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Writing on the wall: Anglo-Saxons at Monte Sant'Angelo sul Gargano

(Puglia) and the spiritual and social significance of graffiti

Among the early medieval names inscribed on the walls at the shrine of S. Michele at Monte Sant'Angelo sul Gargano are a small number from Anglo-Saxon visitors, all but one written in runic script. This article employs those names as a lens through which to explore issues of devotion and identity in the context of pilgrimage and travel, by focusing on the particular physical, religious and performative contexts which led to their production. Firstly, it examines the spiritual and religious significance of the graffiti by considering the multiple meanings which inscribing or reading such inscriptions might have held for contemporaries. Secondly, it explores the opportunity which the graffiti offer for investigating aspects of identity and belonging, arising as they do from situations in which long-distance visitors found themselves far away from home and where facets of commonality and alterity could be brought into sharp focus. By examining these themes in relation to the surviving names, it is possible to bring to light the range of meanings which the act(s) of writing inscriptions at Monte Gargano might have held for contemporaries within medieval western Europe, and what might have been understood by visitors reading the inscriptions that others had left behind.

Between the seventh century and the ninth, around two hundred names were inscribed into the walls of the shrine of S. Michele at Monte Sant'Angelo sul Gargano (Puglia). Some of those Christians who wrote on the chapel's walls were connected with the late seventh- and early eighth-century Langobard court, but there were also visitors from much further afield. This chapel itself was only rediscovered in the course of excavations in the mid twentieth century; then in 1974, following the removal of a seventeenth-century wall, additional inscriptions were found, including several Anglo-Saxon names in runic script.[1] Since their discovery, much of the

scholarly attention paid to these graffiti has focused on technical aspects of philology or onomastics, and, in the case of the Anglo-Saxon names, also runology.[2] This is important research but its focus has meant that other interesting aspects of these inscriptions have been neglected: the complex spiritual and social meanings of these inscriptions to those who wrote and read them, and the multiple reasons that they were inscribed into the sanctuary at Monte Sant'Angelo, have not been explored in the detail that they deserve. In this article I take a historical and theological approach, examining the names (and especially the Anglo-Saxon names) within their particular physical, religious and performative contexts. I employ these names as a lens through which to examine issues of devotion and identity, focusing on the range of meanings which the act(s) of writing inscriptions on the walls at Monte Gargano might have held for their contemporaries in western Europe, and also what might have been understood by visitors reading the inscriptions that others had left behind. This specific contextual focus allows these names to be understood in relation to their particular moments and circumstances of production, as well as to their spiritual and material settings.[3]

[1] Trotta 2012, 35-41, 89-90, 112-14; Sinisi 2014, 43.

[2] Arcamone 1981; Derolez and Schwab 1983; Arcamone 1992; Schwab and Derolez 1994.

[3] Discussion of similar contemporary graffiti in other places, such as Rome, is beyond the scope of this study. The devotional aspects of names in, for example, Roman catacombs has been explored by Carletti 2002, amongst others. Anglo-Saxon names in both runic and roman script appear in catacombs in Rome, but these can only be fully assessed and understood in relation to their own (quite different) specific settings, since the particular (material and other) contexts of each group of inscriptions are fundamental to understanding purpose and appearance; in Rome, for example, the existence of other non-roman scripts significantly affects how certain choices made by inscribers should be understood and interpreted. For an excellent contextually-sensitive discussion of some of the Anglo-Saxon inscriptions

First I explore the spiritual and religious significance of the graffiti by unpicking the multiple meanings of the acts of writing or reading the inscriptions in the walls of the shrine. The graffiti are assumed to have been written by those who travelled to the shrine as Christian pilgrims, whether or not that was the visitors' only or main purpose.[4] This presents a particular context for understanding the variety of meanings which the graffiti may have held to writers and readers, and leads also to my second theme, the opportunity offered by the graffiti for considering aspects of identity and belonging in the context of pilgrimage and travel, where facets of commonality and alterity might be brought into sharp focus. The names at the shrine can be classified linguistically as Latin, Greek, Langobard, Frankish and Anglo-Saxon: while it would be simplistic to assume that there is always a straightforward equation of ethnicity with the linguistic origins of names, in combination with other evidence this variety of names offers a useful starting-point for considering the range of cultures in contact at Monte Gargano.[5] That most of the Anglo-Saxon names were written in runic script does suggest too that they should indeed be identified as relating to travellers from northwestern Europe. As a small number of individuals who were a long way from their point of origin, their perspectives may have differed somewhat from those of some other visitors. Here a wide range of possible significances of the early medieval graffiti at Monte Gargano are explored, not all of which may have been equally important to all visitors, but they offer a starting-point for exploring the likely purposes and effects of these writings on the walls. Before approaching these two main themes, however, I offer an overview of the evidence for the site itself, and the routes and means by which travellers

in Rome, see Izzi 2014. In addition, it should be noted that while my argument builds on earlier philological research, none of the names is here (re-)examined with relation to philology, anthroponymy, or runology.

[4] For the various "purposes" of pilgrimage, see Dietz 2005.

[5] See Carletti 1980.

reached it during the seventh to ninth centuries, which act as a framework for interpreting the inscribed names.

Topographical, material and historical contexts

The shrine of S. Michele is located near the top of Monte Gargano (830m a.s.l.) in the Gargano promontory (the spur of Italy's "boot") in northern Puglia, in south-eastern Italy (Fig 1). The Gargano promontory is rocky, mountainous and an important seismogenic area, with Monte Gargano itself lying directly on the Mattinata fault-line;[6] the land rises sharply from the coast and Monte Gargano is about 5km inland with a clear view of the sea to the south. The mountain's relative proximity to the coast made it a target for an attack in 869 by "Saracens" who had settled at Bari, as recorded by the contemporary archbishop of Reims, Hincmar.[7] By contrast, visitors travelling over land from more northerly areas might have found the mountain difficult to access because of the immediate topography of the Gargano promotory and, depending on the precise route taken, the Apennines. Nonetheless, the site was clearly significant

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[6] Piccardi 2005, 114-16.

[7] *Annals of St Bertin*, s.a. 869 (*MGH SS* 1: 485): "... iidem Saraceni de Baira egredientes ... ad ecclesiam sancti Michaelis in monte Gargano perrexerunt, et clericos eiusdem ecclesiae multosque alios qui ad orationem illuc convenerant depraedantes, cum multa spolia ad sua redierunt." Sinisi 2014, 51. mentions a journey to Monte Gargano from the east made by a Byzantine noble-woman named Arthellais in the sixth century, but the text which records this is patently late and unreliable: see *Vita S. Arthellaidis*, 5 (*BHL* 719: 264). The only other mentions of Arthellais are in late liturgical manuscripts (e.g. Rome, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, MS 5949, s. xii) and in the twelfth-century *Chronicle of Montecassino*, which records the presence of her relics in a grant supposedly dating to 797: I.18 (*MGH SS* 34: 61, l. 1(A) and l. 15(B)). It seems likely that the assumed existence of a saint named Arthellais about whom little or nothing was known prompted someone (probably in the eleventh century) to compose a text outlining who she was.

for contemporaries even in the north, as is clear from Hincmar's recording of the attack in 869 despite the distance from the Carolingian heartlands.

Northern Europeans visiting the site likely travelled via Rome, the major pilgrimage destination for late antique and early medieval western European Christians. Historical sources record a considerable number of northern Europeans who travelled or intended to travel to Rome and some cases on to Jerusalem; some of those (recorded or otherwise) who visited Rome or Jerusalem might also have journeyed to Monte Gargano, perhaps learning about the shrine while in Rome.[8] Occasionally northern Europeans are visible elsewhere in southern Italy too, such as Hunwine, a priest connected with the Northumbrian monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow, whose death in Benevento is mentioned in a mid-eighth-century letter to Bishop Lul of Mainz (d. 786).[9] Some individuals like Hunwine, probably in southern Italy on ecclesiastical business, might have journeyed to the site if they were relatively close by. A (probably Frankish) monk named Bernardus visited the shrine in c.867 on his way to Jerusalem: he and his companions (Stephanus, a Spaniard, and Theudemund—presumably a Langobard—from the monastery of S. Vincenzo in Benevento) first went to Rome to request permission from Pope Nicholas to make a journey for Jerusalem, before heading to Monte Gargano and then travelling on to Bari.[10] Bernardus does not give any details of how the group travelled, but the most likely route would be on the Roman road network (see Fig 1), journeying first south on either the Via Appia or the

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[8] At the turn of the ninth century there were *scholae* of Franks, Frisians, Saxons and Langobards in Rome, according to the *Life* of Pope Leo III in the *Liber pontificalis*, xcviii.xix (ed. Duchesne, vol. 2, 6, l. 21). For detailed discussion of Anglo-Saxon visitors to Rome with full prosopography, see Matthews 2007. For visitors from Frankish Gaul, see Hen 1998. See also Shwartz 2013, 472-4.

[9] *Ep.* 116 (*MGH Epp. Sel.* 1: 251, ll. 15-17).

[10] *Itinerarium Bernardi monachi*, I-III (ed. Tobler and Molinier, vol. 1, 309-10).

Via Latina, and then at some point heading east, perhaps on the Via Traiana.[11] The Chronicle of Montecassino, written in the twelfth century but probably drawing on earlier sources, records that in the late eighth century an English pilgrim on his way to Monte Gargano stopped and was healed at Montecassino, which lies nearly on the Via Latina, suggesting that (whether or not this event actually happened) this was a plausible route from Rome to the promontory, at least at the time that the text was written.[12] A pilgrim might then reach Monte Gargano itself either by journeying towards the ancient town of Teanum Apulum (near modern San Paolo di Civitate) and then over the mountains; or, most likely, by travelling via Sipontum (Siponto, on the coast to the south and west of Monte Gargano, near the modern town of Manfredonia) and along the coast, with a steep ascent to the shrine from the south.[13]

Pilgrims to Monte Gargano found the chapel nestled precariously into the north face of the mountain, as shown in the digital archaeological reconstructions depicted below (Figs. 2 and 3).[14] Bernardus notes that the chapel was entered from the north and could hold about sixty people.[15] Visitors came in through a long porticus, with an altar preserving the imprints of

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[11] Trotta 2012, 127.

[12] *Chronicle of Monte Cassino*, 1.13 (*MGH SS* 34: 48-9; for discussion of date and sources see ix-xvii).

[13] Trotta 2012, 127-8. See also the description of the journey of the monk Bernardus to Monte Gargano (and from Monte Gargano to Bari) in Sinisi 2014, 53. The specific route Sinisi outlines is not in fact recorded in Bernardus' text, even though her article implies that she is offering a paraphrase rather than (as I believe she is) her own imaginative reconstruction.

[14] I am extremely grateful to Dr Massimo Limoncelli for sharing his digital reconstructions with me, and for giving me permission to reproduce them here.

[15] *Itinerarium*, II (ed. Tobler and Molinier, 310): "Cuius introitus est ab aquilone, & ipsa sexaginta homies potest recipere in se."

Michael's footprints right at the back and up a staircase (<mark>Figs 4-6</mark>). Now, the chapel is entered by going down a staircase from a lower level within the shrine complex, since other structures were built above it in later centuries, but archaeological evidence shows that it was originally simply a chapel built into the side of the mountain and incorporating the cave, or *grotta*, which is fundamental to the shrine's founding legend.[16] The significance of this cave is described in the *Liber de apparitione S. Michaelis*, in connection with three separate appearances of the archangel Michael to the bishop of Sipontum, in whose diocese the sanctuary lay.[17] In the course of these appearances, Michael stated that he had consecrated the cave, and he also left his footprints imprinted in the stone there.

Ascertaining genuine historical information about the origins of the shrine from the *Liber de apparitione* is difficult, since not only is the account clearly legendary, but also the text is a composite work whose surviving form may date from some time between the late seventh and the late eighth or early ninth century, though it is likely that it depends on some earlier material too.[18] In addition, many of the details of the composition seem to have been influenced by local ecclesiastical politics, including a dispute between the bishops of Benevento and Sipontum over ownership of the shrine.[19] Archaeological evidence demonstrates the existence of the shrine at least in the sixth century and probably also earlier, and it was probably established in some form

[16] Entrance to the chapel/crypt is now only permitted as part of a guided tour; it is surprisingly easy to get locked in if looking too long at the inscriptions.

[17] These are edited in *MGH SS rer. Lang.* 1: 540-5. The Latin text is usefully reprinted with English translation in Johnson 2005, 110-15. The Latin text is also printed with Italian translation in Trotta 2012, 63-8, with Greek versions of the text (and Italian translation of them) at 157-65.

[18] Otranto 1981; Trotta 1994; Everett 2002; Everett 2003, 267-8; Johnson 2005, 36-41.

[19] Everett 2002, 373-89.

at a time when the area was still under direct control of the diocese of Sipontum.[20] It is interesting in this context to note Luigi Piccardi's suggestion that genuine seismic activity, including smoke and lightning which would almost certainly have been visible down on the coast at Sipontum, might lie behind the original apparition.[21]

However, Langobard control of this part of southern Italy seems to have been established only in the late sixth century, while significant Langobard patronage of the shrine probably began only during the seventh century, as is evident from the surviving inscriptions recording the munificence of Langobard rulers.[22] One of these records the the donation of "Romoald dux", probably Romoald I (d. 687), duke of Benevento (662-687).[23] This inscription was prominent both because of its position within the shrine complex and because of the way the text was highlighted on the stone. It was carved into the western face of the "rulers' pillar," so-called because it bears a number of inscriptions connected with the Langobard rulers: this pillar is positioned at the entrance to the staircase up which visitors to the shrine passed to reach the cave preserving Michael's footprints (Figs 6, 7), and the text itself it is inscribed in capitals, outlined and underlined.[24] Romoald I appears also in connection with the transfer of the diocese of Sipontum and the sanctuary at Monte Gargano to Benevento, as recorded by the ninth- or early tenth-century *Life* of Barbatus, bishop of Benevento from 633 until 682.[25] The account of the

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[20] Arnold 2000, 569; Trotta 2012, 85-92; on the claims of Sipontum see also Everett 2002.

[21] Piccardi 2005, 121-3.

[22] Wickham 1981, 28-34; Arnold 2013, 70-91.

[23] Otranto 1985, 168-9: "d[e] donis d(e)i et [s(an)]c(t)i a(rcha)ngeli fiere iusse et don[avit] Romouald dux age[r]e pietate Gaidemari fecit."

[24] Derolez and Schwab 1983, 97-106.

[25] *Vita S. Barbati*, 7 (*MGH SS rer. Lang.* 1: 560-1); Vuolo 1996, 217-26; Everett 2002, 382-7; Oldfield 2014, 24-5.

transfer of control probably represents the interests of Beneventan bishops at the time the *Life* was written, but the earlier association between the bishop of Sipontum and the cave, as also described in the *Liber de apparitione*, is significant. It is also possible that there is a genuine seventh-century connection between the decision to transfer the diocese and the shrine to the control of Benevento, and raids by Slavs in the region of Sipontum in c.642, mentioned by Paul the Deacon (d. 799) in his *Historia Langobardorum*, written towards the end of the eighth century, though apparently based on earlier sources.[26] Paul wrote at some distance from the events he described, and so his narrative must be treated cautiously, but the confluence of these two accounts is plausible, at least, if not absolutely certain.[27]

The Anglo-Saxon visitors most likely arrived during the period of Langobard patronage, between the late seventh century and the mid-ninth, though it is impossible to narrow this period further with certainty on the basis of the current evidence.[28] The second half of the seventh century is the earliest likely date for their arrival, since the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms only began to be converted to Christianity at the beginning of the seventh century, and given what is known of contemporary Anglo-Saxon Christian travellers to Rome and mainland Europe.[29] It is probable that the visitors arrived before the "Saracen" attack in 869, as this is likely to have made travel to Monte Gargano less appealing; in the 870s the shrine was supposedly "deserta et ruinosa" (abandoned and in

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[26] *Historia Langobardorum*, IV.44 (*MGH SS rer. Lang. 1*: 134-5).

[27] For discussion of date and place of production see Costambeys 2000; McKitterick 2000; McKitterick 2004, 77-82.

[28] Derolez and Schwab 1983, 121-2 "tentatively" suggest a closer dating of 700-750 based on runography and orthography, particularly for "Hereberehct", but there is no concrete evidence which certainly supports this narrower window.

[29] Matthews 2007, 45-50, 61-7.

ruins).[30] Rough chronological limits can also be judged from the use of runic script, since runes disappear from frequent use as an Anglo-Saxon script from the mid-late ninth century.[31] It is less clear how many groups of pilgrims are represented by the Anglo-Saxon names. Three names (one now illegible) appear in close proximity, immediately to the right-hand side of the arched entrance to the long porticus, and therefore prominently visible to the chapel's visitors (Figs 4, 7-9). The highest on the wall is "Wigfus"; immediately underneath is an illegible but unmistakeably runic inscription (Figs 8-10); a little way below both of these is "Herræd," which has been given an inscribed outline (Figs 8, 9, 11).[32] On the same wall, at roughly the same height but a little way to the right, is "Hereberehct" (Figs 8, 12).[33] Further into the shrine proper, "Leofwini" is inscribed in runic letters on the north face of the second block of the arch which connects pillar 11 to pillar 2 (see Fig 7).[34] There is also one more name of potential interest in considering Anglo-Saxon visitors. On the north face of the "rulers' pillar" (11), in roman script and written in Latin, appears the name "Eadrhid Saxso" with the epithet "VH," "vir honestus," an honorific title used in Langobard Italy (Figs 7, 13).[35] Although somewhat garbled, the linguistic form of the name itself suggests that this man was probably an Anglo-Saxon rather than another kind of Saxon, but the context of his visit was probably different from his

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[30] Otranto and Carletti 1990, 87.

[31] Hines 1998, 194; Parsons 1999, 35-6; Parsons 1994. Dating on linguistic grounds also suggests this period, perhaps earlier rather than later: see Derolez and Schwab 1983, 118-25.

[32] Derolez and Schwab 1983, 113-16.

[33] Detailed runological and philological discussion of these inscriptions can be found at Derolez and Schwab 1983, 117-18. See also Arcamone 1981, 111; Arcamone 2007, 132.

[34] Trotta 2012 104, 108-9. Schwab and Derolez 1994 state (incorrectly) that the inscription is on pillar 12, apparently based on the imprecise description in Arcamone 1992.

[35] Carletti 1980, no. 56; Conti 1971, 170; Everett 2003, 268-71.

compatriots: given the other "viri honesti" with Langobard names on the pillar, it is likely that he was connected with the Langobard court.[36] In considering why these texts were written, what their purpose was when those associated with them had returned home, and how they can shed light on perceptions of identity, the differences between the runic and roman inscriptions, and the contexts in which they were likely produced, are significant.

The writing on the wall

The inscriptions at Monte Gargano are remarkable for their survival to the present day, though it is worth remembering that they may not have been so unusual in their broader contemporary context. While textual and pictorial graffiti on walls[37] tend now to be considered a social nuisance (with the possible exception of works by noted street artists), pre-modern graffiti do not seem to have usually been considered in this way by contemporaries.[38] In some pre-modern contexts, writing or drawing on walls seems to have been quite normal: the preservation of graffiti in houses and shops in Pompeii indicates that the practice of writing on the walls of buildings was fairly common in the ancient world and, although the material from Pompeii is clearly exceptional, the survival of graffiti at many ancient sites suggests that it should probably be considered fairly universal.[39] It has been suggested too that early modern people habitually wrote on walls, for example in their own houses, not least because paper was often not easily

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[36] E.g. Carletti 1980, no. 81; Derolez and Schwab 1983, 105-7.

[37] Here I do not consider graffiti or inscriptions on portable objects. Many of the issues are the same, but there are also some significant differences, notably (though not exclusively) in connection with permanence and monumentality. See for example Scott-Warren 2010.

[38] See for example the essays in, and introduction to, Baird and Taylor 2011; see also Fleming 2001; Milnor 2014, 2-3.

[39] Bagnall 2011, 23-4.

available.[40] Graffiti written or inked on to walls, which perhaps became more popular during the sixth and seventh centuries, are more ephemeral than inscriptions and tend not to survive from this period.[41] This is at least partly because of the medium on which they were created: graffiti which might have once been written on (or scratched into) the walls or posts of late antique or early medieval vernacular buildings have perished along with most of the buildings themselves, which are for the most part unlikely to have been made of anything as durable as stone.[42]

While the inscription of early medieval graffiti into surviving monumental stone structures may not have been the only context in which, or means by which, people in the early Middle Ages made and viewed written or pictorial statements on the structures around them, it is clear nonetheless that the texts written on to the walls at Monte Gargano were neither mindless scratching nor want of other surfaces for writing. These texts include inscriptions of individual names, groups of names, names with pious sentiments, pious sentiments without names, and lengthier and more complex texts, such as those which refer to Langobard rulers and which are placed in prominent positions at the shrine.[43] This variety probably arose partly from different contexts of writing: a visit by a party from a Langobard court, for example, whether that of Benevento or the kingdom of Italy, might take on "state" significance, as opposed to visits by smaller groups of pilgrims, and these might be recorded in distinct ways. However, distinguishing between "informal graffiti" versus "formal inscriptions" is difficult and probably

[40] Fleming 2001; Benefiel 2011.

[41] Trout 2009, 172.

[42] An exception to this may be found in the early medieval anthologies from the Arabian peninsula which preserve "what have been called graffiti, verses of poetry etched upon doors or walls of caravanserais, in cities like Baghdad and al-Ahwāz": see Antrim 2012, 26-7.

[43] For the variety of different kinds of graffiti see Carletti 1980; Everett 2003, 265-74.

not helpful in any case, since in Antiquity and the early Middle Ages the boundary between the two, though extant, seems to have been more fluid and flexible.[44] The inscriptions at Monte Gargano were created as part of the broader phenomenon which saw contemporary Christians writing their names on to the walls of religous sites, as for example at some of the Roman catacombs.[45] Whether the simple record of a name or a longer statement or sentiment, these writings should all be seen as texts which were meaningfully created by their authors.[46] This is significant because the production of any sort of text in this kind of public space may have a performative aspect, memorialising the action of writing as an event resulting in visual and material text. Moreover, the material contexts and locations of the inscriptions shape the ways that such texts might be read in the space and setting in which they were created and, unlike writing on more portable objects, these graffiti retain their sense of place even when the authors of the writing are long gone.[47]

More important are the immediate circumstances of writing on walls in determining how that writing should be understood, even if not all aspects of this are easily recoverable, since acts of inscribing or writing on walls relate to their own particular surroundings rather than carrying universal meanings.[48] The precise details of the visits made by different groups of people to Monte Gargano cannot now be identified, though it is likely there was significant variation: some visitors may have been reasonably local, others like "Arricus of Marsica" from further afield, while some, perhaps like "Leo of Bergamo" or the Anglo-Saxon visitors, came from much

[44] Baird and Taylor 2010, 6.

[45] See e.g. Carletti 1986, 2002; Izzi 2014; Yasin 2015.

[46] Williams 1998, 603.

[47] Milnor 2014, 72-3.

[48] Baird and Taylor 2010, 6; and for a range of specific contextual discussions see the essays in the same volume.

further away;[49] some visitors identified themselves as being in religious orders, while others did not;[50] some were male and some female;[51] three people self-identified as "peregrinus";[52] some were clearly of very high status, like the Langobard rulers and the people at their court,[53] and most others were surely less so, though it might be questioned whether very lowly visitors would have been allowed (if there were official guardians), or able, to inscribe their names on the walls. The prominence of Langobard rulers' inscriptions suggests that emulation, and the desire to demonstrate status and prestige, may have contributed to some visitors' desire to write their names on the walls, or to have them written there, though it should be noted that it is impossible to get a clear chronological stratigraphy for most of the names and to know which inscriptions preceded or followed others.

Undoubtedly the major reason (even if not the only one) for visitors to travel to the site was its religious significance, and it is in contemporary theology and spirituality, and through the lens of contemporary exegesis, that the intended power and meanings of the graffiti can be revealed.[54] Here the biblical *Book of Daniel* is particularly important because of its statements about writing and the place which it accords to the archangel Michael. *Daniel* contains what is probably the

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[49] E.g. Carletti 1980, no. 8, "Arricus de Marssic[a]"; no. 163, "Leo de Bergamo."

[50] Carletti 1980, no. 27, "Guinup[ert]," "Petrus p(res)b[iter]," "Ali[pe]rtus"; no. 78, "[P]aulus monahcos" [sic]; no. 100, "Burgu d(omi)ni pre[sby]te[r]"; no. 107, "Pasqualu m(onachus)"; no. 110, "Ioannes pre(sbyter) peccatur"; no. 112, "Aupert p(res)b(y)[ter]"; see also no. 97, "Petru servus dei," "Maurualdu serv[us dei]."

[51] E.g. Carletti 1980, no. 15, "Bereteradi"; no. 34, "Varnedruda viva in d(e)o semp(er)"; no. 65, "Ratemund biba in d(eo) con soa nora Isitruda"; no. 101, "Pertus," "Ramberta."

[52] Carletti 1980, no. 9, "[.]rto[..]ndus peregrinos"; no. 79, "Turo pelegrinus"; no. 160, "Ermefridu pele[grinus]."

[53] The "official" Langobard texts include Carletti 1980, nos. 44, 52, 82.

[54] Dietz 2005, 7, 27, 203-6.

most famous biblical instance of wall-writing in the description of the feast at which Belshazzar, co-regent of Babylon, abused the sacred vessels from the temple of Jerusalem, drinking wine from them and praising artificial gods:[55]

> In the same hour there appeared fingers, as it were of the hand of a man, writing over against the candlestick upon the surface of the wall of the king's palace: and the king beheld the joints of the hand that wrote. ... And the king cried out aloud to bring in the wise men, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spoke, and said to the wise men of Babylon: Whosoever shall read this writing, and shall make known to me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with purple, and shall have a golden chain on his neck, and shall be the third man in my kingdom.[56]

This story was surely known at least to those in religious life in early medieval England, since the works of the biblical prophets were certainly available to several early Anglo-Saxon authors; in the mid eighth century, however, the prophetic books were not available in the mission-field in Hessia and so they were requested by the West Saxon clergyman, Boniface (d.754), from Bishop Daniel of Winchester, whose name itself suggests contemporary devotion to the saint.[57] The account of Belshazzar's feast is also included in the Old English *Daniel*, a poetic rendering

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[55] Dan 5.1-4.

[56] Dan 5.5, 7. "In eadem hora apparuerunt digiti, quasi manus hominis scribentis contra candelabrum in superficie parietis aulae regiae: et rex aspiciebat articulos manus scribentis. ... Exclamavit itaque rex fortiter ut introducerent magos, Chaldaeos, et aruspices. Et proloquens rex ait sapientibus Babylonis: Quicumque legerit scripturam hanc, et interpretationem ejus manifestam mihi fecerit, purpura vestietur, et torquem auream habebit in collo, et tertius in regno meo erit."

[57] *Ep.* 63 (*MGH Epp. Sel.* 1: 128-32); see discussion in Marsden 1995, 1, 12, 41, 45-6. On Old Testament names for early medieval bishops in Britain see Sharpe 2002.

of the *Book of Daniel* composed probably in the eighth or ninth century, though preserved

uniquely in the Exeter Book (Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS 3501), a tenth-century manuscript

containing Old English poems, probably written in south-western England.[58] Before the twelfth

century, the major commentary on *Daniel* available in the west was the work of the fifth-century

scholar Jerome, who noted that the fingers of the hand wrote on the royal palace so that the king

knew that what was written concerned the king himself.[59] In Belshazzar's case this writing was

admonitory and when Daniel interpreted the writing he foretold death and destruction.[60] Even

though in purpose the admonitory inscription is different from texts left by pilgrims on the walls

of holy places, the important point here is that what is written on a building which belongs to

someone is directed at that person. Christians who wrote on the walls of the shrine of the

archangel at Monte Gargano, like those who wrote on the walls of catacombs and churches

elsewhere in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, directed their texts to the owners of those

places, the angels and saints who were present there.

Inscriptions in stone are significant too because of their potential for greater permanence and

monumentality than words written in ink on paper or parchment, primarily by their material

existence on the structures which are their medium (this is, indeed, why we can still read these

texts now). This was noted by ancient and medieval authors, and in Christian thought was often

mentioned in connection with the biblical book of Job since, in his desperation, Job requests that

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[58] Marsden 1995, 52-3. The date and provenance of the Exeter Book are contested: see Conner 1993, 48-94; Gameson 1996.

[59] Jerome, *Commentarii in Danielem,* II.5, l. 78 (*CCSL* 75A): "et scribunt in pariete aulae regiae, ut intellegat rex ad se pertinere quod scribitur."

[60] Dan 5.13-28.

his words be written in a book, or inscribed in lead or in stone, as a way of preserving them.[61]

Inscriptions were not only written, however, but intended to be read: Isidore of Seville (d.636) observed rather functionally in his *Etymologies* that letters were signs without sounds which are able to convey to us silently what is said by those who are absent, thus offering an interpretation of written text as encoded language.[62] He added that letters were invented in order to remember things, so that what is bound by letters does not slide away into oblivion.[63] Gregory the Great (d. 604) noted that reading required dialogue or conversation with the text being read, and although it is clear from the context that he was thinking primarily of Scripture, this describes the exegetical method by which late antique and early medieval Christian writers examined all kinds of texts.[64] Thus when those who are absent speak to the readers via their written texts, those readers need to engage with those texts actively. Indeed, sometimes the texts at Monte Gargano speak directly to the reader and ask for a response, such as the two inscriptions on the "rulers' pillar" which ask that "the one who reads this, pray for me."[65] The lengthier inscriptions connected with the Langobard rulers clearly proclaim their munificence, or indicate the

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[61] Job 19.23-24: "Quis mihi tribuat ut scribantur sermones mei? quis mihi det ut exarentur in libro, Stylo ferreo et plumbi lamina, vel celte sculpantur in silice?"; see e.g. Gregory, *Moralia in Iob*, xiv.62, ll. 8-10 (*CCSL* 143A, 736): "Et notandum quia in plumbo quod scribitur ipsa metalli mollitie citius deletur; in silice uero tardius quidem ualent litterae exprimi sed difficilius deleri."

[62] Isidore, *Etymologiae* I.iii.1 (ed. Lindsay): "Litterae autem sunt indices rerum, signa verborum, quibus tanta vis est, ut nobis dicta absentium sine uoce loquantur"; Parkes 1999, 93.

[63] Isidore, *Etymologiae* I.iii.2 (ed. Lindsay): "Vsus litterarum repertus propter memoriam rerum. Nam ne oblivione fugiant, litteris alligantur."

[64] *Mor. in Job*, iv, praefatio, I (*CCSL* 143: 158); Parkes 1999, 99.

[65] Carletti 1980, no. 77, 79: "qui legis ora pro me," "tu [q]ui l[eg]is ora pro me."

importance of their visits.[66] The act of writing names or other texts should thus be understood as leaving a devotional trace which was deliberately intended to "speak," resulting in a lasting sign from passing visitors who might soon be absent in body, but who continued by the existence of their names to be part of a dialogue, either with future visitors or with the saint at the shrine.

This dialogue between writing and reader fits also into the contemporary context of prayer and the culture of *memoria* which involved collecting the names of living and dead Christians in order to offer prayers for them on a regular basis. Since the early centuries of Christianity, the names of living and dead Christians had been collected, and by the sixth century the names of the departed were read out in Masses; from at least the seventh century religious communities recorded the names of their living and dead members, along with those who had formally associated themselves with the communities, in order to offer prayers for them.[67] These names were collected together into *libri vitae*, "books of life," whose conceptual significance relied on biblical references to the salvation of those who were recorded in books, which were read in the light of Christ's instruction to his disciples in Luke's Gospel to "rejoice because your names are written in heaven."[68] Psalm 68, which was interpreted as referring to the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, asks of the persecutors, "may they be wiped out of the book of the living, and not written with the just";[69] Daniel 12 opens with an apocalyptic prophecy that "at that time Michael will rise up ... and at that time your people will be saved, each one who will be found

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[66] Otranto 1985.

[67] Andrieu 1921, 153; Schmid and Wollasch 1967, 368-9; Keynes 1996, 49-50.

[68] Luke 10.20: "gaudete autem quod nomina vestra scripta sunt in caelis."

[69] Ps 68.29: "Deleantur de libro viventium, et cum justis non scribantur."

written in the book."[70] Drawing on this earlier imagery, books of life appear numerous times in Apocalypse, mostly warning that those who were not found written in the book would not be saved; the work closes by warning that no one should remove anything from the prophecy, or "God will remove his part from the book of life."[71] The concept of the book(s) of life was multifaceted and while there were several ways of understanding its meaning—as a book or books containing the deeds of every soul, for example, or allegorically as the vision of the approaching judgement—it is quite clear from the works of late antique and early medieval writers that a significant interpretation of the book of life mentioned in Scripture was that it held the names of individuals who would be saved and would therefore come to the presence of God. Alongside this can be set a visionary account from the first part of the ninth century which records that a poor woman in Laon was shown a wall in the earthly paradise, inscribed with gold letters: she discovered the name of Bernard, who had been king, shining more brightly than all the rest. In contrast, when she found the name of Louis, it was faint because it had been scratched away; the woman's guide told her that this was because of his murder of Bernard.[72] This represents vividly the importance of the names on the wall, and accords with the warnings that those who are wicked will have their names removed from those of the just, but theological writings too described the significance of names in relation to the salvation of the righteous. In his commentary on Genesis, Bede notes that a mountain "is rightly called Sephar, i.e. book, because it is the book of life, in which all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are enclosed,

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[70] Dan 12.1: "In tempore auteum illo consurget Michael ... et in tempore illo salvabitur populus tuus, omnis qui inventus fuerit scriptus in libro."

[71] Rev 22.19: "auferet Deus partem eius de libro vitae." See also Apoc 3.5; 13.8; 17.8; 20.12, 15; 21.27.

[72] Houben 1976, 42; see also Dutton 1994, 67-80.

and in which are written the names of all the elect";[73] around a century later, Agobard (d.840), Bishop of Lyon, stated confidently that "certainly the names of the just are written in the book of life."[74] Inscriptions of names on the walls of a significant religious shrine will, at least for some readers or writers, have brought to mind the soteriological significance of names in the judgement of the elect as described in contemporary theological works such as these, suggesting in turn that the inscriptions of names should be read in the context of the conceptual *liber vitae*.

The perceived significance of the contemporary remembrance of names is evident too in the requests which show clergy and others actively seeking to be included in the books of religious communities, as well as in the lists of names which survive from this period. In the prologue to his prose *Life of Cuthbert*, written for the monks of Lindisfarne in the early eighth century, Bede asked the Lindisfarne community to remember him in their Masses and also to inscribe his name in their book.[75] In about 750, the West Saxon missionary Boniface made an agreement with Optatus, abbot of Montecassino (Lazio), to exhange the names of the living and the dead members of their communities.[76] In the late ninth century, the names of a group of travellers from England were included in the list of names kept by a religious community at Brescia.[77]

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[73] Bede, *In Genesim*, III, 10.30, ll. 298-301 (*CCSL* 118A: 150): "Recte etiam sephar, id est "liber," cognominatur; ipse est enim liber uitae, in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae absconditi, in quo electorum omnium nomina conscripta."

[74] Agobard, *De spe et timore*, ll. 886-7 (*CCCM* 52: 452): "Certe iustorum tantummodo nomina scripta dicuntur in libro uite."

[75] Bede, *Vita S. Cuthberti prosa*, Prologue (ed. Colgrave, 146).

[76] *Ep.* 106 (*MGH Epp. Sel.* 1: 231-2); Schmid 1978, vol. 1, 114.Schmid 1978, vol. 1, 114.Schmid 1978, vol. 1, 114.Schmid 1978, vol. 1, 114.Schmid 1978, vol. 1, 114.Schmid 1978, vol. 1, 114.Schmid 1978, vol. 1, 114.

[77] Keynes 1997.

These kinds of requests and arrangements are found across Europe throughout the early Middle Ages and highlight the value attached to personal remembrance, and especially of remembering individuals by name. By using individuals' names, personal commemoration could be offered alongside the more general remembrance of those who were associated with religious communities or incorporated into their books. One of the masses composed by Alcuin (d.804), a scholar from York recruited to the court of Charlemagne, asks for the health of those whose names are read before the altar, and for refreshment to be granted to those souls.[78] Names inscribed into the walls of religious sites can be understood as part of this culture of praying for individuals, and can be likened also to stones inscribed with names from Northumbria.[79] Interestingly, these show unique parallels with inscribed grave-markers at the monastery of S. Vincenzo al Volturno (Molise), which lies between Rome and Monte Gargano, and it has been suggested that Italian inspiration may lie behind the Northumbrian name stones.[80] At least some of the Northumbrian monuments should probably be understood as memorial stones rather than grave-markers specifically:[81] several of them are quite small, and they usually have one or two names on them. Sometimes the same name appears twice in different scripts, as for example the Lindisfarne stone which records "Osgyth" in both roman and runic letters, dating probably from the mid seventh to mid eighth century.[82] They have been likened to a kind of *liber vitae* in stone, the assumption being that they were intended to prompt prayer and remembrance of the named

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[78] *Missa pro salute uiuorum et mortuorum* (ed. Deshusses, 27-8).

[79] The most extensive recent discussion of these is Maddern 2013.

[80] Mitchell 2001, 170-3.

[81] Okasha 2004; cf. Maddern 2013, 31-50.

[82] Lindisfarne 24: Cramp 1984, vol. 1, 202-3, vol. 2, pl. 200, no. 1119.

individual.[83] The names recorded on the walls at Monte Gargano can likewise be understood in this way, with their presence at the shrine intended to prompt prayers for those named individuals.

The endurance of the names inscribed into the walls must also be considered in terms of the real and lasting presence of those individuals at the shrine. In addition to the material existence of the names on the walls, it is here important to understand the significance of the reading out of lists of the living and the dead in the context of *memoria*. This meant much more than simply vocalising names, and more even than remembering and offering prayers for those who were on the roll-call: it has been suggested that the individuals whose names were read out were then present in some way, and that to name a particular person was to make him present.[84] This idea has been developed particularly by Otto Oexle, especially with regard to the dead: Oexle argues that the dead could be made present by being named.[85] Some early medieval texts suggest that this was true also of the naming or calling to mind of the living, via a concept of spiritual presence. Alcuin wrote to commend a boy to a priest, saying that although the priest was unknown to him in bodily presence, he had knowledge of his spiritual presence; he went on to assure the priest that "you are always present with us, spiritually, in our prayers," despite the physical distance between Alcuin and his correspondent.[86] Similar sentiments are found from a number of other late antique and early medieval authors, who note the spiritual reality of the presence of someone who was bodily absent, or sometimes emphasize the power of prayer in a

[83] Karkov 1999; Ó Carragáin 2005, 41-2.

[84] Oexle 1985, 81-5.

[85] Oexle 1983; Oexle 1984; Oexle 1985; Geuenich and Oexle 1994.

[86] *Ep.* 274 (*MGH Epp.* 4: 432). Alcuin makes similar statements in a number of letters, e.g. *Epp.* 168, 215, 250, 272 (*MGH Epp.* 4: 176-7, 359, 404-6, 430-1).

specific place, via spiritual presence, even when the person who prayed was elsewhere.[87] Gregory the Great wrote to Eulogius about the baptism of ten thousand people in the English kingdoms in Britain, telling Eulogius that his prayers were present in a place at the edge of the world even though he was not bodily there himself.[88] Those whose names were inscribed at the shrine might thus have a spiritual presence there; and since reading often meant reading aloud in this period, those who engaged in dialogue with previous pilgrims by reading their names might make them present by speaking their names when reading them from the walls.[89] This is significant in considering contemporary responses to graffiti and the meanings which it might have conveyed to those who saw and read it, or have been intended to convey by those who wrote it (or had it written on their or others' behalf). Thus "reading" and "looking at" graffiti should be conceptualised as two different actions, especially since the process of reading a text normally involved vocalising it, and this is important because it suggests that reading inscriptions—whether names or lengthier texts—might be a performative act.[90] At Monte Gargano, this would have the effect of uniting the reader and the owner of the name as members of a disparate and diasporic Christian community dedicated to the Archangel Michael, a saint who was significant across "national" boundaries in late antique and early medieval Europe.[91]

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[87] Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 44.6 (*CSEL* 29-30: 376-7); Augustine, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, 106.2 (*CCSL* 36); see also Abram 1994, 76, 161; Shepardson 2014, 125.

[88] *Ep.* 8.29, ll. 31-7 (*CCSL* 140A: 551-2). See also Choy 2012, 10-11.

[89] See the essays in Chartier and Cavallo 1999; Milnor 2014, 72-3. The Latin and Old English words for reading ("lego" and "rædan" respectively) clearly mean "to recite" or "to read aloud" as often as they mean "to read" in the sense of interpretation of written letters: *LS* 1047-8, def. II.2, II.2b; Bosworth and Toller 1964, 782, def. VI a, b.

[90] Fleming 2001, 51-60.

[91] Sowerby 2016, 178-80.

Just as the names of the living and the dead, the present and the absent, were written into the physical *libri vitae* of monastic communities, the walls of religious sites might receive the names not only of visitors themselves, but also of those known to them. This is suggested by the account of a late sixth-century writer known as the "Piacenza Pilgrim," who recorded that, during a visit to the Holy Land, he wrote the names of his parents while reclining on the couch at the place where the Lord attended the wedding at Cana.[92] It is impossible now to know which of the names at Monte Gargano belong to visitors and which (if any) belong to people known to visitors, but it is certainly possible that some pilgrims might have wished to inscribe others' names at the site, so that their friends or relatives could be present there spiritually if not bodily. Moreover, it is clear that the contemporary sense of spiritual presence relates not only to people but also to places, and this is important in understanding the effects of the names of pilgrims once those visitors had returned home.[93] In his treatise on the soul, written for Gundrada (Charlemagne's granddaughter) probably in the closing years of his life, Alcuin discusses how places can be made present to the soul, recalled via their names to memory. Using the example of Rome (as a far away place), Alcuin notes that someone who has seen Rome can recall it, forming an image in his mind, so that he sees it as it actually is when he hears the name of Rome mentioned, or when he recalls it to mind; while he thinks about it, "the one thing that I think about is present to me in the soul."[94] This is instructive in terms of thinking about relationships

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[92] "Antonini placentini itinerarium," 4 (*CSEL* 39: 161, ll. 7-9): "Deinde milia tria uenimus in Cana, ubi ad nuptias fuit Dominus, et accumsimus in ipso accubitu, ubi ego indignus nomina parentum meorum scripsi ..."

[93] See also Choy 2012, 10-11; Ousterhout 1990, 119.

[94] Alcuin, *De ratione animae*, VII-VIII (*PL* 101: 639-50, at 642): "Sicut enim qui Romam vidit, Romam enim fingit in animo suo, et format qualis sit. Et dum nomen audierit vel rememorat Romae, statim recurrit animus illius ad

across distances, between different people, and between people and places, and informative in understanding the significance of graffiti left by visitors. Those who had visited Monte Gargano and had returned from their journey could form an image of it in their minds, so that it would be spiritually present to them; if their names, or those of their absent relatives remained inscribed on the wall at the shrine, perhaps they would also remain spiritually present there.

Finally, it is important to remember that not everyone who visited the shrine would have been able to read the names in the same way. It is widely accepted that there was a spectrum of pre-modern literacy, rather than a simple division between people who could read and write, and people who couldn't.[95] Probably some of those who visited the shrine at Monte Gargano were completely illiterate, while others were fully literate so that they could both read and compose complex texts; presumably there were still others who could identify the letters of the alphabet or who could read their own names, or perhaps also a little more, even if they could not read fluent sentences in Latin or in their own vernacular. Here the range of meanings encompassed by the Latin and Old English words for reading are significant, because they give the impression of decoding, as suggested also by the comments of Isidore, mentioned above. The Latin word, *lego*, means not only "to read" but also "to pick out," and while it can mean simply "to see" or "to catch sight of" its sense is more usually that of deliberate identification and consideration.[96] The original sense of the root-word that became Old English *rædan* seems to have meant "to give advice or counsel," or "to explain something obscure," and it came by extension in Old English

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memoriam, ubi conditam habet formam illius, et ibi recognoscit [eam ad memoriam], ubi recondidit illam"; "hoc unum mihi tunc praesens est in anima." See also Szarmach 1999, 397-8.

[95] MacDonald 2005; see also the essays in McKitterick 1990.

[96] *LS* 1047-8.

(as also in Old Norse) to mean simply "to read (ordinary, rather than obscure, writing)."[97] Root-meanings can easily lose their signifance over the passage of time and it should not be assumed without good reason that they retain those meanings over centuries. However, there is evidence suggesting that Old English *rædan* retained its earlier meaning in some contexts: Ælfric (d. 1009/1010) describes the Jews challenging Christ to "read," in the sense of work out, who was touching him, while one of the riddles in the tenth-century Exeter Book challenges the reader to "read what I mean."[98] Perhaps some of those who read the inscriptions at the shrine of Monte Gargano might therefore be understood as puzzling them out, or carefully identifying their devotional and other meanings.

The presence of writing on walls in public spaces or on monumental structures like churches and shrines is one way in which people in semi-literate societies—even those who could not read or write—might engage with the written word and with some of its range of meanings. At Monte Gargano, presumably even illiterate visitors could ask what the letters meant, and for their own names to be inscribed there among the others if the meaning of such an act seemed important to them. The dedication of the shrine to the Archangel Michael may have made such an act all the more important since he left no corporeal relics: Michael was held to have left his footprints in the rock, but his body was not there to touch. This meant that the shrine itself became the physical focus, to the point that pieces of stone were taken away as relics. The most famous instance of this was in the context of the foundation of Mont-Saint-Michel in Normandy, another elevated site devoted to Michael which was set up consciously in parallel to Monte Gargano. The

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[97] Howe 1993, 61; Bosworth and Toller 1964, 782.

[98] Howe 1993, 64; Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies* II.14 (ed. Godden, 141, l. 119): "heton hine rædan. hwa hine hreopode"; Riddle 61, l. 9 (ed. Krapp and Dobbie, 229): "ræd hwæt ic mæne."

mid-ninth-century foundation legend records that Michael appeared to Bishop Aubert of Avranches, instructing him to send brothers to Monte Gargano to bring back "pignora": they returned with a piece of the stone in which Michael's footprints were imprinted.[99] In this context it is worth considering too whether the dust generated by inscribing names might also have been collected and taken home as a sort of relic.[100] The foundation legends associated with Monte Gargano make it clear that Michael was understood to be genuinely, if incorporeally, present at the site. The miracles of saints at their shrines and, for human saints, at their tombs or where their relics were, was discussed by a number of late antique and early medieval theologians, some of whom puzzled over the relationship between earth and heaven in this context: Augustine of Hippo (d.430), for example, wondered whether the saints could be both in heaven and also simultaneously present at their tombs, while Alcuin noted that Bishop Willibrord was spiritually present where his body rested.[101] Perhaps it was reasonably straightforward to conceptualise Michael, an invisible and incorporeal angel, existing simultaneously in his shrine at Monte Gargano and also undertaking the range of various tasks which conventional angelology ascribed to him, such as leading the souls of the dead to heaven, and attending on God.[102] In any case, the idea and acceptance of multiple presences is an important part of the conceptual underpinning of the cult of saints, and perhaps also informed the ways in which people thought about their own spiritual presences beyond their physical existence in one place.

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[99] *De apparitione S. Michaelis*, III (*PL* 96: 1389-94, at 1392D-1393B); for discussion of the text and Bishop Aubert, see Smith 2003; Simonnet 1999; see also Peers 1996, 104-7.

[100] I am grateful to Prof. Sarah Semple for this suggestion.

[101] Augustine, *De cura mortuis*, xvi.20 (*CSEL* 28: 653, l. 18 - 654, l. 12); *Vita Willibrordi*, 30 (*MGH, SS rer. Merov.* 7: 137, ll. 16-22); see also Brown 1981, 4; and Foxhall Forbes 2013, 314-15.

[102] Keck 1998, 38-9, 44-5, 63, 168-71, 179-83, 205-6.

There can have been no single common experience of Monte Gargano: people come to shrines with their own thoughts and beliefs and, as a number of medieval writers noted in one form or another, pilgrimage involves a state of mind at least as much as it involves a physical journey. By setting these graffiti in the context of contemporary theological discussion and religious belief, I have tried to bring to life the multiple experiences of some of those who visited the shrine, and to flesh out some of the ways that contemporary visitors—especially from Britain—might have thought about the graffiti, whether as readers or inscribers or commissioners of inscriptions. The range of meanings suggested here may not all have applied for all people: there were clergy and laity, men and women; educational background cannot have been uniform, and, if the linguistic variation in the names is any guide at all to the range of cultures at the site, it seems likely that different cultural constructions may also have played a role in the range of experiences at the shrine. In this context, the cluster of Anglo-Saxon names in particular also offers the opportunity to consider another aspect of the pilgrim experience at the shrine: those who brought themselves far away from their homelands in search of God encountered different languages, cultures, landscapes and practices. At first sight, a handful of names does not seem a particularly large (or promising) body of evidence from which to draw out information about identity and belonging, but in fact it is possible to tease out aspects of these by considering the occurrence of the Anglo-Saxon names in their specific situational contexts, since they offer glimpses of the lengthier processes which shape the ways that people relate to the world around them.

Identity and belonging

Ethnicity in the past has been extensively examined by modern scholars, though the more specific concept of identity as distinct from ethnicity has received less problematisation by

specialists of late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. It is clear that, much of the time, people in past societies were not particularly concerned with the explicit classification of ethnicity, at least in the terms that modern scholars have sometimes used to examine these issues.[103] It seems that in this period writers of narrative histories, for example, used identifying ethnic labels primarily, or perhaps only, in the description of interactions or situations where the relational differences that made up ethnicity were perceived to be especially significant.[104] One important reason for this, as a number of scholars have noted, is that both ethnicities—which may form a part of constructed identities—and also identities themselves are subjective, situational and multilayered, so that the aspect or layer of the ethnicity or identity which is particularly important in any given interaction is dependent on the precise circumstances of that situation.[105] Identities are performed by individuals and groups rather than existing in an unchanging "ideal" form, and are constructed as ways of categorising the world: identities are shaped by (real or perceived) difference, depending on and drawing meaning from those differences—that is, what they are not—to assert what they are.[106] The performance of identity depends on context, since this determines the categorisations and the layers which are most relevant in the performance of identity in any given situation. To examine identity and ethnicity in the past it is therefore especially important to consider situations which prompted people to evaluate or re-evaluate the ways in which they related to, or were distinguished from, other social groups.

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[103] The bibliography on this subject is vast. For studies of ethnicity see, for example, Geary 1983; Amory 1997, 13-42; Halsall 2007, 35-62, 455-498; Heather 2008; Martin 2014; and the essays in Pohl and Reimitz 1998; and Gillett 2002; Bartlett 2001. The best discussion of identity I have found to-date is Halsall 2017.

[104] Geary 1983, 21-5.

[105] Halsall 2007, 38-45.

[106] Halsall 2017, 189-91.

The significance of the Anglo-Saxon names in this regard, therefore, is not the names *per se* but their occurrence at a southern Italian shrine under Langobard control where people from a number of different kinds of social groups came together; that is, in a context which would prompt interactions that might compel people to define or consider their identity in ways which, ordinarily, they might not. The Anglo-Saxon names are only a few among the many inscribed at the chapel which probably represent Christians from a number of different geographical areas and societies, who presumably spoke a range of different languages (with varying degrees of bi- or multilingualism), and who likely considered themselves to belong to a range of social groups. The experiences at the shrine may well have prompted visitors to consider or define the relational differences which, in the context of pilgrimage to a Christian holy place, placed some people in certain groups rather than others. While certain shared traits could connect some pilgrims to others at Monte Gargano—such as a devotion to Christianity or to Michael, or perhaps clerical status, or an ability to speak Latin—other characteristics may have differentiated them—such as their native vernacular, or physical appearance, or particular religious customs. Here it is also significant that aspects of identity and ethnicity can be highlighted or perceived both from within (the emic perspective) and from without (the etic perspective). That is, an individual can perceive or identify him- or herself as sharing characteristics which place him/her as part of a member of one social group as opposed to another; or, that individual can be identified or perceived by another or by others as belonging to a particular social group.[107] The key point here is that the layers that make up identity, or ethnicity as a sub-set of identity, are not fixed in importance or relevance and, as a result, the identity and ethnicity of an individual is likewise not immutable. Indeed, Guy Halsall argues that "agents do not actually *possess*

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[107] Safran 2014, 4-5.

identities as finite objects"; he suggests instead that where a person chooses to deploy an identity in a social context, it should be seen not as something where the value is fixed, but more like a "wager" which is dependent on the other parties to that interaction accepting that deployment and responding as expected in return.[108]

In looking at isolated names we see only hints of a series of complex social interactions, but it is perhaps possible to discern aspects of the conscious use of a particular identity in the labelling of "Eadrhid Saxso," one "vir honestus" among several recorded on the faces of pillar 11, and probably all connected with the late-seventh-century Langobard court. In this period, the label "Saxso" might theoretically refer either to an "Old Saxon" from Saxony, or to an English-speaker from Britain, an Anglo-Saxon (though the first use of that term probably postdates the recording of these names).[109] As noted already, however, linguistic study suggests that name was that of an English-speaker rather than an Old Saxon. Ute Schwab and René Derolez argue that the name has been garbled somewhat in transmission but must have been an Anglo-Saxon name, perhaps originally "Eadred" or "Eadfrið," and they suggest that this person may have been part of the retinue of the queen of King Cunincpert (r.688-700), identified by Paul the Deacon as "Hermelinda," *ex Saxonum Anglorum genere*.[110] The specific origin of "Hermelinda" is difficult to identify but she might have come from Kent, where Cunincpert's father, Perctarit, had fled in 671; several members of the ruling dynasty of Kent in the late seventh century had names with the first element "Eormen-," such as "Eormenhild," which might have been mangled as

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[108] Halsall 2018.

[109] Magennis 2011, 34-5.

[110] *Historia Langobardorum* 5:37 (*MGH SS rer. Lang.* 1: 157); Derolez and Schwab 1983, 105-7; Schwab and Derolez 1994, 19.

"Hermelinda."[111] If the person represented by the name "Eadrhid" was indeed a Saxon from Britain who was a member of the late seventh-century Langobard court, it seems likely that the label "Saxso" originated in that context, perhaps as a nickname or byname applied by those at the Beneventan court who perceived an aspect of the identity of this "Eadrhid" to be his origin or status as a Saxon among Langobards.

What is striking, however, is the retention of this appellation here, especially alongside the inscriptions associated with the Langobard rulers. Importantly, it seems that many individuals whose names were recorded at the shrine did not inscribe their names themselves, instead employing someone else to make the inscription for them.[112] Sometimes this may have been connected with literacy, although those who had sufficient financial means may have employed craftsmen to produce a more skilled carving. Two inscribers are named in the inscriptions at Monte Gargano, in both cases (probably) for high-status individuals: "Sabilo," who appears following five (linguistically) Germanic names on the north face of pillar 11, possibly representing individuals connected with the Langobard court;[113] and "Gaidemari," who made an inscription for Romuald I on the west face of pillar 11, and who appears as the fourth of a list of "viri honesti" on the same face of the pillar, which he seemingly also carved.[114] It is therefore possible that the name of "Eadrhid" may have been carved by a professional craftsman (perhaps "Gaidemari" since his name features in the list with "Eadrhid"). This might account for the odd spelling, if the inscriber were not familiar with Old English orthography, though it should be

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[111] *Historia Langobardorum*, 5.32-3 (*MGH SS rer. Lang.* 1: 154-5); Derolez and Schwab 1983, 105-7; Kirby 1991, 36; Balzaretti 2008, 15-16.

[112] Everett 2003, 271.

[113] Carletti 1980, no. 72.

[114] Carletti 1980, nos. 81-2.

noted that spelling was hardly consistent in this period in any case and a number of the inscriptions contain oddities (including "Saxso" rather than "Saxo").[115] Much more importantly, envisaging an inscriber also suggests either that at the time of commissioning the inscriber was instructed (by "Eadrhid"? by someone else?) to include the byname "Saxso," or, if the inscriber formed part of the Langobard court, that he knew the byname and felt it appropriate to include it. Whoever carved the name, it is impossible now to discern whether the inclusion of "Saxso" was conscious, as a deliberate way of drawing attention to ethnicity, or unconscious, if perhaps the original connotations had ceased to be particularly significant and it was by then just considered part of this man's name. It is also impossible to know whether the label is emic or etic, that is, whether "Eadrhid" himself used the name as a way of expressing or performing this aspect of his identity, or whether it was used by others to call attention to difference. But, even with these uncertainties, the use of this byname is significant: in a sense the addition of "Saxso" is redundant in any case given that the name "Eadrhid" is foreign in the context of the Beneventan court and at the shrine of Monte Gargano. While the inclusion of the honorific "vir honestus" emphasises the status which "Eadrhid" shared with others at the Langobard court, the addition of the byname emphasises difference over similarity, linking "Eadrhid" with a remote or foreign group, and perhaps with Queen "Hermelinda," in opposition to those who might in some contexts identify themselves as "Langobard." The inscription of the name of "Eadrhid" at Monte Gargano captures only one moment in a much longer story and, in so doing, allows just a glimpse at a more complex series of interactions in which (ethnic) identity was performed and perceived, and in which the geographical or ethnic origin of a person could become part of the

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[115] See e.g. Carletti 1980, no. 73, which is damaged but shows two instances of metathesis: "s[ancti] arhc[ang]eli Mihc[aelis]"; see also no. 78.

regular perceived and/or performed expression of who that person was, the wager which was deployed with a particular expected response.

In contrast, the Anglo-Saxon names in runic letters offer a different context for, and means of, understanding the performance or expression of ethnic identity. As noted already, it is not clear whether the Anglo-Saxons whose names are recorded in runes were part of one group or several, although since the names appear in two quite different places (on the entrance to the long gallery, and further into the shrine), it seems likely that at least two different groups should be envisaged. The immediate material context of the Leofwini inscription, close to other Langobard names and further into the shrine, is clearly different from the runic names at the entrance to the porticus.[116] These latter seem to have been inscribed by at least three individuals, to judge from the carving, and it is certainly possible that they were added at different times: the visibility of an Anglo-Saxon name (or more than one) in runic script might have attracted later visitors to add their names nearby. The choice of runes, rather than roman script, is itself significant and, I suggest, should be seen as a means of expressing ethnicity and identity, a performance of ethnic difference within a community of shared religious belief. These names are the only ones inscribed in non-roman script, in contrast to other contemporary graffiti such as those in Roman catacombs, where multiple scripts appear: names are written in Greek letters as well as in roman script, and Anglo-Saxon visitors wrote in both roman and runic alphabets.[117] At Monte Gargano, however, even the limited number of linguistically Greek names which have been identified at the site are written in roman, rather than Greek letters. One plausible reason for this is that names

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[116] Schwab and Derolez 1994, 19; Arcamone 1992, 409-10; Arcamone 2007, 133-4. Arcamone argues that "Leofwini" may be earlier than the others, but it is impossible to be certain.

[117] See Carletti 2002; Izzi 2010, Izzi 2014.

which the editors of the graffiti describe as linguistically "Greek" may by this point have been adopted into Latin or Romance linguistic repertoire. Alternative explanations might be that the few pilgrims with Greek names asked a Latin-literate inscriber to make a carving on their behalf; or that some of those with Greek names were part of Latin-speaking communities since Byzantine influence in northern Puglia seems to have been relatively limited; or that this reflects local conventions of literacy (especially since the mixing of languages and scripts is hardly unknown in this period).[118] Whatever the reason, the result is that the runic names are immediately visible as strikingly different from the others since they are the only names at the shrine which do not appear in roman script.

During the period from the seventh century to the mid-ninth, Anglo-Saxon literate culture employed both roman and runic script in a variety of different ways. Some English-speaking areas do seem to have employed runes more than others (though it is impossible to determine precise regional origins of the Anglo-Saxon visitors to Monte Gargano); the one context where the use of runes seems to have been restricted was in manuscripts, where roman script held pre-eminence.[119] For the most part, however, in this period the choice of runic or roman letters—or even a mixture of the two—seems to have been down to the individual.[120] Runes and roman script appear together on coins and on memorial stones; they also occur together on eighth-century objects such as the Ruthwell Cross and Franks Casket, and in this latter case runes are used for Latin as well as for Old English, suggesting that in some contexts the choice of a script

[118] See e.g. Carletti 1980, nos 18, 127: "Basilius"; "Leoncio"; Safran 2014, 6-7, 38-41, 55-7.

[119] Page 1999, 15; Metcalf 1998, 436-8. Tilghman 2011, 93-4 notes that the use of manuscript runes in particular was "conspicuous and self-conscious."

[120] This is attested also by the appearance of both runic and roman inscriptions by Anglo-Saxon visitors to Roman catacombs: for an excellent analysis of some of these, see Izzi 2014.

may not have been dictated by the language it encoded.[121] It is also clear that there was no status implication attached to either runic or roman script in the context of inscriptions: for example, in the early Christian Northumbrian use of runes, both monastic and secular, there seems to be no distinction in status at all.[122] The use of runes for the monumental inscription of Old English poetry on the Ruthwell Cross (Dumfries and Galloway) demonstrates clearly that runic just as much as roman script could be used for high-status, devotional texts. Clearly both scripts were possible choices for many different types of writing: the use of runic script at Monte Gargano should be seen in this way, as a choice, whether deliberate or unconscious.

Consideration of how the names were transformed from their forms as spoken by the pilgrims to the forms written on the walls of the shrine is also instructive. Some of those who employed a professional inscriber may have done so because they were not literate, but this cannot straightforwardly be the case for the names in runic script.[123] It has been suggested that one or more of the Anglo-Saxon visitors might have written names on something ephemeral (like a stick) for an inscriber to copy, if they did not write their names for themselves.[124] However, the use of runic script indicates that one or more of the pilgrims was at least literate enough to write names since these names cannot simply have been written in runes from the form spoken to an inscriber (unless one assumes the extremely unlikely circumstance that the "house" inscribers were familiar with runes). The carvings are significantly different from one another to suggest

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[121] Parsons 1999, 23, 25, 35-6, 76. It should be noted that on Franks Casket it is theoretically possible that some of the Latin in runes could be accidental rather than deliberate, but it is difficult to be certain either way.

[122] Fell 1994, 130.

[123] It is difficult to determine this from the inscriptions themselves; it seems overwhelmingly likely, however, that not all who visited were literate, as noted by Everett 2003, 271.

[124] Derolez and Schwab 1983, 107, 119.

that at least four people were responsible for the five names (including the illegible one), and none of the carvings suggests an inscriber unfamiliar with the letter forms: one of the names ("Hereberehct"; Fig. 12) has a triple bind rune, for example. It seems likely, therefore, that the names were carved by one or more of the Anglo-Saxon visitors themselves. Given the close relationship between literacy and the Church in this period, and since the people most likely to travel to a shrine like Monte Gargano, presumably via Rome, were probably connected with the Church and likely to be monks or clerics, it is not surprising that at least some of the Anglo-Saxon visitors should have been literate to some degree (at any rate, literate enough to write names). This also suggests, however, that the use of runes should not simply be considered as the only writing option available to these pilgrims, since it is more than probable that such visitors knew roman script as well.[125]

Taken together, these points suggest strongly that the choice of runes was both deliberate and significant, and should not simply be understood as an automatic rendering of spoken words into written form without thought for the way that those names were presented. The use of runic script in this context might, then, be considered both as a performance of identity, and simultaneously a wager on a shared acceptance of what it might to be English. As performative statements, these runic names challenge the reader to participate in that shared understanding, and also categorise people as "insiders" or "outsiders" according to their responses. As "insiders," subsequent pilgrims from early medieval English kingdoms would presumably recognise the runic script as familiar and, in a southern Italian context, distinctive, even if they were illiterate and unable to read the names recorded in that script. At the same time, visitors

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[125] David N. Parsons argues that reform of the runic alphabet (*futhorc*) and dissemination of the runic standards were led by monastic foundations, probably in parallel with the dissemination of roman script: see 1999, 11, 91-3, 113.

from elsewhere would become "outsiders," if they could not read the runic letters. In the Old English *Daniel*, those who are called to explain the writing on the wall at Belshazzar's feast are identified as "runcræftig," a *hapax legomenon* which should mean something like "skilled in letters, runes, mysteries."[126] Although the pilgrims clearly were not literally writing in code, the effect for contemporary Langobards or others might have been similar. This is particularly interesting since, just as "Eadrhid" did not need "Saxso" added to his name to mark him out as different, these Anglo-Saxon names are already distinctive in the southern Italian context without the use of runic script. For literate "outsiders," Anglo-Saxon names might look "foreign" even if written in roman letters, but the runes are visually performative, so that all visitors, literate or illiterate, are challenged to accept the wager, and to identify themselves as similar or different. The placement of four of the names ("Hereberehct," "Herræd," "Wigfus" and the one now illegible; Figs. 4, 8) at the entrance to the porticus is also striking since they are highly visible and yet many, perhaps most, pilgrims probably could not read them. This suggests that for those who wrote the runic Anglo-Saxon names, at least, the presence of the names at the shrine, and the identity which they embodied, may have been more important than the number of people who could "decode" them. This does not negate the significance of the reading aloud of names when that happened; it does, however, highlight that the situation in which visitors found themselves was one in which identities could be constructed, performed, challenged. All (presumably) of those who visited the chapel as pilgrims shared in their identifications as Christians, or the devotees of Michael, and would recognise the inscription of names as a devout practice; and yet at the same time, the runic names are either foreign or familiar depending on

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[126] *Daniel*, ll. 733-6 (ed. Krapp, 131): "Ne mihton arædan runcræftige men, engles ærendbec, æðelinga cyn, oðþæt Daniel com, drihtne gecoren, snotor and soðfæst, in þæt seld gangan."

who is reading them and, as such, constitute an expression or performance of ethnic identity. While it remains impossible to recover all the social interactions which surrounded the inscription of these names on the wall, unpacking the choices that were made by the inscribers and the contexts in which those choices were made allows a glimpse into the ways in which early medieval pilgrims may have negotiated the situations in which they found themselves, far away from home and where some of the relational differences between themselves and other Christians are likely to have been striking.

Conclusion

In the late nineteenth century an English woman named Janet Ross visited the shrine at Monte Gargano. As she copied down some of the inscriptions into her notebook, one of the canons guessed her nationality, because "the English are always copying old things other people don't look at."[127] She observed pilgrims scratching the outlines of their hands or feet on the walls and steps of the shrine, though she could not ascertain exactly why this was done, since she was told only that this was "for devotion" ("per devozione"); someone offered to inscribe the outline of her foot for her, but said that "it will not be so good for the soul of the Signora as if she did it herself."[128] A tremendous gap of time separates her visit from the visit(s) of the Anglo-Saxon pilgrims, and for the most part their experiences must have been quite different, but there are perhaps some similarities too. Presumably, like Janet Ross, early medieval English visitors to the shrine were at some point recognised as "foreign," and also observed some differences between themselves and the other pilgrims. Far away from home, as strangers in a strange land,[129]

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[127] Ross 1889, 312.

[128] Ross 1889, 311.

[129] Exod 2.22.

travellers from early medieval Britain performed their shared identity as part of a Christian community devoted to the Archangel Michael by inscribing their names on the wall, even as they signalled their differences from other pilgrims by choosing to use runic script. Those in religious life—and especially those learned in theology—will have read the inscribed names and interpreted the significance of the writing on the wall at the shrine in relation to contemporary spirituality, devotional practices and religious thought. Whether Anglo-Saxon visitors drew precisely the same conclusions about the meaning and value of inscribing names on the walls of the shrine as did their Langobard or other contemporaries is impossible to say, though it seems likely that there will have been some individuals who shared similar views. Visitors to the shrine in this period will all have had different experiences to varying degrees, and there was surely no one Anglo-Saxon experience either. Since the Anglo-Saxon names are the sole enduring memorial of the presence of early medieval English visitors at the archangel's shrine, the motivations and interpretations of these pilgrims can only be extrapolated from other contemporary evidence, set into the specific contexts in which they found themselves in southern Italy. But, by so doing, it is perhaps possible—if only for a moment—to glimpse the experience, and the inscriptions, through the eyes of those early medieval visitors to Monte Sant'Angelo sul Gargano.

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