological boundaries between bodies, images, and relics in the preceding centuries. A well-known sixth- or seventh-century hagiographical tale discussed by Vasileios Marinis in Chapter 19 of this volume describes how a devotee of the popular Arabian saints Cosmas and Damian painted their images on the wall of her house to satisfy her desire to see them. On being stricken by illness, the devotee scraped the surface of the painted plaster with her fingernails and ingested the painted fragments dissolved in water, thereby finding

an immediate cure from pain effected by the presence of the saints.[19] Such practices were sufficiently widespread to eventually attract the opprobrium of iconoclasts concerned with the dissolution of the ontological divide between image and prototype. A letter written by the iconoclast emperor Michael II in 824 warns the Carolingian emperor about the dangerous practices associated with the veneration of images, including their treatment as if they were living beings, denouncing priests and clerics who "scraped paint from images and mixed it with the offerings and wine [of the eucharist] and after the celebration of the Mass gave it to those wishing to partake."[20] The antecedents of such catholic practices of ingesting the sacred are perhaps to be sought in devotional rituals associated with relics, such as that observed in the fourth century by Lucilla of Carthage, who was in the habit of kissing the bone from a martyr in her possession prior to ingesting the eucharist.[21] Within the polemics of iconoclasm, the eucharist offered a true image of the divine, a foil of real presentation for the falsity of material representation; it was the equivalence implied by their mingling that occasioned scandal.[22]

In these cases, the principle of transubstantiation enjoyed a de facto extension from the eucharistic gifts to painted images of those pious mortals charged with mediating a relationship to the divine. The material colors scraped from the paintings were just that—material pigments. What is implied by their role in the narrative is that they were transvalued if not transubstantiated by their use to delineate the material images of the saints' bodies. In this sense, they acted as flesh—color and enfleshment often being coincident in the painted body—fragments of the saints imbued with the sacrality of body fragments that otherwise served as relics.[23]

The ability of a painted icon to facilitate inherence or immanence in numerous hagiographic and miracle tales finds a chiastic reflection in tales of static living saints, figures who fashioned themselves as images through practices of pious emulation, appearing as neither fully animate nor entirely inanimate.[24] Patricia Cox Miller has argued that the tension between animation and inanimacy or stasis inherent in such presentations of the sacred represents a Christian variant on "an ancient Mediterranean culture-pattern," a reworking of a long-exploited indeterminacy in which eulogiae, icons, and relics are characterized by what Cox Miller (citing Bill Brown) sees as an "ontological instability, an oscillation between animate and inanimate, subject and object, human and thing."[25] The series might be extended to the relationship between the devotee and the focus of devotion, to the tension between mimesis as identification or identity, a relation of superficial emulation versus the ontological ambiguities of participation.[26] These ambiguities are thrown into high relief by mimetic practices that entail not only emulation but ingestion; this much is clear from Exodus 32:20, where the idolatrous Israelites are forced to ingest the golden calf they have made, ground to powder and suspended in a liquid medium, literalizing a biblical trope according to which idolaters become like the inanimate idols that they worship. By

contrast, in pre-Reformation and Catholic Christianity, the complex chiasmus of *Imitatio Christi,* of man who is made in God's image aspiring to reproduce the habitus of God made man, is intensified by the ingestion of the eucharistic gifts, through the digestion of which the worshipper not only incorporates the sacred but "is absorbed into the body of Christ and is subsumed within it."[27] The point may well be to achieve "a mutual in-one-anotherness," but to describe this as a mimetic relation seems to stretch the boundaries of mimesis well beyond the generally understood meaning of emulation, imitation, or representation.[28]

As Saba Mahmood's comments on devotion to the Prophet Muhammad suggest, similar ambiguities are operative in the negotiation of the relationship between personal identity and devotional identifications in Islam, even outside the parameters of an incarnational economy. No less than icons and stamped clay tokens, late antique and early medieval hagiographic texts could function as eulogiae, "designed to circulate, a source of blessing for readers as well as for the author."[29] Similarly, the hadith, the textualized records of the deeds and words of the Prophet Muhammad, are characterized as *āthār,* traces or vestiges that permit the faithful access to the Prophet as a mimetic model, whose practices of comportment, dress, and even dental hygiene one can internalize and make one's own.[30] The mimetic potential of prophetic biography represents a specifically Islamic take on the established tradition of affective hagiography that renders the devotional landscape of early Islam perfectly comprehensible from the perspective of late antiquity. More material continuities into the early Islamic period are apparent in the continued collection, circulation, and consumption of eulogiae, which were adopted among the practices of early Islam. The evidence for this takes the form of glass pilgrim flasks produced for Muslims, similar to those known to have contained sanctified earth, oil, and water gathered from pilgrimage sites by Christian and Jewish pilgrims in the sixth and seventh centuries but with a distinctive iconography.[31] There is no evidence for the manner in which the matter contained in such flasks was consumed by early Muslims, but in light of well-documented Christian practices and the viscosity of many of the materials used to mediate sacrality, it is likely that they were applied both externally and internally.

In addition, more profane practices of ingestion similar to those well documented in Egypt even before the Christian era survived in the medieval Islamic world, where they were also employed for therapeutic or prophylactic purposes. Some existed on the margins of canonical devotional practices; among them were rituals associated with a stone bearing the image of a man with a scorpion's tail, which was visible at the entrance to the Great Mosque of Hims in northern Syria in the tenth century (Figure 29.2).[32] This was among a wide array of antique figural *spolia* whose investment with apotropaic or talismanic properties underlay their deployment at the entrances to medieval Islamic cities, mosques, and palaces from North Africa to Iran.[33] The specific form and location of the Hims relief recall the scorpion-men of ancient Mesopotamian art and literature,

FIGURE 29.2. *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt wa gharāʾib al-mawjūdāt* (The Wonders of Creation and the Rarities of Existence), an imaginative depiction of the scorpion-man talisman in the mosque of Hims, Muhammad ibn Mahmud ibn Ahmad al-Tusi, Iraq, 1388. Bibliothèque nationale de France, suppl. pers. 332, fol. 95b.

hybrid creatures that guarded the entrances to magical landscapes; it may well have been intended to protect the mosque against scorpions, a source not only of poisonous irritation but of potential spiritual pollution, since they were among the chthonic forms that jinn were believed to assume.[34] In terms of continuity with earlier practices, what is particularly noteworthy about the scorpion-man of Hims is that clay impressed with the image was believed to protect the house against scorpions and reptiles; dissolved in water and consumed, it was thought to cure the sting of the beast.[35]

According to several hadith, scorpions and poisonous reptiles are among the threats against which charms can be legitimately employed.[36] The deployment of sympathetic means to this end is well documented in the *Picatrix,* the tenth- or eleventh-century Latin translation of the Arabic *Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm,* and in later European texts derived from Arabic sources. These describe the therapeutic consumption of an aqueous solution of incense stamped with the image of a scorpion engraved on a bezoar stone under the rising sign of Scorpio, whose ascendancy also determined the moment when the seal should be impressed on the material of the incense.[37] Considering the relationship between image, signet or seal matrix, and the medium of impression, it is worth noting that the Arabic term *khātam* served to denote both the stamp and the clay or other medium that bore its impression; to the present day, the same term is

used to denote the protective or prophylactic formulas inscribed on wooden boards, then washed with water intended for ingestion.[38] With the sympathetic conjunction of image, medium, and zodiacal alignment ensuring its efficacy, the Hims relief appears like a large-scale manifestation of the small-scale amulets and talismans produced across the early Islamic world, many bearing images of snakes, scorpions, and birds intended to both cure and repel.[39]

The tokens impressed with the talismanic image from Hims belong to the universe of popular magic and medicine, but they also have counterparts in early Islamic pilgrimage practices. By the tenth century, and probably much earlier, Shi'i pilgrims were both consuming and taking home tablets comprising earth from the Shi'ite shrines at Kerbala and Najaf in Iraq.[40] Although it is not clear when the practice started, similar tablets composed of the soil of Medina were also produced for pilgrims, stamped with a hadith recalling the Prophet's assertion that the soil of Medina and his own saliva were possessed of curative powers.[41] The same hadith was frequently invoked in *al-ṭibb al-nabawī,* prophetic medicine, a genre of medicinal text produced from the ninth century onward.[42]

Combining sacred image and matter, these clay tokens not only facilitated the mobility of sacred topography but were, like their Christian counterparts, also said to have both prophylactic and therapeutic properties.[43] In both Christianity and Islam, the production of clay tablets comprised of sacred dust points to the importance of multiplicity and replication in disseminating sacrality in times and places far removed from the events of prophetic or saintly biography. Whereas the corporeal relics favored in late antique and medieval Christianity were in theory finite, albeit capable of generating secondary relics, clay tablets had the advantage of potentially infinite production. Body-part relics are extremely rare in the Islamic world due to an Islamic reticence about fragmentation of the sanctified body, general concerns about the ritual pollution that accrues from contact with dead bodies, the premium placed on the integrity of the body, and proscriptions relating to its mutilation. As a consequence, the possibility of proliferation is necessarily intrinsic to the relic in Islam, even that deriving from the sanctified body. In the case of relics of the Prophet Muhammad, the ascription of reliquary value generally derives from one of three circumstances.[44] First, the source of such value might be a direct relationship to the body of the Prophet through derivation from it, most obviously as exuviae; hairs and nail clippings are the most common examples, sheddings whose ability to provide access to their living source was one reason that believers were urged to dispose carefully of their own lest they be abused for magical purposes.[45] Second, a relic might bear a direct relationship to the body of the Prophet as a trace, *athar,* what in Peircean semiotics would be termed an index, a sign that is causally related to its referent. This contact might or might not leave a visible mark; at one end of the spectrum are Prophetic footprints, at the other the hadith themselves. Third, manufactured objects might be

sanctified by virtue of a contingent relationship to the body of the Prophet: robes, sandals, and standards are the typical examples, although, depending on where and when one looks, the series could be extended to include shirts and even twigs used for cleaning the teeth. By the nineteenth century, the most extraordinary collection of such relics was housed in the treasury of Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, in which was amassed hairs, sandals, footprints, teeth, and accoutrements of the Prophet as well of those of early caliphs, saints, and prophets.[46] These were gathered from different regions of the Ottoman Empire, especially from the eighteenth century onward, perhaps part of a concerted pietistic response to the twin threats of European expansionism and the rise of militant Wahhabi Sunnism (which rejected the principle of *tawassul,* or intercession, and the veneration of saints and prophets) in the Arabian Peninsula.[47] During this period, images of the Prophet's relics, including those newly arrived in Istanbul, were integrated into devotional prayer books, thus circulating their baraka outside the palace walls in ways that will be considered further below.

Although the first two categories of relic derive directly from the Prophet's body, the third consists of mundane artifacts singularized by infusion with Prophetic baraka. These kinds of relic represent a point of congruence, if not continuity, between Christian and Islamic traditions, an overlap apparent to those jurists who raised occasional objections to the veneration of material objects or to the idea of mediation that they embodied based on concerns about authenticity or the transculturation of Islamic practice. All three classes of relic—exuviae, traces, and contact relics—were the focus of devotional, prophylactic, and therapeutic practices similar to those found in Eastern Christianity in the centuries before the advent of Islam, including practices of ingestion.

According to a hadith, the Prophet applied his spittle mixed with dust as medicine to those afflicted by ulcers or wounds.[48] After his death, the hair, footprints, and even nail parings, sweat, and saliva of the Prophet were kept as relics, sometimes consumed by taking them into the devotee's body.[49] The Prophet himself is said to have distributed the hairs cut from his head as part of the ritual observed during his final pilgrimage to Mecca; dipped in water, the resulting liquid had both apotropaic and therapeutic properties that were efficacious against both illness and the evil eye.[50] As a result, such relics were often favored in funerary contexts, where they would protect the deceased and attest to his or her piety. As he was dying, the first Umayyad caliph Mu'awiya (d. 680) is said to have requested that he be buried in a shirt given to him by the Prophet, whose nail parings the caliph had preserved in a bottle; these were to be ground to a powder and placed in his eyes and mouth, along with the Prophet's hair, according to some accounts. More than one Companion of Muhammad is said to have been buried with a hair of the Prophet on his tongue and each of his eyes, a practice also said to have been followed in the funerary rites of several later rulers, including Nur al-Din ibn Zangi (d. 1174), leader of the counter-Crusade.[51]

Similarly, those seeking the baraka of the Prophet's footprints, robe, or sandals might touch them to their eyes or mouths. The indexical chain central to the production of such secondary relics could even be extended by replication. One of the most common relics, the sandal or *na'l* of the Prophet, circulated in the form of schematic drawings traced from the original and repeatedly copied in their turn. In this way, the most famous example of the sandal relic, that housed in a purpose-built shrine in Damascus, traveled across the Islamic world as a schematic likeness (*mithāl*), which was often incorporated into illustrated eulogies of the Prophet, his tomb, and relics that reached the devout in places as distant as the Maghrib and the Atlantic coast of the *dār al-Islām*.[52] This ability of the copy to circulate the baraka of the original was predicated on an indexical relationship between tracing, relic, and, ultimately, the body of the historical Prophet. Collapsing space and time, the image of the relic assumed the efficacy of the relic, traveling forth to meet the pious in situations far removed from those that the original could attain, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin's well-known comments on technological reproduction.[53]

Echoing the scenario imagined by al-Biruni in the text cited above, images of the sandal and other relics were often inscribed with the injunction to kiss the image or to touch it to one's eyes and face or rub it over them in order to honor its owner and avail oneself of its baraka. Both are enjoined in the texts inscribed around and within the image of the sandal shown here (Figure 29.3), which appears at the end of a two-meter-long painted scroll commemorating the Arabian pilgrimage of a female

FIGURE 29.3. An image of the Prophet Muhammad's sandal (*na'l*) with texts eulogizing its virtues and those of the Prophet, from a scroll commemorating a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina in 1432–1433 (British Library, Add 27566, detail).

pilgrim, Maymuna, in 1432–1433; the text invokes the mediating role of the image, asserting (somewhat defensively) that these gestures honor neither the image nor the sandal but its owner.[54] Like the long-venerated Christian icons and manuscript images discussed by Vasileios Marinis in Chapter 19 of this volume, some of the images of the Prophet's sandals found in early modern manuscripts show clear signs of wear from kissing or touching.[55] In Christian and Islamic practice, the application of both relics and their depictions to eyes and mouths and the exchange of saliva inherent in the act of osculation point to a desire to ingest the baraka of the relic, which in other cases was facilitated by the mediation of viscous liquids—milk, oil, water, or unguents—that might be absorbed into the body. Just as the ink from certain inscribed passages of the Qur'an might be dissolved and ingested for its curative or protective properties (see below), the baraka that inhered in the hairs of the Prophet was sometimes ingested by dipping them in water that was then drunk. The most famous and best documented of such ritualized ingestions of baraka was elaborated at the Ottoman court. Beginning in the reign of Selim I (r. 1512–1520), once a year, on the fifteenth day of Ramadan, the *khirka* or *burda* (robe) of the Prophet was subject to a ceremonial washing (more in the nature of a symbolic dipping than a general scrub). As part of the ceremony, the robe was infused with water from the sacred Zamzam well at Mecca that was afterward gathered in bottles and distributed among the Ottoman elite as a relic in its own right, to be consumed as needed, generally drop by drop in an aqueous dilution (Figure 29.4).[56]

In what is the only reference to a footprint of the Prophet in Mecca that is known to me, the Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi (d. 1682) describes an analogous practice in which pilgrims filled the depression of the print with rose-water, which they then rubbed on their faces and eyes.[57] It is possible that Çelebi was in fact reporting on the Maqam Ibrahim, the stone that was widely identified as bearing the footprints of Abraham. The confusion may have arisen from the tradition that the feet of the Prophet Muhammad were identical to the size of the prints left by Ibrahim. As early as the 'Abbasid period, it is reported that water from the sacred well of Zamzam was poured on the stone with Ibrahim's prints, then drunk by the pious or stored in bottles and jugs for later consumption.[58] Zamzam water was widely believed to have curative properties; infused with the baraka derived from the Prophet's footprint or robe, its use concatenated a potent sacrality that derived from the condition of contact with both person and place.[59]

Although rejected by some jurists, analogous practices are documented even in relation to the body of the austere Syrian jurist Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), during whose lifetime devotees sought to drink the water with which he performed his ritual ablutions and after whose death mourners vied with each other to gather the water in which his body had been washed.[60] The practice was presumably sanctioned by the reported value attributed to the water with which the Prophet Muhammad had per-

FIGURE 29.4. Ottoman vessels containing Zamzam water used to wash the Prophet's robe. Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi (Topkapi Palace Museum), Istanbul, Inv. TSMK 21/763.

formed his ritual ablutions by his Companions, who sought baraka from it. In the nineteenth century, water used to wash the Prophet's tomb in Medina thrice yearly, and even the brooms used in the process, were preserved as relics.[61] Analogous practices still exist in various parts of the Islamic world today, often as parts of the devotional rituals associated with shrines, which Ibn Taymiyya and his successors have consistently tried to regulate. These practices are perhaps best documented in relation to the sufi shrines (*dargahs*) of South Asia, where the ingestion of flower petals or earth surrounding the graves, or of water used to wash the graves, forms part of a redistributional economy that circulates the blessedness that emanates from the bodies of the saints even after death. In a manner comparable to the *prasād* offered to Hindu deities at their shrines, edible substances that absorb some of the sanctity of the deities who partake of them before they are redistributed for ingestion by the pious, such instances of "sensuous media" enchain presence across space and time, linking the proven piety of the dead, or the sacred substance of deities, with the devotional aspirations of the living.[62] Although traditions of prasād are common to both Hindus and

Muslims, this very commonality can also inspire attempts to establish the limits of commensuration when it comes to practices of ingesting the sacred. Until today, Christian insistence upon the unique ontological status of the eucharist explains the presence of signs in the cathedral of Panaji, the capital of Goa, that warn visitors: "Holy Communion is not a prasad. Non-Christians are not allowed to receive Holy Communion."

In the Islamic world, the most fascinating instance of relic ingestion involved a metarelic, a text about a relic, for which no indexical relation to the Prophet is self-evident. This was the celebrated *Qaṣīdat al-Burda* of the Egyptian sufi al-Busiri (d. ca. 1296), a poem in praise of the Prophet's robe written in Mamluk Egypt that enjoyed enormous popularity across North Africa into the early modern period. According to its preface, al-Busiri's poem was written when the poet was stricken by paralysis. On completing the poem, the poet slept and the Prophet appeared to him in a dream, whereupon he recited his poem to the Prophet; by way of reward, the Prophet placed his cloak (*burda*) around the poet's shoulder. When he awoke, he found himself cured.[63]

While the relic of the Prophet's robe (which existed in multiple incarnations) was consistently associated with curative or other miracle-working properties, what is remarkable about al-Busiri's poem is that it acquired some of the curative and talismanic properties associated with the baraka of the original; in this it followed a trend set by at least one earlier eulogy of the Prophet Muhammad.[64] In the preface to his own poem, al-Busiri describes how a blind man was visited by the Prophet in a dream and told to seek healing from the robe; unable to find the original, he successfully availed himself of a copy of al-Busiri's poem, which he applied to his eyes. The words of the ode could be inscribed on signet rings by moonlight (a usage that recalls talismanic practices) and then used to serve a range of apotropaic or therapeutic purposes similar to those associated with the image of the Prophet's sandal—aiding memory or relieving labor pains, for example. The text could be recited over water that was then ingested to absorb the baraka of the robe or dissolved in rose-water and saffron for ingestion.[65] Echoing the contemporary practice of ingesting lemon juice infused with the pulverized stones of Mamluk funerary monuments, the most famous commentary on the burda, that of Muhammad al-Bajuri (d. 1860), commends the curative properties of certain verses of al-Busiri's poem, which he says should be inscribed on a pottery shard, then washed with licorice juice ingested on an empty stomach.[66]

Such practices find a counterpart in the ingestion at the Ottoman court of water infused with the robe itself, but the ability of a textual eulogy to circulate the baraka of the relic had the advantage of making its mediating power accessible to a much wider spectrum of the faithful than the Ottoman elite. In this sense, it might be compared to the way in which tracings of the Prophet's sandal, copied, recopied, and circulated in manuscripts and single folios (see Figure 29.3), rendered its baraka accessible to those

living far from Damascus, where the most famous of the sandal relics was kept. Although tracings of the sandal were related to the original by an indexical chain of copying, this was not the case with al-Busiri's text, at least not at first glance. As in the case of the paint ingested from early medieval Byzantine icons, there is no obvious historical relationship to the Prophet that would permit the material text of al-Busiri's poem to take on some of the reliquary value of the cloak that inspired it, or at least its dream image. Instead the investment of al-Busiri's poem points to the status of the dream vision as an instance of real presence, giving direct access to the reality of the Prophet and his healing robe. A well-known hadith insists that, "Whoever has seen me in a dream has indeed seen me."[67] In some cases, the Prophet is said to have appeared to sufi saints in dreams in order to bestow some of his healing saliva on them; in others, the dream vision of the Prophet instantiated a presence sufficient to forge an indexical link with mosques built centuries after his death.[68] In this sense, al-Busiri's words in praise of the robe assumed the status of a secondary relic, bolstered by an indexical chain from the dream presence of the Prophet to his robe to the poetic (re)presentation of that robe, invested with the thaumaturgic properties of the original.

The ontological fluidity inherent in this scenario is common to both Christian and Islamic traditions, in which the prophetic or saintly figure of a dream apparition is not merely an ephemeral chimera but an experience of real presence, transcending time and space in a manner sufficient to forge an originary link in a chain of materially mediated blessing linking the body of the prophet or saint with that of the believer, petitioner, or pilgrim. In the vita of Saint Artemius (d. 363), for example, we hear of a cure effected through drinking a wax seal impressed with the image of the saint following a prescription offered by the saint himself, along with the seal, in a dream.[69] The phenomenon is comparable to the ability of pigment to "jump the species barrier," as it were, in an ontological transformation into de facto saintly flesh. In Christianity, the same eventuality finds numerous counterparts in tales of icons coming to life—bleeding, lactating, or even reaching from their frames to admonish, punish, or avenge themselves—but also in accounts of dreams in which the image of a saint acts as him- or herself. In other words, in both Christianity and Islam, modes of devotional experience regarded as immaterial within the epistemologies and ontologies of modernity were, under the right conditions, considered instances of real presence, fully capable of material effects, including "relic-effects."

The osculation of the Prophet's sandal commanded by the texts inscribed on its image (see Figure 29.3) and the ingestion of his robe's baraka through the medium of the ink used to describe and eulogize it also point to the complex imbrications of oral narratives, textual artifacts, and material relics in fostering both the dispersal of and access to the sacred. In the case of al-Busiri's text, the material words of the poem convey an immaterial blessing that derives from the robe only by virtue of its contact with the body of the Prophet. However, the ingestion of water infused with the text and its

displaced blessings followed a precedent long established in relation to the text of the Qur'an, which describes itself (7:82) as a healing and a mercy. Ingestion of the Revelation's blessings by means of its material support (usually parchment or paper and ink) and other mediating substances (most obviously water) in order to absorb and avail oneself of its baraka are well documented both ethnographically and textually in many regions of the Islamic world. Often described as drinking the Qur'an, in fact such practices exploit a distinction between the verbal revelation of the Qur'an and its materialization as written text, distinguished by the Arabic term *muṣḥaf* (plural *maṣāḥif*).

Although the materialization of divine scripture facilitated its ingestion and digestion, we should bear in mind the primacy afforded in many parts of the Islamic world to oral recitation, a mode of accessing scripture in which it also entered the body of the reciter. Here we might recall the biblical account of Ezekiel being commanded to ingest the scrolls containing the divine message that he was to convey to the Israelites by his preaching, his reiteration of divine speech preceded by its literal incorporation; the scrolls are said to have tasted as sweet as honey, prefiguring accounts of ingesting the eucharistic host in Christian tradition.[70] Adding to the dialectic between oral recitation and textualization as modes of investing the body with traces of the divine, premodern practices of reading constituted "a physical act, as the movement of lips, the sounding of words, the tracing of fingers and hands were integral to digesting the text and understanding its meaning."[71]

Setting a precedent later extended to relics of the Prophet and their depictions, the material codex was honored by being kissed, perfumed, and protected from pollution by the touch of those in a state of ritual impurity. In addition, practices of logophagy seem to have been well developed in relation to the material Qur'an in early and medieval Islam, for they are discussed in a number of juridical texts that are informed by a tension between the transcendental nature of the logos and the profane (and potentially polluting) nature of the human body. As a consequence, these discussions are characterized by divergent opinions regarding the religious acceptability of ingestion and its legality, a controversy that has continued to the present day.[72] Early practices of ingesting the Qur'an often made use of ephemeral materials, including Qur'anic verses written in ink on paper, then dissolved in water and drunk for curative or prophylactic purposes—against the evil eye or illness or to ensure an easy childbirth, for example. In addition to appearing in juridical texts, reference to such practices is made in the genre of *al-ṭibb al-nabawī,* prophetic medicine.[73] Efficacious texts, including verses of the Qur'an, could also be inked on the interior of a bowl, dissolved in water, and then ingested, a tradition documented in Egypt well into the modern period.[74] Occasionally, some of the mediating materials infused the sacred draught with additional sources of baraka; citing a recipe attributed to the Prophet, Ibn al-Khashshab (d. ca. 1252) describes how specific Qur'anic verses should be in-

scribed with saffron on a bowl and then dissolved with water, ideally drawn from the sacred well of Zamzam in Mecca, whose baraka was, as we have seen, also central to the ingestion of prophetic relics.[75] The commonality points once again to overlaps between devotional and therapeutic practices centered on the Prophet and on the Qur'an. The well-known Syrian Shafi'i jurist Abu Zakaria Yahya Ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi (d. 1278) considers the permissibility of someone in a state of ritual impurity touching a variety of objects, including pastries or bread inscribed with the words of the Qur'an.[76] Once again, the production of such unlikely confections finds analogies in devotional practices focused on the Prophet Muhammad. It is reported, for example, that those in debt petitioned the Prophet for help by leaving quantities of wheat at his tomb in Medina (Figure 29.5). Once a year, on the seventeenth of *Dhū'l-qada,* the wheat was gathered and made into bread for public distribution, presumably with the idea of ingesting the baraka that it had accumulated through proximity to the Prophet's body.[77] In addition, many of the textual amulets inscribed with Qur'anic verses intended for ingestion specified their ability to foster prosperity and protect against magic, the evil eye, illness, insects, robbery, and so forth, the same range of protective functions inscribed on the talismanic images of the Prophet's sandals that circulated widely in the premodern and early modern Islamic world.

For jurists who ruled on the legality of ingesting the Qur'an, its permissibility was generally determined in relation to intention. For example, al-Nawawi distinguishes between the ingestion of the words of the Qur'an written on something edible, which

FIGURE 29.5. Ottoman dish containing wheat from the Prophet's tomb in Medina. Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi (Topkapi Palace Museum), Istanbul, Inv. TSMK 21/501.

he sees as acceptable, and the burning of a wooden artifact on which the Qur'an is inscribed, which is prohibited. Both result in the disappearance of the material Qur'an, but ingestion is to be distinguished from destruction, a distinction rooted not in the physical processes of material alteration but in the intention underlying the transformative process.[78] Jurists such as al-Nawawi accept an eventuality attested equally by some of the surface abrasions on medieval Christian icons (see Chapter 19) and on medieval Islamic pilgrimage scrolls (see Figure 29.3), acknowledging that identical material changes may result either from a deliberate act of desecration or from practices of use, veneration, and wear that necessitate the eventual ritualized disposal of well-worn codices.[79] In both cases, the ethical implications of material alteration are determined contextually in relation to intention, with practices of ingestion, kissing, or devotional touching distinguished from those of deliberate defacement and desecration.

By the twelfth century, if not earlier, ephemeral practices of inking the Qur'an on the interiors of ceramic bowls to facilitate ingestion were rendered permanent by the production in Egypt and Syria (and later in Iran and India) of brass or bronze bowls inscribed with Qur'anic formulas, later combined with knots, letters, and magic squares intended to exploit the science of letters (*'ilm al-ḥurūf*). Unlike in the case of the inked ceramic bowls that continued to be produced to order, in metal magic-medicinal bowls incised texts and images were rendered permanent and could therefore benefit multiple users.[80] In the use of such inscribed metal magic-medicinal bowls, the medium of inscription does not actively dissolve in mediating liquids such as milk, oil, or water in the same dramatic way as ink, even if the ingestion of the metal medium on which the text is inscribed is assumed. Instead the combination of text and image infuses the liquid medium with its curative powers in a manner analogous to practices in which efficacious words of the Qur'an or a text such as al-Busiri's *Burda* are placed or recited over water that is then ingested.[81] In one case, multiple mediations—from the ink of inscription and its paper, parchment, or pottery support to the liquids in which it dissolves—facilitate the ingestion of the very words of efficacious text. In the other, contact (even the reverberations of words spoken on the surface of the liquid) infuses the liquid with a potency of sufficient efficacy that its blessings may even be transmitted by a proxy (referred to by the Arabic term *rasūl,* agent or envoy) nominated to drink from the bowl, albeit with some delay in the transmission of the cure to the ultimate beneficiary.[82] The role of such proxies or surrogates raises further interesting questions about relationships of identification and identity and about the relationship between emulating and becoming.[83]

Some of the earliest magic-medicinal bowls contain images and texts reflecting their use for both prophylactic and therapeutic purposes—for example, against colic and cold, to ease the pain of childbirth, or against the poison of biting reptiles and insects or arachnids such as scorpions, sorcery or the evil eye, sore eyes, flatulence,

hemorrhaging, or the bites of mad dogs. The linkage between the evil eye and the bite of poisonous insects and reptiles is reflected in several hadith that sanction the use of protective measures against both.[84] The association is manifest in numerous amulets and apotropaic mosaics produced in the eastern Mediterranean in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic period, which, in a classic case of *similia similibus curantur,* depict the evil eye being pierced by fierce animals, poisonous reptiles, and sharp weapons.[85] Both amulets and bowls address the danger of poison penetrating the body, in one case by means of teeth or fangs, in the other by means of an optical exchange invested with haptic qualities according to a theory of vision that evidently favored extramission as the default mode of the gaze.[86]

Combining text and image, the magic-medicinal bowls stand at the intersection between different realms of efficacious practice, one a textual tradition focused on the Qur'an that was sufficiently canonical to be the subject of discussion among early Islamic jurists, the other related to more theologically ambiguous traditions of amuletic, apotropaic, astrological, and talismanic images and texts with a long history in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.[87] They also stand at the intersection between long-established practices of iconophagy and practices of logophagy promoted by the sacrality and potency of scripture in Islam as the revealed word of God.[88] This is further underlined by the fact that some of the earliest magic bowls bearing apotropaic images of poisonous reptiles or birthing women combine Qur'anic inscriptions with a record of their being engraved under particular zodiacal signs. That shown here (Figure 29.6) bears an exterior inscription attesting that it was inscribed while the moon was in the house of Leo, just as the seals mentioned in the *Picatrix* were engraved under the sign of Scorpio to ensure their efficacy when imprinted on matter to be ingested.[89] The overlap between the therapeutic ingestion of clay impressed with images found on seals, talismans, and even stone reliefs such as that in Hims (see Figure 29.2) and practices of drinking the Qur'an to similar effect remind us that juridically sanctioned practices of ingesting sacred texts and relics coexisted and intersected with more popular practices of consuming images and texts for prophylactic or therapeutic purposes.

The strikingly transhistorical and intersectarian character of such practices only underlines the point; many of the same lists of dangers addressed in Islamic magic-medicinal bowls are addressed in Coptic magical texts produced before and after the Muslim conquest, while protection against the related dangers of snakes, scorpions, and the evil eye by means of amulets combining words and images of these dangers has been sought in many parts of the Islamic world into the present day.[90] Moreover, pharaonic-era papyri outlining cures for scorpion bite involving licking images of deities drawn on the hand afflicted by a bite stand at the head of a long line of iconophagic and logophagic cures for scorpion bite that continued well into modernity.[91] Cures for the same malady employed in North Africa in the early twentieth century,

FIGURE 29.6. Inscribed copper-alloy magic-medicinal bowl with interior anthropomorphic and zoomorphic images (now worn), Syria, 1169–1170. (A) Side view; (B) bottom view. Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, MTW 1443.

for example, involved ingesting pious formulas written on paper, dissolved in water, and consumed along with honey and oil.[92] Such ephemeral practices represent a facet of the Islamicized magic-medicinal practices to which the inscribed bowls also belong. Generic antecedents to such practices might be sought in pharaonic stelae of Horus, god of protection, who is depicted trampling crocodiles while holding serpents, scorpions, and other malevolent creatures; inscribed with efficacious texts, such stelae were mounted in a basin for gathering water poured over them, which was then collected for prophylactic and therapeutic use.[93] Equally relevant are the magic bowls produced for different religious communities in southern Iraq between the fifth and eighth centuries and inscribed with texts in Aramaic, Syriac, Mandaic, Middle Persian, and Arabic designed to avert the evil eye or specific demonic forces.[94] There is, however, little indication of direct continuity with pre-Islamic practices. Instead we appear to be dealing with a "family" of practices that were particularly well articulated in relation to the healing powers of sacred text. The ingestion of the Qur'an as a cure for the bites of chthonic creatures recalls, for example, not only accounts of pious Christians ingesting pigments scraped from icons but also the report by Bede (d. 735) that scrapings from the leaves of books (probably insular Gospels) from Ireland, a region known for the absence of snakes, were dissolved in water and given to victims of snakebite in order to expel the poison and ease the pain.[95]

Sometimes the particulars of such ritual ingestions suggest more specific relationships. The washing away of incantations inscribed on wooden boards, presumably for ingestion, is a practice mentioned in Coptic grimoires produced even after the Muslim conquest of Egypt, which recommend inscribing words on a wooden board, then rubbing them with lemon and washing them away with water. In the cases of other Coptic spells, the text was written in honey on an alabaster table, then dissolved in white wine.[96] Analogous practices of ingesting inked texts, including the Qur'an, dissolved in water still flourish in various areas of the Islamic world and are particularly well documented in the Islamicate regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, although they were clearly once more widespread. These practices involve the inscription of repeated Qur'anic formulas (whose content is often seen as related to the required function) by a *mallam* (practitioner) on a wooden board, along with the names of God and other efficacious formulas, sometimes including magical signs, many preserved in manuscripts or printed compendia of apotropaic or talismanic magic imported from Arabic-speaking North Africa and the Middle East.[97] Once the text has been written on the wooden board, a common writing medium in north and sub-Saharan Africa, the ink is then erased from its surface and the liquid by means of which the erasure is affected is collected in vessels for consumption or external application. Liquidized text is administered in doses extending over a specified time period while the patient refrains from polluting or immoral activity. In cases of extreme need (epidemics, pests, fires, etc.), the complete Qur'an can even be written, erased, and distributed to an entire

community for ingestion. Like their earlier Egyptian counterparts, the resulting draughts can be used for both medicinal purposes and as charms to protect against the evil eye or magic, to ensure success in love, or to ensure protection and success in specific circumstances, such as initiating a business or undertaking a journey.[98]

Directed toward profane ends, these rituals point to intersections between practices of empowerment for prophylactic, therapeutic, or more nefarious purposes, an overlap that not only blurs the boundaries between devotional and magical practices but that also transcends sectarian affiliation. Versions of such practices of ingestion also enjoyed a remarkable longevity. The preparation of Coptic texts for ingestion by means of infused lemon juice recalls practices documented ethnographically as late as the nineteenth century, when a ferruginous stone in the tomb of the Mamluk sultan al-Mansur Sayf al-Din Qalawun (d. 1290) was rubbed with a lemon and then scraped with a pebble in order to produce a liquid given as a drink to children who were late in starting to speak in order to "untie their tongues."[99] As this suggests, practices of ingesting Qur'anic texts and other efficacious matter are attested both among elite communities and in more popular milieus; the production of metal magic bowls that immortalize bowls produced in more ephemeral media is evidence enough of this. Moreover, unlike relics, access to which was necessarily limited, texts and images were not only more easily manipulated but more convenient to generate. This is reflected in their association with more humble media in therapeutic practices documented in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century North Africa, which entailed the ingestion of curative or protective formulas inscribed on paper, grains of wheat, onion skins, or the shells of eggs, which were then cooked and eaten, or written on plates, which were then wiped cleaned and eaten from. Other practices involved ingesting water that had come into contact with an efficacious image or over which efficacious words had been recited (a practice that recalls the recitation of al-Busiri's poem about the Prophet's cloak over water intended for ingestion) and the inhalation of the smoke of a charm that had been burnt.[100] Such vernacular practices find counterparts in contemporary royal ceremonials: on the occasion of New Year (Nauruz), the Qajar ruler of Iran, Nasir-al-Din Shah (r. 1848–1896) drank from a cup in the interior of which an Islamic scholar had inscribed auspicious verses from the Qur'an, dissolved in liquid, before offering the cup to the closest members of his entourage.[101]

In their use of animated matter, ingestion, and inhalation to draw the object of desire and its efficacious energy into the body, practices of iconophagy and logophagy not only highlight a significant overlap between the material forms and modes of consuming efficacious matter in sacred and profane contexts but also find rarely noted analogies with profane erotic strategies. One such analogy lies in the poetic phenomenon of prosopopoeia, a rhetorical device used to animate material objects through the presence of texts written in the first-person "voice" of the artifact. The phenomenon was known in late antiquity and was quite common in the medieval Islamic

world, with a particular concentration of examples in the architecture and arts of the western Mediterranean between the tenth and fourteenth centuries.[102] Yet what is seldom noted is that the earliest recorded instances of prosopopoeia, those found in the milieu of the 'Abbasid court in Baghdad, often occurred in contexts in which the "speaking" artifact mediated between the bodies of lovers. The earliest references to such artifacts are preserved in the tenth-century *Kitāb al-Muwashshā* (The Ornamented Book) by the Iraqi belle-lettrist Muhammad al-Washsha' (d. 936). Among the many inscribed objects that al-Washsha' mentions are those bearing Arabic verses written in the first person so that the literate viewer gave voice to the object when he or she vocalized its associated text. Two classes of such objects are of particular interest. The first are *mandīl*s, or handkerchiefs that were valued as highly personal items and thus passed between lovers as tokens of affection. On one, the author noted the following inscription:

> I am the handkerchief of a lover
> who wipes his tears on me
> Then offers me to his beloved
> who wipes on me some wine.[103]

The context makes clear that the exchange of bodily fluids mediated by the textile —the tears of one lover being wiped against the wine-stained mouth of another— was central to the meaning of a gesture in which the textile mediated the mingling of bodily fluids in an effective displacement of consummation onto the space of the handkerchief. The mediating textile enabled the ingestion of the bodily fluids of one by the other in a manner eulogized, if not encouraged, by a first-person text that itself invited the reader to elide the distinction between artifactual voice, poetic voice, and personal voice, between being, text, and thing. The role of saliva in this ontological collapse finds analogies in more formalized rituals of incorporation; it is not by chance, for example, that in the medieval Islamic world the dissemination of the ruler's baraka or rituals of incorporation into the body politic often operated by the sharing of food from the plate of the ruler, effectively ingesting his saliva.[104]

A more intimate and literal take on the same theme is associated with a genre of talking object consisting of apples inscribed with romantic verses written in golden ink (or even ambergris) through which the apples "speak," invoking their mediating role in passing secrets between lovers. Many of these verses refer to eating and drinking, some making explicit the fact that the "talking" apple passed from the hands of one lover will eventually be eaten by the other.[105] At once the reification of desire and its realization in displacement, the talking apple passed between lovers permits one to

take the other into his or her body, effecting a unity in which identities are merged in a manner that enacts a displaced version of sexual congress.

The phenomenon of prosopopoeia has recently attracted some attention for its ability to destabilize the subject–object binary central to Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment epistemology and ontology. In an omission that reflects the hard boundaries drawn between the realms of profane and sacred in modern scholarship, however, its structural (and possible genealogical) relation to the erotics of piety have so far escaped attention. And yet the use of animated matter to mediate (and even consummate) a relation of desire is no less relevant to the practices of ingesting sacred matter that I have discussed here. Whether the object of desire is the baraka emanating from prophet, saint, or logos, the ingestion of the sacred has as its ultimate end not a mimetic imitation of the sacred but a merging of the self with it. Exploiting the process of digestion in which certain substances are incorporated into one's physical being and others discarded, ingestion is especially well suited to this end, for reasons explained in another context by Marsilio Ficino (d. 1499) in his *Three Books on Life* (*De vita libri tres*), a work heavily indebted to Arabic works on alchemy and talismans. Contrasting the efficacy of images designed to harness the powers of heaven for therapeutic ends with that of medicines prepared by those skilled in astrology for the same ends, Ficino insists on the greater potency of medicinal powders, liquids, and unguents compared to images since the former allow for a greater combinatory power, absorbing celestial influences more rapidly than the hard materials of which images are formed. Moreover, applied externally or "taken internally and converted into our very selves (*in nos convertuntur*)," such viscous medicines are absorbed and incorporated into the substance of the body; the celestial draught "flows into the veins and marrow."[106]

A more cynical, but perhaps ultimately more revealing, take on the ability of ingestion to incorporate the mediated object of desire is the parody of both religious practice and scientific humanism encountered in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). On his travels the narrator visits the Academy of Lagado, where he is introduced to a method of incorporating mathematical knowledge. This entails swallowing thin wafers on which mathematical formulas have been written with an ink composed of an herbal tincture designed to relieve disorders of the head, a kind of forerunner to modern psychoactive drugs.[107] As the wafer dissolves through digestion, the concoction with which the mathematical proposition has been written is released and rises to the brain, bearing its textual content (and thus mathematical knowledge) with it. Ultimately ineffective, this ingenious attempt to incorporate textual content by the mediation of substances that bind to the brain is an obvious parody not only of the eucharist but perhaps also of contemporary practices of ingesting sacred texts and images for prophylactic or therapeutic purposes. Among them, one might mention

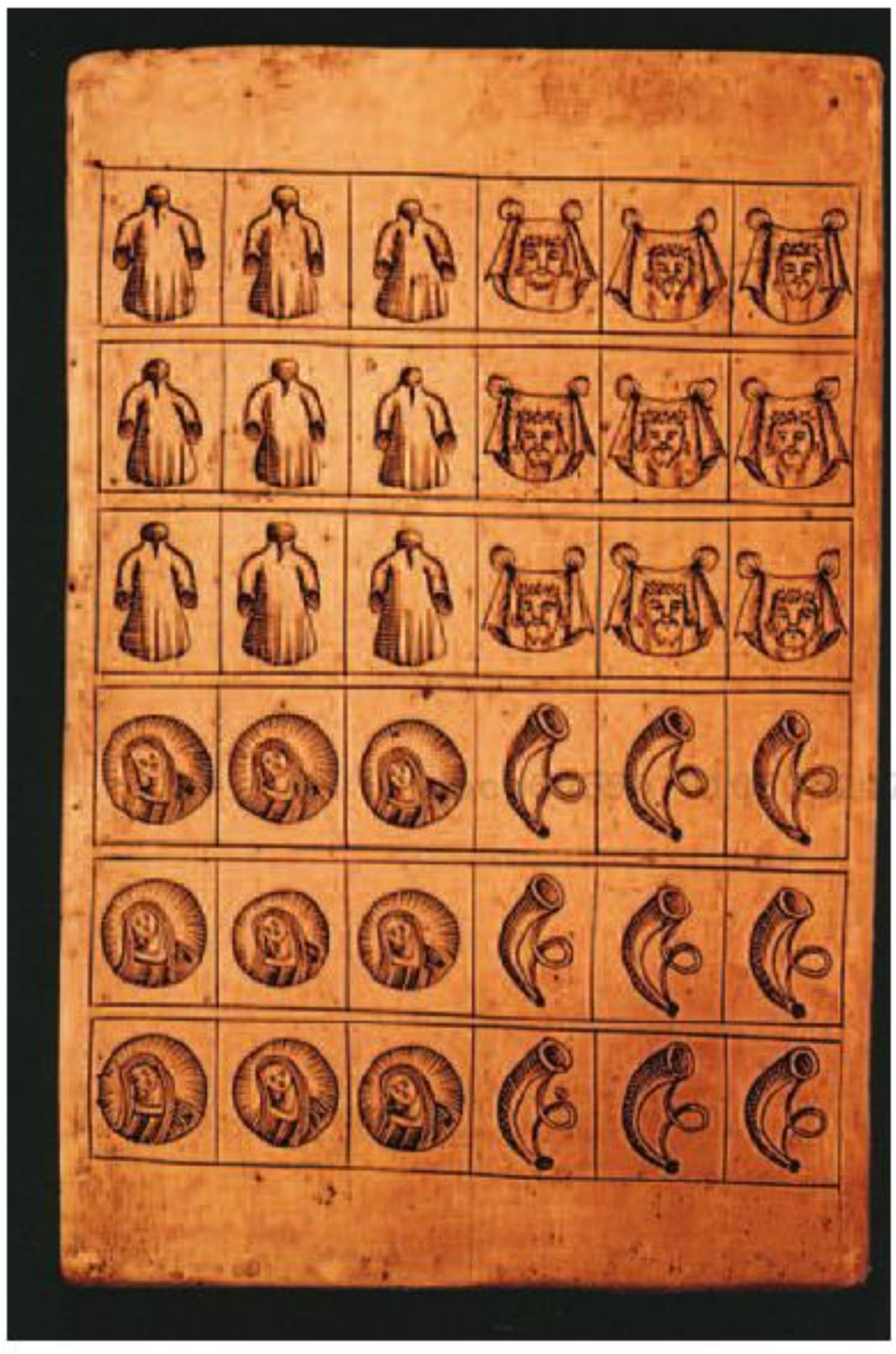

FIGURE 29.7. Sheet with copper-plate engravings of *Schluckbildchen* (images for ingestion) of relics including the tunic of Christ, the *sudarium* of Veronica, a miraculous icon of the Virgin, and the hunting horn of Charlemagne. Germany, seventeenth century, 10.4 × 6.8 centimeters. Plattensammlung Nr. 36, Ursulinen Kloster, Landshut.

the *Schluckbildchen,* tiny printed images (some as small as 2–20 millimeters) of icons of the Virgin or of relics mass-produced as multiples for Germanophone Catholics during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Figure 29.7). Imbued with apotropaic or therapeutic powers, these printed sheets of multiples functioned as "holy pills" that were cut and consumed as needed, typically dissolved in water but also baked in bread or incorporated into other foodstuffs to be fed to humans or livestock to cure fevers or other ailments.[108]

Swift's parody invokes the workings of a material economy in mediating the consumption of immaterial objects of desire, whether baraka or knowledge, in ways that alter the substance of the self; the prescribed manner of ingesting knowledge—swallowing the wafer while fasting, then subsisting on a pure diet of bread and water for three days following—implicitly raises interlinked questions of contamination, efficacy, and ritual that are often made explicit in juridical or scholastic discussions of the need for fasting when ingesting the sacred.[109] The endeavors of the academicians of Lagado also highlight once again the inadequacy of a concept of mimesis as imitation or re-presentation as an explanatory model for what is at stake in these practices of ingestion. Similarly, semiotic models that treat material forms and practices as wrappings for immaterial concepts and ideas that stand at an ontological remove from the medium

of their transmission fail to do justice to the ways in which matter mediates and is animated by the sacred and, consequently, to the ontological ambiguities and complexities inherent in practices of ingestion.[110] In the ingestion of the Qur'an, for example, it is not the semantic content of the text that is consumed but the efficacious potency of the word made manifest. Similarly, practices of icon ingestion seek to incorporate not an immaterial concept of the saint accessed through depiction but his or her very essence embodied in the stuff of imaging. As the manifestations of a corporeal desire for the consumption of the sacred, such practices seek to collapse an ontological distinction essential to the operation of mimesis as re-presentation. Insofar as they can be described as mimetic, they are closer to the notion of mimesis as participation, a mode of "sensuous similarity" that is opposed in the writings of Walter Benjamin to "nonsensuous similarity," which is typified by the semiotic conception of words (and, by extension, other representations) as having only a conventional relationship to their referents.[111] In Benjamin's sense, the mimetic has a somatic quality that distinguishes it from the semiotic while adumbrating a distinction between identification as participation and as imitation that is relevant to the devotional practices parodied by Swift.

If Swift's parody exploits the capacity of ingestion to satisfy a literal desire for incorporation, it also highlights a fundamental practical and theoretical distinction between the implications of imbibing knowledge on the one hand and sacrality on the other. Knowledge incorporated through processes of digestion can be transmitted further, whether through didactic means or the production of additional edible inscriptions by one previously enlightened through their consumption. By contrast, those who ingest the sacred are rarely said to undergo a sufficient transubstantiation to become sources of sanctity in their own right, at least not through ingesting sacred matter alone. This stands in striking contrast to the ability of banal artifacts and materials to both absorb and transmit sacrality emanating from relics with which they are in contact or to the widespread notion that pollution is catching, that sacred matter, relics, and texts can be contaminated by a ritually unclean touch.[112] The contrast suggests that systems of sacrality that operate corporeally have a built-in obsolescence, a "shelf life," that mitigates any claims of further transmission on the part of those who ingest sacred matter. The merits of circumscribing sacrality are self-evident both in precluding a fast track to personal sanctity through ingestion and in addressing more prosaic questions of mutilation and pollution during an internal trajectory from ingestion to mastication through digestion to excretion. Necessarily, therefore, it is through this temporal and teleological progression through the body that a charge of sacred energy instantiated materially through proximity to or participation in the sacred is finally discharged.

NOTES

1. Alison Flood, "Sachin Tendulkar's Blood Used to Prepare Special Edition of His Memoirs," *Guardian,* July 19, 2010.

2. Glenn Peers, *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 53–54, and Travis Zadeh, "From Drops of Blood: Charisma and Political Legitimacy in the *Translatio* of the 'Uthmānic codex of al-Andalus," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 39, no. 3 (2008): 321–346. For an overview of the homology in the context of a Christian salvific economy, see Jeffrey F. Hamburger, "Body vs. Book: The Trope of Visibility in Images of Christian-Jewish Polemic," in *Ästhetik des Unsichtbaren: Bildtheorie und Bildgebrauch in der Vormoderne,* ed. David Ganz and Thomas Lentes (Berlin: Reimer, 2004), 113–145.

3. In addition to the works cited below, see Caroline Bynum Walker, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (Brooklyn: Zone, 2011). Studies on the early history of the materiality of devotional practices in Islam are few; those of Travis Zadeh (see notes 2 and 72) are exemplary.

4. Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 97–98.

5. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), and Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

6. Saba Mahmood, "Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009): 847.

7. J. Chelhod, "La *Baraka* chez les Arabes ou l'influence bienfaisante du sacré," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 148 (1955): 68–88; Josef W. Meri, "Aspects of *Baraka* (Blessings) and Ritual Devotion among Medieval Muslims and Jews," *Medieval Encounters* 5, no. 1 (1999): 46–69; and Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002), 100–119.

8. Edward C. Sachau, *Al-Beruni's India,* 2 vols. (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1989 [1910]), vol. 1, 111, after the Arabic of Abu Rayhan Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Biruni, *Kitāb fi tahqīq-i-ma li'l-Hind* (Hyderabad: Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma`ārif al-`Uthmāniya, 1958), 84.

9. For modern Christian practices of ingesting water in which photographs of contemporary saintly figures, deceased or living, have been submerged or with which they have come in contact, see Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, "La Fonction sacrale de l'image dans l'Égypte contemporaine: De l'imagerie traditionnelle a la revolution photographique," in *La Multiplication des images en pays de l'Islam: De l'estampe à la télévision (17e–21e siècle),* ed. Bernard Heyberger and Silvia Naef (Würzburg: Ergon, 2003), 67, Figure 3; and Heike Behrend, "Photo Magic: Photographs in Practices of Healing and Harming in East Africa," *Religion and the Media* 33, no. 2 (2003): 129–145.

10. Max Junghändel, "Rillen an aegyptischen Tempeln," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 23 (1891): 861–863; Pierre Nautin, "La Conversion du temple du Philae en église chrétienne," *Cahiers archéologiques* 17 (1967): 33; and Claude Traunecker, "Une pratique de magie populaire dans les temples de Karnak," in *La Magia in Egitto ai tempi del Faraoni,* ed. Alessandro Roccati and Alberto Siliotti (Modera: Panini, 1987), 221–242.

11. Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 2–3, 5.

12. See, for example, Gary Vikan, "Pilgrims in Magi's Clothing: The Impact of Mimesis on Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art," in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage,* ed. Robert Ousterhout (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 97–107.

13. Martina Bagnoli, Holger A. Klein, C. Griffith Mann, and James Robinson, eds., *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2011).

14. Gary Vikan, *Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art,* rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010), 27–29.

15. Daniel Caner, "Towards a Miraculous Economy: Christian Gifts and Material 'Blessings' in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14, no. 3 (2006): 334–335, 341, 345, 356, 359, and Blake Leyerle, "Pilgrim Eulogiae and Domestic Rituals," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 10 (2008): 222, 231. For an overview of the eulogiae sought by pilgrims and their material containers, see Cynthia Hahn, "Loca Sancta Souvenirs: Sealing the Pilgrim's Experience," in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage,* ed. Robert Ousterhout (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 85–96.

16. Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 96–154.

17. Gary Vikan, "Ruminations on Edible Icons: Originals and Copies in the Art of Byzantium," in *Retaining the Original: Multiple Originals, Copies, and Reproductions, Studies in the History of Art,* vol. 20 (1989): 47–59, and Vikan, "Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38 (1984): 67–70. For an illuminating and suggestive discussion of the Symeon tokens and their relationship to both amulets and the eucharistic bread, see Bissera V. Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 28–36.

18. Paul van den Ven, *La Vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune, 521–592,* 2 vols. (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1962–1970), no. 124, and Vikan, "Ruminations on Edible Icons," 56.

19. Ernst Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954): 107, 148, and Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 139. For a detailed discussion, see Glenn Peers, "Object Relations," in *Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity,* ed. Scott F. Johnson (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012). I am grateful to Glenn Peers for sharing his essay with me before publication.

20. Cited in Ann Freeman, "Carolingian Orthodoxy and the Fate of the Libri Carolingi," *Viator* 16 (1985): 100, and Charles Barber, "From Transformation to Desire: Art and Worship after Byzantine Iconoclasm," *Art Bulletin* 75, no. 1 (1993): 8.

21. Patricia Cox Miller, "'Differential Networks': Relics and Other Fragments in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, no. 1 (1998): 122–123. For an extended discussion of the relationship between relics and the eucharist, see G.J.C. Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist: A Process of Mutual Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

22. On this point, see Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

23. Liz James, "Color and Meaning in Byzantium," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11, no. 2 (2008): 223–233.

24. As James A. Francis notes, "The rise of the holy man, the icon, and biography are deeply connected." Francis, "Living Icons: Tracing a Motif in Verbal and Visual Representation from the Second to Fourth Centuries CE," *American Journal of Philology* 124 (2003): 591.

25. Cox Miller, *Corporeal Imagination,* 120, 145. For the original text, see Bill Brown, "Reification, Reanimation, and the American Uncanny," *Critical Inquiry* 32 (2006): 199.

26. Peter Brown, "The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity," *Representations* 2 (1983): 1–25, and Cox Miller, *Corporeal Imagination,* 60, 140.

27. Francis, "Living Icons," 594.

28. Ann W. Astell, *Eating Beauty: The Eucharist and the Spiritual Arts of the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 11.

29. Leyerle, "Pilgrim Eulogiae," 228, and Cox Miller, *Corporeal Imagination,* 133.

30. Gordon D. Newby, "Imitating Muhammad in Two Genres: Mimesis and Problems of Genre in Sīrah and Sunnah," *Medieval Encounters* 3, no. 3 (1997): 266–283.

31. Julian Raby, "In Vitro Veritas: Glass Pilgrim Vessels from 7th-Century Jerusalem," in *Bayt al-Maqdis: Jerusalem and Early Islam,* ed. J. Johns, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art, vol. 9, part 2 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 113–190, and Helen C. Evans and Brandie Ratliff, eds., *Byzantium and Islam Age of Transition, 7th–9th Century* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012), no. 186.

32. Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Muqaddasi, *Kitāb aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm,* ed. M. J. de Goeje, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 186; André Miquel, *Aḥsan at-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm (Le Meilleure repartition pour la connaissance des provinces)* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1963), 231–232; Abū Bakr Ahmad ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadhani, *Kitāb al-Buldān,* ed. M. J. de Goeje, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, vol. 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 112; and Henri Massé, *Abrégé du livre des pays* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1973), 136.

33. Finbarr B. Flood, "Image against Nature: *Spolia* as Apotropaia in Byzantium and the Dar al-Islam," *Medieval History Journal* 9, no. 1 (2006): 143–166, and Julia Gonella, "Magic *Spolia* in Medieval Islamic Architecture of Northern Syria," *Muqarnas* 27 (2010): 103–120.

34. Erica Reiner, "Magic Figurines, Amulets, and Talismans," in *Monsters and Demons in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds,* ed. Ann E. Farkas (Mainz: P. von Zabern, 1987), 28–29.

35. Flood, "Image against Nature," 150–151.

36. Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Le Sommaire du Sahih Mouslim,* bilingual (Arabic-French) ed., trans. Fawzi Chaaban (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1992), vol. 2, 402–403, nos. 1136–1137.

37. *The Latin Picatrix,* Books I and II, trans. John Michael Greer and Christopher Warnock (Lexington, KY: Lulu, 2009), 34.

38. In other cases, however, the impression is referred to as the design or engraving (*naqsh*) of the seal (*khātam*). Venetia Porter, "Islamic Seals: Magical or Practical?," in *Magic and Divination in Early Islam,* ed. Emilie Savage-Smith (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 179–180, 182. For prophylactic logophagy, see notes 95–98 below.

39. Porter, "Islamic Seals," and Flood, "Image against Nature," 153.

40. Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Life and Lore,* 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1976), vol. 1, 86, 88; vol. 2, 199; Helga Venzlaff, "Mohr-e Namāz: Das schiitische Gebetssiegel," *Die Welt des Islams* 35, no. 2 (1995): 250–275; and Meri, "Aspects of *Baraka* (Blessings)," 51–52.

41. Hilmi Aydın, *The Sacred Trusts: Pavilion of the Sacred Relics, Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul* (Istanbul: Tughra Books, 2009), 191–192. On the curative properties of the Prophet's saliva and the soil of Medina, see Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Medicine of the Prophet,* trans. Penelope Johnson (Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society, 1998), 139–140.

42. Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Medicine of the Prophet;* Emilie Savage-Smith, "Ṭibb," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* new ed., vol. 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 453.

43. Kitzinger, "Cult of Images," 147–148, and Vikan, *Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art,* 23–24, 31–33.

44. The most comprehensive existing historical study of the Prophet's relics, a generally underresearched topic, is that of Ahmad Taymur, *Al-Āthār al-nabawiyya* (The Prophetic Relics) (Cairo: ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1971). See also Brannon Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden: Ritual, Relics, and Territory in Islam* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 71–98, and Josef W. Meri, "Relics of Piety and Power in Medieval Islam," *Past and Present* (2010), suppl. 5, 97–120. For a useful overview of the veneration of the Prophet's body, see Denis Gril, "Le Corps

du Prophète," in *Le Corps et le sacré en Orient musulman,* ed. Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen and Bernard Heyberger (Aix-en-Provence: Édisud, 2006), 37–58.

45. Cyril Elgood, "Tibb-ul-Nabbi or Medicine of the Prophet," *Osiris* 14 (1962): 175.

46. Süleyman Beyoğlu, "The Ottomans and the Islamic Sacred Relics," in *Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation,* vol. 4: *Culture and Arts* (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2000), 36–44; and Aydın, *Sacred Trusts.*

47. Christiane Gruber, "A Pious Cure-All: The Ottoman Illustrated Prayer Manual in the Lilly Library," in *The Islamic Manuscript Tradition: Ten Centuries of Book Arts in Indiana University Collections,* ed. Christiane Gruber (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 120–123, and Alexandra Bain, "The Late Ottoman *En'am-ı şerif:* Sacred Text and Images in an Islamic Prayer Book," D.Phil. dissertation, University of Victoria, Saanich and Oak Bay, Victoria, Canada, 1999, esp. 18–33.

48. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Medicine of the Prophet,* 139–140.

49. Ignace Goldziher, "The Cult of Saints in Islam," *Moslem World* 1 (1911): 302–312, and Samuel M. Zwemer, "Hairs of the Prophet," in *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume,* ed. Samuel Löwinger and Joseph Somogyi, Part 1 (Budapest: Globus u.a., 1948), 48–54.

50. Meri, "Relics of Piety and Power," 105.

51. Brannon Wheeler, "Relics in Islam," *Islamica* 11 (Summer 2004): 107–108, and Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden,* 72–75.

52. Meri, *Cult of Saints,* 109–111; Meri, "Relics of Piety and Power," 106–112; and Ahmad ibn Muḥammad al-Maqqari, *Fatḥ al-mutaʿāl fi madḥ al-niʿāl,* ed. Ahmad Farid al-Miziyadi (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīya, 2006).

53. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media,* ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 21.

54. M. Renaud, *Monuments arabes, persans et turcs du cabinet de M. le duc de Blacas,* vol. 2 (Paris: : L'Imprimerie Royale, 1828), 311–324, and Venetia Porter, ed., *Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam* (London: British Museum Press, 2012), 60, Figure 34. For other, later, tile and manuscript images of the sandals bearing similar invitations to kiss and touch them, see Sophie Makariou, ed., *Chefs d'oeuvre islamiques de l'Aga Khan Museum* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2007), no. 72, and Bain, "The Late Ottoman *En'am-ı şerif,*" 109–110. For later examples of images that evoke the Prophet and his qualities inscribed with invitations to kiss, rub, and touch them, see Gruber, "A Pious Cure-All," 132, 140–141.

55. Meri, "Relics of Piety and Power," 110, n. 52.

56. On the burda, see David S. Margoliouth, "The Relics of the Prophet Mohammed," *Moslem World* 27, no. 1 (1937): 20–27. For a description of the ritual ingestion of this water at the Ottoman court in the early eighteenth century, see Alexandru Dutu and Paul Cernovodeanu, eds., *Dimitrie Cantemir, Historian of South East European and Oriental Civilizations* (Bucharest: Association Internationale d'Études du Sud-ouest Européen, 1973), 142. From the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, the ritual changed slightly so that the Ottoman elite kissed the robe, with their traces wiped with a kerchief presented to each. Nurhan Atasoy, "Khirḳa-yi Sherīf," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* new ed., vol. 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 18–10; Aydın, *Sacred Trusts,* 34–40, 197; and Gruber, "Pious Cure-All," 134.

57. Aydın, *Sacred Trusts,* 115.

58. M. J. Kister, "Maqām Ibrāhīm, a Stone with an Inscription," *Muséon* 84 (1971): 483–485. Against this, however, one should note a tradition of depicting the Kaʿba set within the outline of

the Prophet's footprint, documented in illustrated pilgrimage texts as early as the sixteenth century. See Barbara Schmitz, *Islamic Manuscripts in the New York Public Library* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992), 45.

59. On the properties of Zamzam water, see Jacqueline Chabbi, "Zamzam," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* new ed., vol. 11 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002), 442, and Elgood, "Tibb-ul-Nabbi," 140.

60. Meri, *Cult of Saints,* 105.

61. Aydın, *Sacred Trusts,* 191.

62. Richard Kurin, "The Structure of Blessedness at a Muslim Shrine in Pakistan," *Middle Eastern Studies* 19, no. 3 (1983): 316–318.

63. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, "Al-Būsīrī's *Qasīdat al-Burdah* (*Mantle Ode*) and the Supplicatory Ode," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 37, no. 2 (2006): 145–189; Stetkevych, *The Mantle Odes: Arabic Praise Poems to the Prophet Muhammad* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); and Mohiuddin Qadri, *Qasidat al-Burdah: The Poem of the Mantle* (Lahore: Lulu, 2008). On al-Busiri and his historical context, see Victor Danner, "Al-Būsīrī: His Times and Prophetology," in *Islamic and Middle Eastern Societies: A Festschrift in Honor of Wadie Jwaideh,* ed. Robert Olson and Salman al-Ani (Brattleboro, VT: Amana Books, 1987), 41–61.

64. The *Shifā bi-ta'rīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā* (Healing by Recognition of the Rights of the Chosen One), written by the Maghribi scholar Iyad ibn Musa (d. 1149 CE), trans. Aisha Bewley as *Ash-Shifa of Qadi Iyad* (Inverness, UK: Madinah Press, 2006).

65. Stetkevych, "Al-Būsīrī's *Qasīdat al-Burdah*," 146–147, 150.

66. Rose Aslan, "Understanding the Poem of the Burdah in Sufi Commentaries," M.A. thesis, American University in Cairo, 2008, 82. I am grateful to Iman Abdulfattah for drawing my attention to this thesis. For the related practices in Mamluk funerary monuments, see note 99 below.

67. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* Book 87: *On the Interpretation of Dreams,* hadith nos. 122–123; and Muhammad Muhsein Khan, ed., *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1979) (Arabic–English), vol. 9, 104.

68. Meri, *Cult of Saints,* 111. For accounts of dream appearances of the Prophet in Mamluk Egypt and Syria, sometimes in the context of curing infirmity, see Yehoshua Frenkel, "Dream Accounts in the Chronicles of the Mamluk Period," in *Dreaming across Boundaries: The Interpretation of Dreams in Islamic Lands,* ed. Louise Marlow (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2008), 202–220. The hagiography of the eleventh-century sufi sheikh Abu Ishaq of Kazarun explains how he had a dream in which the Prophet Muhammad drew with charcoal the plan of a mosque, which the sheikh then built. Denise Aigle, "Sainteté et miracles en islam médiéval: L'Exemple de deux saints fondateurs iraniens," in *Miracles, prodiges et merveilles au Moyen Age* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1995), 64.

69. Vikan, "Art, Medicine, and Magic," 73, n. 45.

70. Ezekiel 2:9–10, 3:1–3. The event is echoed in biographies of the mid-sixth-century Byzantine poet Romanos the Melode, who is said to have been commanded by the Virgin to eat a scroll in a dream, after which he awoke and composed the first of his celebrated hymns. Joseph Yahalom, "*Piyyut* in Byzantium: A Few Remarks," in *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures,* ed. Robert Bonfil et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 325.

71. Peers, *Sacred Shock,* 52.

72. For an excellent overview, see Travis Zadeh, "Touching and Ingesting: Early Debates over the Material Qur'an," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 129, no. 3 (2009): 443–466.

73. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Medicine of the Prophet,* 128.

74. Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London: John Murray, 1895), 263–264.

75. The use of saffron as a medium of inscription appears to have a long history in the context of Egyptian medicinal-magic practices. See, for example, John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), no. 33.

76. Abu Zakariyya Yahya al-Nawawi, *Etiquette with the Quran: Al-Tibyān fi Ādāb Ḥamalat al-Qur'ān* (Burr Ridge, IL: Starlatch Press, 2003), 112, 115, and Zadeh, "Touching and Ingesting," 464.

77. Aydın, *Sacred Trusts,* 196.

78. Al-Nawawi, *Etiquette with the Quran,* 112.

79. J. Sadan, "Geniza and Genizah-like Practices in Islamic and Jewish Tradition," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 43, nos. 1–2 (1986): 36–58.

80. H. Henry Spoer, "Arabic Magical Medicinal Bowls," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 55, no. 3 (1935): 256; Emilie Savage-Smith, "Magic-Medicinal Bowls," *Science, Tools, and Magic,* Part 1: *Body and Spirit* (London: Nur Foundation in Association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press, 1997), 72–78; and Almut v. Gladiss, "Medizinische Schalen: Ein islamisches Heilverfahren und seine mittelalterlichen Hilfsmittel," *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 11 (1999): 147–161.

81. See, for example, Elgood, "Tibb-ul-Nabbi," 155–156.

82. Spoer, "Arabic Magical Medicinal Bowls," 255–256, and Savage-Smith, "Magic-Medicinal Bowls," 72.

83. In a future essay I hope to address similar questions of surrogacy and mimesis that arise in medieval Islamic devotional practices and pilgrimage rituals.

84. Muslim, *Le Sommaire du Sahih Mouslim,* vol. 2, 402–403, nos. 1136–1137, and Elgood, "Tibb-ul-Nabbi," 152–154.

85. Katherine M. D. Dunbabin and M. W. Dickie, "*Invida rumpantur pectora*: The Iconography of Phthonos-Invidia in Graeco-Roman Art," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 26 (1983): 7–37. Such imagery was known in pre-Islamic Arabia, for a spectacular image of the eye under attack is found on a wall painting datable to the first through the third centuries CE from Qaryat al-Faw in central Arabia, misidentified in recent scholarship as a zodiacal image. 'Ali Ibrahim al-Ghabban, *Roads of Arabia: Archaeology and History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (Paris: Somogy Art Publishers, 2010), 340, no. 163.

86. On extramission in Islamic thought, see David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 18–32; Lindberg, "The Intromission–Extramission Controversy in Islamic Visual Theory: Alkindi versus Avicenna," in *Studies in Perception: Interrelations in the History of Philosophy and Science,* ed. Pieter K. Machamer and Robert G. Turnbull (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1978), 137–159.

87. Emilie Savage-Smith, "Amulets and Related Talismanic Objects," and Porter, "Islamic Seals," in *Magic and Divination in Early Islam,* ed. Savage-Smith (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 179–200.

88. Although images of scorpions and other beasts are found along with Qur'anic quotations on Iranian amulets from the ninth century, it us worth noting that the appearance of magic squares seems to be a phenomenon of the Islamic period: Porter, "Islamic Seals," 187.

89. Savage-Smith, "Magic-Medicinal Bowls," 82, no. 25. See also no. 26, inscribed while the moon was in Scorpio.

90. Peter W. Schienerl, "Zur magischen Wirkungsweise rezenter ägyptischer Skorpionamulette," *Archiv für Völkerkunde* 36 (1982): 147–159; Giovanni Canova, "Serpenti e scorpioni nelle tradizioni Arabo-Islamiche," *Quaderni di studi Arabi* 8 (1990–1991): 191–207, and 9: 219–244; Regine Schulz, "Schlangen, Skorpione und feindliche Mächte," *Biblische Notizen* 93 (1998): 89–104; and Jürgen Wasim Frembgen, "The Scorpion in Muslim Folklore," *Asian Folklore Studies*

63 (2004): 112–117. For the antecedents of such practices in Egypt, see Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 18–19.

91. The relevant text recommends reciting over images of the gods Atum-Horus-Heknu, Isis, and Horus prescribed words, which are then to be drawn on the hand of one afflicted by a scorpion bite and licked off by him or drawn on a piece of linen and applied to the throat of the afflicted; alternatively, a herb known as scorpion's herb can be ground and dissolved in beer and wine and ingested by the one suffering a scorpion's sting. J. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), no. 84, 55. For the broader context of curative licking and swallowing, see Robert Kriech Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1997), 95–96.

92. Edmond Doutté, *Magie et religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Algiers: Adolphe Jourdan, 1909), 237.

93. P. Lacau, "Les Statues guérisseuses dans l'ancienne Égypte," *Monuments et mémoires: Fondation Eugène Piot* 25 (1921–1922): 189–209, and Byron E. Shafer, John Baines, Leonard H. Lesko, and David P. Silverman, eds., *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths, and Personal Practice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 169.

94. Michael G. Morony, "Magic and Society in Late Sasanian Iraq," in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World,* ed. Scott Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 84–107.

95. William J. Diebold, *Word and Image: An Introduction to Early Medieval Art* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 28.

96. Michael Green, "A Late Coptic Magical Text from the Collection of the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden," *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen* 67 (1987): 35, 38.

97. Jack Goody, "Restricted Literacy in Northern Ghana," in *Literacy in Traditional Societies,* ed. Jack Goody (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 235.

98. Goody, "Restricted Literacy," 226–241; Abdullahi Osman El-Tom, "Drinking the Koran: The Meaning of Koranic Verses in Berti Erasure," in *Popular Islam South of the Sahara,* ed. J.D.Y. Peel and C. C. Stewart (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1985), 414–413; Salah El Mohammed Hassan, "Lore of the Traditional Malam: Material Culture of Literacy and Ethnography of Writing among the Hausa of Northern Nigeria," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1988, 198–228; and Raymond A. Silverman, "Drinking the Word of God," in *Inscribing Meaning: Writing and Graphic Systems in African Art,* ed. Christine Mullen Kreamer, Mary Nooter Roberts, Elizabeth Harney, and Allyson Purpura (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 2007), 117–123.

99. Junghändel, "Rillen," 862–863.

100. Doutté, *Magie et religion,* 109–110.

101. Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785–1906* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 156–157.

102. For such inscriptions on artifacts (as opposed to architecture, which has a more extensive bibliography), see Hana Taragan, "The 'Speaking' Inkwell from Khurasan: Object as 'World' in Iranian Medieval Metalwork," *Muqarnas* 22 (2005): 29–44; Avinoam Shalem, "The Otherness in the Focus of Interest: Or, If Only the Other Could Speak," in *Islamic Artefacts in the Mediterranean World: Trade, Gift Exchange and Artistic Transfer,* ed. Catarina Schmidt Arcangeli and Gerhard Wolf (Venice: Marsilio, 2010), 29–44, and Shalem, "If Objects Could Speak," in *The Aura of the Alif,* ed. Jürgen Wassim Frembgen (Munich: Prestel, 2010), 127–147.

103. Al-Washsha', *Le Livre de brocart (al-kitāb al-muwashshā) par al-Washshā',* trans. Siham Bouhlal (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 230, and Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Washsha', *Al-Muwashshā,*

aw al-zarf wa'l-zurufā' (Beirut: Dār Sadir, 1965), 264. See also Franz Rosenthal, *Four Essays on Art and Literature in Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 93–95.

104. Paula Sanders, *Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo* (Albany: State Univeristy of New York Press, 1994), 28–29, and Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 85.

105. Al-Washsha', *Le livre de brocart,* 219–220, and al-Washsha', *Al-Muwashshā,* 250–251. The invocation of apples and wine in this context invokes a homology between wine and apples found in contemporary 'Abbasid poetry, in which wine is often described as a liquefied apple, itself solidified wine, while the apple also often functions as a metaphor for the breasts or cheeks of the beloved. M. C. Lyons, *Identification and Identity in Classical Arabic Poetry* (London: Gibb Memorial Trust, 1999), 301.

106. Marsilio Ficino, *Three Books on Life,* ed. and trans. Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark (Tempe, AZ: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 2002), 305–306, 352–353.

107. Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels,* ed. Robert Demaria Jr. (London: Penguin, 2003), 174. In fact, one of the noted properties of al-Busiri's ode on the Prophet's cloak is the poem's ability to improve the capacity for knowledge when dissolved in water and taken orally.

108. Christian Schneegass, "Schluckbildchen: Ein Beispiel der 'Populärgraphik zur aktiven Aneignung,'" *Volkskunst* 6 (1983): 27–32; Christoph Kürzeder, "Geweyhte Sachen und anberührte Bildlein," in *Maria Allerorten: Die Muttergottes mit dem geneigten Haupt, 1699–1999—Das Gnadenbild der Ursulinen zu Landshut—Altbayerische Marienfrömmigkeit im 18. Jahrhundert* (Landshut: Museen der Stadt Landshut, 1999), 281–283, Figure 3 and catalog nos. I/48g, I/50g, I/56a, and I/56b.

109. Zadeh, "Touching and Ingesting," 464. The issue is frequently discussed in relation to the Christian eucharist. See, for example, Marilyn McCord Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist: Thomas Aquinas, Gilles of Rome, Duns Scotus, and William Ockham* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 261–275, and Gary Macy, *Treasures from the Storeroom: Medieval Religion and the Eucharist* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), esp. 20–35, 68–69. I am grateful to Aden Kumler for these references.

110. Webb Keane, "Subjects and Objects," in *The Handbook of Material Culture,* ed. Chris Tilley (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 198–199; Keane, *Christian Moderns;* Birgit Meyer, *Religious Sensations: Why Media, Aesthetics and Power Matter in the Study of Contemporary Religion* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 2006); and Hent de Vries, ed., *Religion: Beyond a Concept* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 647–772.

111. Walter Benjamin, "Doctrine of the Similar" (1933), trans. Knut Tarrowski, *New German Critique* 17 (1979): 65–69, and Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

112. In addition to the images of the Prophet Muhammad's sandal discussed above, examples include the sacrality acquired by the gate of Edessa through its function as the locus at which the letter written by Christ to Abgar was displayed and read every time the city was menaced by an adversary. Leyerle, "Pilgrim Eulogiae," 35.