

2015

### Moveable Feasts: Processions as Multimedia Performance in Le Puy-en-Velay

Elisa A. Foster  
*Texas Christian University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal>



Part of the Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque Art and Architecture Commons

---

#### Recommended Citation

Foster, Elisa A.. "Moveable Feasts: Processions as Multimedia Performance in Le Puy-en-Velay." *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 5, 1 (2015): 37-67. <https://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal/vol5/iss1/2>

This Feature Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Art History at Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* by an authorized editor of Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact [noltj@kenyon.edu](mailto:noltj@kenyon.edu).



## ***Moveable Feasts: Processions as Multimedia Performance in Le Puy-en-Velay***

**By Elisa A. Foster, Texas Christian University**

Perched atop a volcanic outcrop on Mount Anis in the Auvergne region of central France, the stunning town of Le Puy-en-Velay has

been considered a sacred place since the Roman era. **(Figure 1)** Despite its remote hilltop location, Le Puy-en-Velay played an important role in French ecclesiastical history



**Figure 1** Le Puy-en-Velay Panorama. Photo: Licensed under CC BY-SA 1.0 via Wikimedia Commons

throughout the medieval and Early Modern periods. A Christian sanctuary has been present at the site since the fifth century, and pilgrimages to Le Puy have been documented from at least the late tenth century.<sup>1</sup> Le Puy was also home to important

<sup>1</sup> Pierre-Roger Gaussin, "La ville du Puy-en-Velay et ses pèlerinages," *Revue de géographie de Lyon* 26/ 3: 243 – 271. For history of Le Puy, see Jean-Arnaud-Michel Arnaud, *Histoire de Velay jusqu'à la fin du règne de Louis XV* (La Couche, 1816); Claude de Vic, J. Vaissete, Édouard Dulaurier, Ernest Roschach, Camille Chabaneau, and Camille Chabaneau, *Histoire générale de Languedoc, avec des notes et les pièces justificatives* (Toulouse, 1872).

French bishops, such as Godescalc, who made the first recorded pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela from 950 – 951, and Adhémar du Monteil (1080 – 1087), who famously became the first to volunteer his service following Pope Urban II's call to crusade at the Council of Claremont in 1095.<sup>2</sup> The late eleventh and twelfth centuries saw the construction of the present Romanesque cathedral during which time Le Puy also became the southernmost starting point in France on the route to Santiago de Compostela (the *via podenis*).<sup>3</sup> **(Figure 2)** Though it is now overshadowed by modern-day French pilgrimage sites such as Lourdes, Le Puy-en-Velay still remains an important site of Christian pilgrimage, welcoming thousands of visitors each year.

As Le Puy's role as a pilgrimage center flourished, so too did ritual activities at the cathedral; one of the earliest examples of medieval French polyphony was composed at Le Puy.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, religious processions occurred frequently both in and around the cathedral complex. Extra-mural processions were especially dramatic given the city's location atop of Mount Anis, requiring processions not only to move forward, but also to

---

<sup>2</sup> The early history of Le Puy in the context of pilgrimage was recently discussed in the past edition of this journal. See Roger E. Reynolds, "A Precious Ancient Souvenir Given to the First Pilgrim to Santiago de Compostela," *Peregrinations: The Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 4/3 (2014): 1 – 30; see also note 1.

<sup>3</sup> A concise summary of the importance of Le Puy-en-Velay during the Middle Ages and outline of its construction can be consulted in Walter Cahn, *The Romanesque Wooden Doors of Auvergne* (New York: New York University Press, 1974), pp. 59 – 75.

<sup>4</sup> Wulf Arlt, "The Office for the Feast of the Circumcision from Le Puy," in *The Divine Office in the Latin Middle Ages: Methodology and Source Studies, Regional Developments, Hagiography: Written in Honor of Professor Ruth Steiner*, eds. Ruth Steiner, Margot E. Fassler, and Rebecca A. Baltzer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 324-343. Recording: Ensemble Gilles Binchois, Dominique Vellard, and Wulf Arlt. *Le Manuscrit du Puy* (London: Virgin, 2001).

proceed up the steep incline of the city streets. While clergy both at the cathedral and in neighboring parish churches participated in these rituals on a near daily basis, pilgrims

**Figure 2** Western façade, Le Puy Cathedral, 11 – 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, with 19<sup>th</sup> century reconstruction. Photo: author.



and residents in Le Puy also participated in extra-mural religious processions from at least the thirteenth century. Processions continue in Le Puy to this day on the fifteenth

of August, the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin, bringing in thousands of participants to walk these well-worn routes.<sup>5</sup> Despite Le Puy's important role as a pilgrimage city in medieval and early modern France, its processions have not been adequately examined.

Processions are often difficult to study precisely because they are visual, spatial, and symphonic productions whose components transcend contemporary fields of academic study. It is therefore unsurprising that many past studies of medieval processions have been examined through a disciplinary avenue of research such as liturgical music, or semiotically as a symbol of communal cohesion, conflict, or ritual

---

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Cubizolles, *Le diocèse du Puy-en-Velay des origines à nos jours* (Nonette: Créer, 2005).

transformation.<sup>6</sup> The works of Margot Fassler, Susan Boynton, Margit Thøfner, and especially Kathleen Ashley and Wim Hüskén's edited volume on processional performance, have provided excellent models for a more comprehensive study of processions that account for sight, sound, and material culture. It is this spirit of interdisciplinary research that inspired this article and to which I hope it also contributes.<sup>7</sup>

The temporality of processional activity has also limited the study of these communal performances.<sup>8</sup> Considering rituals like processions only through texts or

---

<sup>6</sup> Louis Marin, "Establishing a Signification for Social Space: Demonstration, Cortege, Parade, Procession (Semiotic Notes)," in *On Representation*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 38 – 53. Louis Marin approaches the procession through the theory of semiotics, dismissing the more performative and unstructured aspects of processional activity. See also C. Clifford Flanigan, "The Moving Subject: Medieval Liturgical Processions in Semiotic and Cultural Perspective," in *Moving Subjects: Processional Performance in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, eds. Kathleen Ashley and Wim Hüskén, pp. 35–51. *Ludus 5* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2001). For historical approaches integrating ritual theory see, among others, Ronald F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence: Population and Social Structure* (New York: Academic Press, 1981); Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).

<sup>7</sup> Margit Thøfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonial in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt* (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 2007); Margot Fassler, "Adventus at Chartres: Ritual Models for Major Processions," in *Ceremonial Culture in Pre-Modern Europe*, ed. Nicholas Howe (Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 13 - 62; Susan Boynton, *Shaping a Monastic Identity: Liturgy & History At the Imperial Abbey of Farfa, 1000-1125* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006). In addition to Ashley and Hüskén's contribution to the study of processions, the edited volume *Visualizing Medieval Performance* includes several studies that address the multiple sources and multimedia of processions. These studies have provided the groundwork for new methodologies and perspectives on medieval performance in general. *Visualizing Medieval Performance: perspectives, histories, contexts*, ed. E. Gerstman (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008). For studies in this volume specifically considering processions see, Christina Maranci, "Performance and church exterior in medieval Armenia," pp. 17 – 32 and Rebecca Zorach, "'Taken by night from its tomb': triumph, dissent, and *danse macabre* in sixteenth-century France," pp. 223 – 248.

<sup>8</sup> Terrence Bailey's *Processions of Sarum and the Western Church* is among the oldest scholarly works on the subject, but still remains the most comprehensive study of medieval processions in Western Europe. Bailey's approach is primarily musical, focusing instead on evidence of their practice. He does not address the meaning of processional activities, only that they occurred with increasing frequency throughout Western Europe. See *The Processions of Sarum and the Western Church* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1971). Processions have also drawn interest for historians, who study these events as part of the larger interest in medieval early modern ritual and ceremony Europe. See among many others, Andrea Löther, *Prozessionen in spätmittelalterlichen Städten: politische Partizipation, obrigkeitliche Inszenierung, städtische Einheit* (Köln: Böhlau, 1999); Moshe Sluhovsky, *Patroness of Paris: Rituals of Devotion in Early Modern France* (New York: Brill, 1998); Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in*

images lends itself to an incomplete reading of these events.<sup>9</sup> Instructions outlined in ordinals and other religious texts can provide some semblance of the order of a procession, but they do not include more spontaneous aspects of the event. Likewise, visual representations can reveal the multiple parts, players, and objects of these activities, but they cannot capture the music and movement of procession. The study of processions therefore cannot be achieved through a single source, particularly clerical instructions, which present these events as a prescriptive ideal.<sup>10</sup> This is not to say that processions never achieved this ideal, but rather that they must be understood through a careful examination of often conflicting evidence presented in material, textual, and musical sources. Such evidence can be found in less-studied records found in liturgical ordinals, cathedral inventories, and chroniclers' records of these processions. Together, these records provide not only a visual account of the performances, but they also

---

*Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Edward Muir, "The Eye of the Procession," in *Ceremonial Culture in Pre-Modern Europe*, pp. 129 – 154. A few examples of studies in the history of art include, Rita Tekippe, "Pilgrimage and Procession: Correlations of Meaning and Practice, and the Effects in Art and Architecture," in *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage*, eds. Sarah Blick and Rita Tekippe, Vol. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), pp. 693-752; Cecilia M. Gaposchkin, "Portals, Processions, and Piety: Saints Firmin and Honoré at Amiens," in *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage*, pp. 218- 242. Carolyn Marino Malone, *Façade as Spectacle: Rituals and Ideology at Wells Cathedral*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> For more on this issue see Nicolas Howe, "Introduction," in *Ceremonial Culture in Pre-Modern Europe*, pp. 1- 12; Elina Gertsman, "Introduction: the spectrum of performances," in *Visualizing Medieval Performance*, pp. 1–16.

<sup>10</sup> The use of non-clerical sources for the study of processions has been addressed in the work of Jacques Chiffloeu, who analyzed Parisian processions in 1412 from both clerical records and chroniclers' descriptions. Chiffloeu, "Les processions parisiens de 1412: analyse d'un rituel flamboyant," *Revue historique* 284/ 575 (1990): 37 – 76). A similar politically-driven study using non-clerical sources is Françoise Michaud-Fréjaville, "Les processions à Orléans Au XVe siècle," *Cahiers de Recherches Médiévales et Humanistes* 12 (2005): 113–130.

document the musical accompaniment and the phenomenological experience of the spectators.

The goal of this study is thus to analyze pre-modern processions in Le Puy-en-Velay as multi-media and multi-sensory performances through a variety of textual, visual, musical, and archaeological sources. It also describes the fluid nature of processional performance by interrogating how these medieval rituals affected their participants in the centuries thereafter when such events were “re-presented” to fulfill new desires of the faithful while also serving as a site of memory. The power manifest in the act of procession became increasingly important in Le Puy as tensions between those residing in the close surrounding the cathedral and the merchant-based lower town increased after the fourteenth century. Because of these changes, the urban fabric of the city itself must be considered in any study of processions, not simply as linear routes, but as spaces in which objects, people and the urban environment interacted and created the act of procession. This evidence reveals valuable information regarding both the order *and* disorder of processions as modes of expressing and creating power relationships.

This article also advocates for the study of medieval and early modern processions despite complete records, which are almost never available. To deny the study of processions because a full reconstruction cannot be achieved is short sighted and ultimately hurts our understanding of these ubiquitous and essential pre-modern practices. Instead, we should study these processions like ruins from the past— from the vestiges that remain—and use this knowledge to conjecture possible reconstructions while allowing for multiple interpretations.

### ***Medieval Processions: An Overview***

The earliest Christian processions were likely adapted from the Roman *adventus* ceremony.<sup>11</sup> Processions recorded in Jerusalem as early as the fourth century and also appeared at this time in Rome.<sup>12</sup> Extra-mural processions, such as the stational procession of Palm Sunday, differed from smaller, indoor processions and other ritual activities where the laity did not have an active role. The lay involvement in liturgical rites decreased from the ninth century, when it became largely centered on clerical participation. The laity again became involved in the later Middle Ages, providing a ritual outlet for the public to participate in religious ritual outside of the prescriptions of the Mass.<sup>13</sup>

Independent liturgical texts devoted to recording the instructions for processions, known as processionals (*processionale*), were not used consistently during the Middle Ages. Precise order and movement, especially for early sources, is therefore difficult to reconstruct.<sup>14</sup> Even as these processions developed a more regularized form, they

---

<sup>11</sup> Fassler, "Adventus at Chartres," p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> The most important record of early pilgrimage to Jerusalem is that of Egeria who went there c. 381 - 384. For English translation see, John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (Oxford: Aris & Phillips 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Sible de Blaauw, "Contrasts in Processional Liturgy: A Typology of Outdoor Processions in Twelfth-Century Rome," in *Art, liturgie et cérémonie au Moyen Age*, eds. Nicolas Bock *et al.* (Rome: Viella, 2002), pp. 357 – 396.

<sup>14</sup> Bailey, 318. Early processions were recorded as notation in church ordinaries, or copied into a gradual or troper. The earliest processional books date no earlier than the twelfth century. See also Pierre-Marie Gy, "Collectaire-Rituel-Processional," in *La liturgie dans l'histoire*, ed. Pierre-Marie Gy (Paris: Cerf, 1990), pp. 91-126. Jean Evenou, "Processions, Pilgrimages, Popular Religion," in *The Church at Prayer*, vol. 3, *The Sacraments*, eds. Robert Cabié, Jean Evenou, Pierre Marie Gy, *et al.* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1988), pp. 241-250.



maintained a strongly local character.<sup>15</sup> Early records of processional activities from the medieval period are rare, but some evidence for these practices is preserved in notations written in other liturgical manuscripts.<sup>16</sup> As new architectural innovations beginning in the thirteenth century allowed for more ritual movement within the church, processional activity also increased. As such, more detailed instructions survive after this time.<sup>17</sup>

There were two different occasions for procession: liturgical, known as ordinary processions, and extraordinary processions, invoked during times of catastrophe or civic celebration.<sup>18</sup> Ordinary processions were both symbolic and practical, providing an orderly way to move about the church before, during, and after services. Celebratory processions most commonly occurred at the beginning and end of Lent, the main feasts of the Virgin Mary (Purification, Annunciation, Assumption and Nativity), the feasts of Advent season, and in the later Middle Ages, the Feast of Corpus Christi. Penitential or supplicatory processions included major extra-liturgical processions on Palm Sunday and

---

<sup>15</sup> Susan Boynton, *Shaping a Monastic Identity*, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Guido M. Dreves and Clemens Blume, eds. *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi*. 55 vols. (Leipzig: Riesland, 1886–1922); Michel Huglo, *Les manuscrits du processional*. 2 vols. Répertoire international des sources musicales Serie B, 14:1–2 (Munich: Henle, 1999–2004); Jean-Baptiste Molin, *Répertoire des rituels et processionnaires imprimés conservés en France* (Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1984). Ulysée Chevalier's multi-volume *Bibliothèque liturgique* (1893 - 1897) also provides documentation and transcription of some extant processional activity from Laon, Reims, and Bayeux among others. See "Ordinaires de l'église cathédrale de Laon (xIIe et xIIIe siècles): Suivis de deux mystères liturgiques," *Bibliothèque liturgique* 6 (Paris: A. Picard, 1897); "Ordinaire et coutumier de l'église Cathédrale de Bayeux (XIIIe siècle) Publiés d'après les manuscrits originaux," *Bibliothèque liturgique* 8 (Paris: A. Picard et fils, 1902).

<sup>17</sup> Anne Walters Robertson, *The Service-Books of the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis: Images of Ritual and Music in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 251. Early processions at the Abbey of Saint Denis are recorded in *nou. acq. latin 306* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale). Personal consultation of this manuscript verifies many processions although they lack specificity of place names and focus rather upon roles for the canons, deacons and sub-deacons.

<sup>18</sup> For a concise overview of terms see de Blaauw, "Contrasts in Processional Liturgy," pp. 357 – 396.

Rogation Days as well as ad-hoc crisis processions. Lay participation in these processions increased during the later Middle Ages, especially for extra-liturgical and extra-mural processions. Other processions that involved the laity varied by church or region, often on the feast days of local saints, the translation of relics, or the dedication of the church.<sup>19</sup>

Music, especially plainchant, was also an essential element to processional performance.<sup>20</sup> Processional hymns began quite early in Gallic France, developing by the sixth century.<sup>21</sup> Processional chant included antiphons sung by the group, interspersed with individual soloists reciting a versicle. While processional music changed according to local variants, general patterns and antiphons frequently appearing in extant records of medieval French processions provide some consistency for comparison to those at Le Puy. Due to the scope of this study and available evidence, I will focus primarily on the antiphons recited during the Rogations processions at Le Puy-en-Velay.

### ***Processions at Le Puy: Liturgical Sources***

Although liturgical texts such as processionals, ordinaries, and graduals are critical sources for the study of medieval processions, they are often incomplete and present a static description of the event that belies the motion and temporality involved.

---

<sup>19</sup> Blaauw, p. 373.

<sup>20</sup> The author would like to acknowledge that she is not a musicologist, and therefore this study is limited to the study of the types of antiphons commonly occurring in processions rather than specifics of musical structure. Many thanks to Dr. Benjamin Brand for kindly clarifying questions I had regarding the musical components of medieval processions. For a good introduction to medieval liturgical music see John Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century: A Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

<sup>21</sup> Ruth Ellis Messenger, "Medieval Processional Hymns before 1100," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 80 (1949): 375–392.

Liturgical texts record processions as highly structured, ordered, and harmonious events. And of course, in some ways, they had to be: The act of procession implies a group whose willingness to conform to the actions of the ritual commands its success. Yet a liturgical ordinal is a prescriptive source, so it dictates actions before the event. Descriptive texts, those that provide an account of the event performed, can provide new information about these processions that either confirm or contradict the liturgical directions. This being said, it is important to first outline the extant textual evidence for processions at Le Puy in order to ascertain the ‘ideal’ form of the procession. From this evidence, we can then add visual, demographic and archaeological evidence to nuance the reality of processional performance.

Although textual evidence of processions at Le Puy-en-Velay is somewhat elusive due to two fires at the cathedral archives, the most important source for this study is a sixteenth-century copy of a fourteenth-century ceremonial from Le Puy, entitled *Incipit liber ordinaries secundum usum Aniciensis ecclesie* (T. 586).<sup>22</sup> Although this manuscript is badly deteriorated, scholar and abbot of Le Puy, Jean-Baptiste Payrard, published an edited version of this manuscript in successive editions of the *Tablettes historiques de la Haute-Loire et du Velay* (now *Cahiers de la Haute-Loire*) from 1874 – 1878. While this source must be used with some attention to modern corrections or

---

<sup>22</sup> Jean-Baptiste Payrard, “Ancien cérémonial de l’église angélique du Puy,” *Tablettes Historiques de la Haute Loire et du Velay* (1872/1873 – 1876/1877ff.). Payrard does mention that he made some changes to this manuscript in order to correct the Latin text and restore the work to its original integrity, but as noted above, it preserves the essential information used for this study. The Bibliothèque municipale du Puy concurs with this assessment, and lists Payrard’s transcription as a copy of the deteriorated Grand Sémanaire version. The continued use of processions at Le Puy is also well documented and indicates a continued practice, as evidenced from a 1756 processional now at the Bibliothèque municipale du Puy (Fonds Léon Cortial).

additions, Payrard's transcription is the most reliable source for processions at Le Puy.<sup>23</sup> Certainly, one must use caution when relying on copied texts; however, I have examined an unpublished manuscript of a book of hours from Le Puy that provides strong evidence for the continuation of the medieval calendar and liturgical practices at Le Puy Cathedral.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, musicologist Wulf Arlt also examined these documents from Le Puy and found them to reflect medieval practices.<sup>25</sup> Arlt argues that the later sources demonstrate an abbreviation rather than expansion of rituals at Le Puy, so processions likely occurred even more often than they are cited in Payrard's transcription.<sup>26</sup>

Most of the liturgical processions in Le Puy-en-Velay took place within the cathedral complex itself, although a few clearly went outside the close. These include processions on the second and third minor Rogation days, detailed below, and the dedication of the Chapel of Saint Michel, located atop a small mount outside this city. Processions within the cathedral complex are mentioned for the Feast of the Circumcision, Feast of the Purification, fourth ferial day after Ash Wednesday, Dedication of the Cathedral, and Saturday before the first Sunday of Advent. Although

---

<sup>23</sup> There are some ambiguities in these texts that mention practices performed "by custom" or shortened titles of antiphons that do not precisely indicate the hymn sung. These discrepancies are unfortunate, but do not negate the information that can be learned from processional texts in conjunction with visual and archaeological evidence.

<sup>24</sup> London, British Library, Mss. Add. 58771. See also Augustin Chassaing, "Calendrier de l'église du Puy-en-Velay au moyen-âge," *Annales de la société d'agriculture, sciences, arts et commerce du Puy*, Vol. 33 (Paris: H. Champion, 1882). Chassaing cites sixteenth-century copies as evidence of medieval rituals. His reconstruction of the liturgical calendar at Le Puy deviates from Ms. 58771 only in the addition of saints to specific days, not in the order or veneration of local saints of Auvergne.

<sup>25</sup> Wulf Arlt, "The Office for the Feast of the Circumcision from Le Puy," in *The Divine Office of the Latin Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 324 – 343.

<sup>26</sup> Arlt, p. 329.

instructions for extra-ordinary processions, such as those held for relief from plague or natural disaster, are not recorded in these liturgical sources, both lay texts and visual sources provide ample evidence that such processions also occurred regularly, especially during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Although the processional is predominately a written text dictating appropriate antiphons and movement between sites during the procession, some visual aspects of these performances can be gleaned from liturgical sources. Most significantly, processions occurring during Rogations provide clear instructions to carry the ‘imago’ of the Virgin. This instruction presumably refers to the famous cult statue, the Virgin of Le Puy, thought to date from the late eleventh century.<sup>27</sup> The third ferial day of minor rogations also calls for the display of the cathedral relics.<sup>28</sup> Other processions specify the use of standard processional objects including candles, crosses and an aspergillum.<sup>29</sup> They also dictate appropriate the liturgical vestments to be worn during the procession.

The earliest processions in Le Puy appear to be those occurring on Rogations Days, or the “beating of the bounds.” Rogations processions have a well-documented early history in Gaul, and so it is unsurprising that they also appear early at Le Puy.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> This statue was destroyed in 1794 during the French Revolution. The present Notre Dame du Puy is known as a *vierge noire*, or Black Madonna. My research on this statue is forthcoming in *Studies in Iconography* 37 (2016).

<sup>28</sup> IIIa feria, “Ad processionem exeunt reliquae.”

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin (Feb. 2): “...Ad processionem, Post pulsationem tertie vadit Episcopus sive ille qui agit officium *Lumen ad revelationem*.... Tunc spargit aquam benedictam super candelas...”

<sup>30</sup> The importance of procession during major and minor Litanies, known as Rogations, was recognized as early as the tenth century in France, as cited in an anonymous sermon from Corbie (Paris, Bibl. Nationale 18296, f. 81.); D. de Bruyne, “L’origine des processions de la Chandleur et des Rogations—à propos d’un sermon inédit,” *Revue Benedictine* 34 (1922): 14 - 26. Evidence for Rogations processions across Europe

Rogations processions, sometimes called the minor litanies, were performed during the three ferial, or non-feast, days before Ascension Thursday (25 April).<sup>31</sup> These events extended outside ecclesiastical boundaries, physically uniting the spaces of the parish or other ecclesiastical jurisdiction through procession.<sup>32</sup> Although Le Puy Cathedral was contained within a close, the Rogations procession sought to define the sacred boundaries of the entire city and surrounding areas.

Sixteenth-century prose chronicler of Le Puy, Étienne Médicis, states that Rogations processions occurred in the city from 1255, but they were likely happening even earlier than this date.<sup>33</sup> Two jointly-issued papal bulls dated to 1265 afforded one year and forty days up to perpetuity of indulgences for pilgrims who visited Le Puy during the feasts of the Nativity, Annunciation, Purification, Assumption, Ascension, and three days of Rogations, so it is not unreasonable to assume that processions were also taking place on these days.<sup>34</sup> In any case, Rogations processions were clearly taking place by the fourteenth century as evidenced by a citation given to cathedral canons during a

---

date even earlier, see Joyce Hill, "The Litaniae maiores and minores in Rome, Francia and Anglo-Saxon England: terminology, texts and traditions," *Early Medieval Europe* 9/2 (2000): 211-246.

<sup>31</sup> Bailey, pp. 95 – 98.

<sup>32</sup> Steve Hindle, "Beating the Bounds of the Parish: Order, Memory and Identity in the English Local Community, c. 1500 – 1700," in *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe* eds. Michaël Halvorson, Karen E. Spierling (London: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 205 – 228. See also Sabine von Heusinger, "Topography of Sacred Space and the Representation of Social Groups: Confraternities in Strasbourg," in *Politics and Reformations: Communities, Politics, Nations and Empire, Essays in Honor of Thomas A. Brady, Jr.*, eds. Christopher Ocker, *et al.* (Boston: Brill, 2007), pp. 67 - 84.

<sup>33</sup> Médicis, *Le livre de Podio*, pp. 188 – 201. Council of Orléans mandated rogations processions for all of Gaul in 511. In addition, Rogations processions are clearly documented in France from 546 at Reims, and Limoges from 580.

<sup>34</sup> Jean-Baptiste Payrard, *Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de N-D. du Puy & du Velay: Premier layette de l'inventaire (chartier) de Sancta Aniciensi Ecclesia*, N° 31 (42), pp. 17 – 18.

1318 Rogations procession.<sup>35</sup> These non-liturgical references provide convincing evidence outside of Payard's transcriptions that processions at Le Puy were a regular practice from at least the fourteenth century.

The Rogations processions at Le Puy also appear to reflect earlier musical practices documented in sources across Europe. All Rogations processions are marked by the visitation to other churches in the city and the singing of antiphons and litanies. The antiphons sung during rogation days at Le Puy are fairly consistent with common antiphons appearing throughout the long history of rogations processions in France, including the *cum jocunditate*, *timor et tremor*, *de Jherusalem* and *omnipotens deus*.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, although the antiphons are not quite as consistent at the processional preserved at the Cathedral of Bayeux, the Bayeux processional provides detailed instructions for the procession very similar to those at Le Puy.<sup>37</sup> Thus Rogations processions at Le Puy appear to be similar to other major cathedrals in that they followed many of the same antiphons and typical movements between the cathedral and other churches in the city.

So what did can we learn about the processions in Le Puy from this liturgical source? It is not possible to map the entire procession with absolute precision but the general structure and relationship between ritual, movement and place can be analyzed.

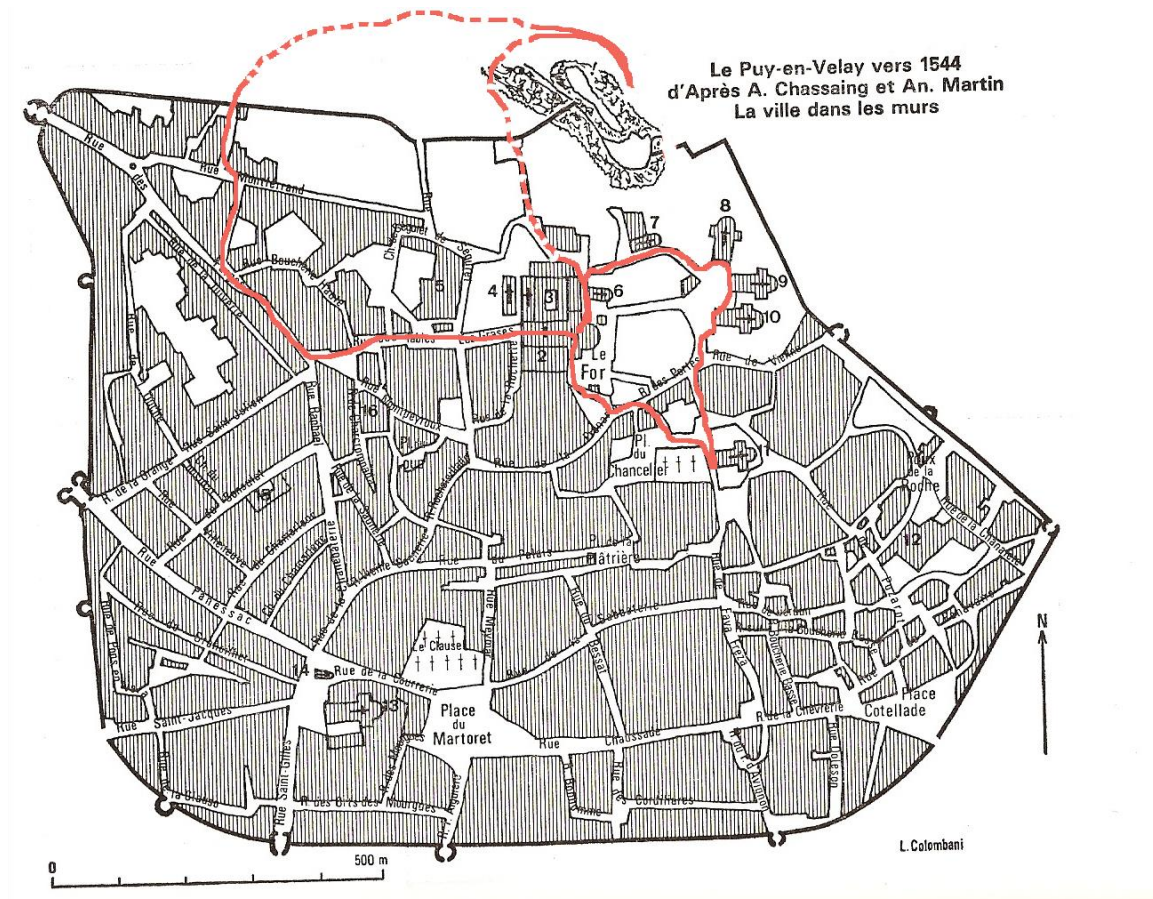
---

<sup>35</sup> Payard, N°51 (22), p. 25.

<sup>36</sup> Bailey, pp. 122 – 127.

<sup>37</sup> *Ordinaire et coutumier de l'église Cathédrale de Bayeux (XIIIe siècle): publiés d'après les manuscrits originaux*, Bibliothèque liturgique 8 (Paris: A. Picard, 1902).

(**Figure 3**) Although each of the Rogations processions in the Le Puy *cérémoniale* are well-recorded, for the scope of this study, I will focus on the second ferial day of Rogations.



**Figure 3** Proposed Route of Rogations procession in Le Puy-en-Velay, fourteenth century. Map after Médicis, c. 1544. Modified by author after Rivet, *Une ville au XVI siècle*. Dotted sequence indicates less evidence for exact route.



The second ferial day of Rogations began after noon.<sup>38</sup> After a minor cantor recited the *propitius esto*, the priest or deacon assigned for weekly duties blessed the cathedral with holy water and then a procession to the neighboring parish churches of Le Puy commenced.<sup>39</sup> Bearing the miracle-working Virgin of Le Puy in their retinue, the clergy processed first inside the church to the sanctuary and the chapel of Saint Paul.<sup>40</sup> As a minor cantor began to sing *De Jherusalem* the procession entered to the Chapel of the Holy Savoir in the bell tower where the Virgin was placed upon the altar. Invocations to various local saints then commenced as the procession went to the Baptistry of Saint John just outside the cathedral. According to the ceremonial, these petitions were to be performed “quickly in a lowered voice.”<sup>41</sup> The same procedure was followed at the collegiate churches of Saint Georges, Agrève and Vosi, and on the other Rogation days, to the Church of Saint Pierre-de-la-Tour. The procession then returned to the baptistry and the antiphon *cum jucunditate* was recited by the home of the Seigneur of Mons [precise location unknown, likely at the corner of the Rue la Traverse and the Rue la Frenerie].<sup>42</sup> After these litanies were recited, the procession returned to the cathedral

---

<sup>38</sup> All text and translations from Jean-Baptiste Payrard, “Ancien cérémonial de l’église angélique du Puy,” *Tablettes Historiques de la Haute-Loire et du Velay*. VIII, 1877-78, 377ff. Many thanks to Lauren Donovan Ginsberg for her assistance with the Latin translations.

<sup>39</sup> Feria secunda. – Ad procession que fit post meridem dictur à cantore minore antiphona *Propitius esto*. [The second ferial day [of Rogations]—for the purpose of the procession that is made after noon. The antiphon *Propitius esto* is recited by the minor cantor].

<sup>40</sup> The chapel of Saint Paul's precise location within the cathedral is unknown. Although the ceremonial indicates that the procession should go to the “ecclesiam” of the Holy Savior, this appears to be the Chapel of the Holy Savior in the bell tower, which was detached from the cathedral itself.

<sup>41</sup> *et dicunt eam festinates et submissa voce*.

<sup>42</sup> Given the location of the procession, the home that the ceremonial refers to is likely one of those owned by the Seigneur de Mons in the second île. According to Genéviève Douillard's reconstruction of these îles

where processional crosses were arranged in front of the choir to go to the Chapel of Saint Michel, a small Romanesque church that rests on the top of Mount Aiguille, known as the *Acuela*. The clergy then arose and exited the cathedral in the direction towards Saint Michel.

At this time, the procession extended beyond the bounds of the city, passing over waterways and bridges of the Borne Valley. On their way to Saint Michel, three young choristers from the collegiate churches of Saint Georges and Saint Vosi and Saint Pierre-de-la-Tour recited an antiphon before reaching the water, assumed to be the Borne River. Upon arriving into Aiguille, the priest assigned to weekly duties performed a mass at the Chapel of Saint Gabriel, located at the bottom of the *Rocher d'Aiguille*. From this point, the procession would head back to the city, entering Le Puy through the “gate that is next to Saint Agrève,” presumably the Porte de Vienne.<sup>43</sup> The procession then continued “until the blessed image is at Saint George Square by the marketplace [Porche du For].”<sup>44</sup> Having returned to the doors of the cathedral, the cantor sung *Aufer a nobis* and the priest designated for weekly duties recites *Salve domine plebem*. The procession ended when the statue of the Virgin was deposited in her place (*in suo loco*) after the priest recited his

---

in 1544, the Sir de Mons owned a large home on the Rue la Traverse at the corner of the Rue la Frenerie. This home seems to be the most likely location for the processional route. It is unclear who owned this home in earlier centuries, so this detail may reflect a sixteenth-century addition. See Douillard, *Topographie médiévale de la ville du Puy, jusqu'en 1544* (MA Thesis, Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne, 1982).

<sup>43</sup> *Juxta portale quod est juxta ecclesiam sancti Agrippani.*

<sup>44</sup> *Et cum imago beate Marie fuerit in plano sancti Georgii et ad januam ecclesie juxta Forum ante fores incipit cantor antiph. Aufer a nobis* [And when the image of Blessed Mary is at the square of Saint George and at the door of the church next to the marketplace and outside in front of the doors the cantor begins the antiphon *Aufer a nobis*].

versicle. Unfortunately this precise *loco* is unknown and is therefore interpreted here as the main altar. It is not clear from this text if the laity participated in the procession itself. As we shall see, if they did not participate initially, the involvement of the laity during Rogations later became common practice.

It is perhaps most useful to examine these prescribed directions for Rogations processions at Le Puy-en-Velay by considering how the specific mention of places, objects and people worked in relation to each other to signal ritual. In many instances throughout the procession, approaching a threshold such as a door, gate or natural landmark signaled the ritualization of movement. For example, choristers from the collegiate churches were required to recite an antiphon before arriving at the Borne River as the procession moved toward the Chapel of St. Michel d'Aiguille.<sup>45</sup> It was not the specific antiphon that mattered for the procession, but rather *when* and *where* it was recited. That the waterway was mentioned at all is also significant as the Borne River, while not far from the city, did not limit access to Aiguille from all points. Thus, some semblance of the route beyond the borders of Le Puy can be inferred. Similarly, the text instructed the soft and quick performance of invocations from the cathedral to the baptistery. Given the close proximity of these two buildings this note is predictable, yet it

---

<sup>45</sup> *Et vadit ad Aculeam per pontem dous Estrolhas...Cantatur ab uno puero sancti Georgii antiphona Domine Dominus noster...Dictur ab uno puero sancti Evodii antiphona Et clamemus...Cantatur ab uno puero sancti Petri de Turre antiphona Abraham...Predictae antiphone debent esse finite antequam transeant aquam.* [and go toward Aiguille over the bridge *des Trollas* [Estrollas]....the antiphon *Domine Dominus noster* is sung by a boy of St. George...the antiphon *Et clamemus* is said by a boy of Saint Evodius...and the antiphon *Abraham* is said by a boy from Saint Peter of Tours...The aforementioned antiphons should be completed before they pass over the water.

reveals that conscious motion towards a place. This movement ritualized the processional space over any verbal cues.

Processional objects also played an important role in the liturgical text. The Virgin of Le Puy often acted as a visual marker of ritual movement during the Rogations procession. For example, the ceremonial instructed that the procession moved towards the cathedral until the Virgin has reached the square. There, the processants became defined in relation to the object rather than to each other. Even the end of the procession was signaled by the placement of the Virgin on the altar. Finally, the majority of sites visited during Rogations processions in Le Puy were contained within the cathedral close, with the exception of St. Michel d'Aiguille, thereby emphasizing not only the sanctity of these sites, but also their allegiance with the cathedral itself.<sup>46</sup> Places and objects were just as important as the antiphons or litanies recited in the procession, so in order to truly understand these processions, we must also uncover evidence beyond liturgical sources.

### ***Material and Visual Evidence***

Processions must not only be understood through textual accounts, but should be interrogated through the relics and other ecclesiastical objects that mark the processional space of the city. Nearly all medieval religious processions featured various ecclesiastical objects and accouterments such as the processional cross, candles, and censers.<sup>47</sup> As

---

<sup>46</sup> This allegiance was especially importance given the rivalry between the cathedral and other parish churches, namely Saint Pierre-le-Monastier in the lower town, more about which is outlined further below.

<sup>47</sup> Tekippe, "Pilgrimage and Procession," p. 699.

processions grew in pomp and size, they carried reliquaries, confraternity banners, and religious statues. Liturgical books were also carried in processions, used either for display or as an instructional aide to the clerics performing these ceremonies. The processions, too, were also visually marked by the dress of the clergy, who usually wore special pluvial copes, albs, and chasubles during the processions.<sup>48</sup> When examined in conjunction with the liturgical sources, these materials provide critical evidence of the moving space of processions.<sup>49</sup>

Le Puy-en-Velay is fortunate to preserve a significant corpus of non-liturgical sources, both textual and visual, that provide an alternate means to uncovering the visual and phenomenological aspects of processions. The least known of these visual sources appears as a small drawing in the notebook of Jean Burel, a mid-sixteenth century chronicler of Le Puy-en-Velay. His manuscript, written as a local history of the city, includes many eyewitness descriptions and sketches of events in Le Puy.<sup>50</sup> A fervent

---

<sup>48</sup> A good explanation of liturgical vestments and objects used in the liturgy can be found in Stephen N. Fliegel, *Replendent Faith: Liturgical Treasuries of the Middle Ages* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2009). For more information on liturgical vestments see, Janet Mayo, *A History of Ecclesiastical Dress* (London: Batsford, 1984) and Cyril E. Pocknee, *Liturgical Vesture: Its Origins and Development* (London: Mowbray, 1960).

<sup>49</sup> This approach to processions takes cues from the work of Timothy Pestell, which examined the archaeological remains of a monastic priory to ascertain the limits of secular and sacred spaces within this landscape. See Timothy Pestell, "Using Material Culture to Define Holy Space: The Bromholm Project," in *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Andrew Spicer and Sarah Hamilton (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Press, 2005). A similar methodology was employed in Jonathan Glixon's study of the relationship between music and ritual ceremonies of Venetian confraternities. See Jonathan E. Glixon, "Music and Ceremony at the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista: A New Document from the Venetian State Archives," in *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in the Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities* ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1991).

<sup>50</sup> Le Puy, Bibliothèque municipale. Ms. 59 (8081). *Mémoires et journal de Jean Burel, marchand tanneur du Puy*. 1560-1603, edited and reprinted as J. Burel and A. Chassaing, *Mémoires de Jean Burel, Bourgeois Du Puy: Publiés Au Nom de La Société Académique Du Puy*, Recueil Des Chroniqueurs Du Puy-En-Velay (Impr. M.-P. Marchessou, 1875), <https://books.google.com/books?id=yGJBAQAAMAAJ>. On Burel see

Catholic, Burel described many religious processions, including a description of a 1578 Assumption procession.<sup>51</sup> At the bottom of this page, he provided a simple sketch of the head and torso of the statue of the Virgin of Le Puy flanked by two illuminated torches, noting the statue's primary role in the event. **(Figure 4)** This image not only provides



**Figure 4** Drawing of the Virgin of Le Puy carried in procession, 1578. Le Puy, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 59 (8081), f. 102r. Photo, author.

intriguing evidence for the statue itself, but also confirms the long-standing use of the Virgin of Le Puy statue on the Feast of the Assumption. Burel's descriptions made procession as performance abundantly clear. For example, he noted that when two canons

---

Augustin Chassaing, "Notice historique sur Jean Burel, chroniqueur du Puy-en-Velay, 1540-1603" (Le Puy: M.-P. Marchessov, 1875).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., "Ymage de Notre-Dame porte en procession," f. 102r. Transcription in Burel and Chassaing, *Mémoires*, 51.

carried Virgin sculpture on a gilded pavilion during the procession, all the bells in the city rang and prayers, songs and supplications to the Virgin filled the air when her cortège passed by.<sup>52</sup> The sculpture's physical marking of the space was not supplementary to the meaning of the procession, rather, processional objects directed, promoted and inspired devotion through their material presence.



**Figure 5** Slippers worn by the Virgin of Le Puy. Cathedral treasury, Le Puy-en-Velay. Photo: author.

In addition to Jean Burel, city chronicler Etienne Médicis, also vividly described the processions of the city during the sixteenth century in his book *Le livre de Podio*.<sup>53</sup> He also included transcriptions of several inventories the cathedral dating to the fifteenth century, which record objects used in procession.<sup>54</sup> These inventory records are a

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 51. “ledict faint ymaige estoit porté par deux chanoines soubz ung pavilion de drag d'or que les confulz portoient; toujours les cloches de toutes les eglises sonnoient, chose de grand admiration & devotion; avec priers, oraifons, canticques chanterie, s'acheminarent par tous la vile...”

<sup>53</sup> Etienne Médicis and Augustin Chassaing. *Le livre de Podio; ou, Chroniques d'Étienne Médicis, bourgeois du Puy* (Le Puy-en-Velay: Impr. de M.-P. Marchessov, 1869).

<sup>54</sup> The usefulness of the Le Puy inventories to reconstruct lost objects from the cathedral has been discussed by Martin de Framond, Director of the Archives de la Haute Loire, in his article on the treasury of Le Puy.





**Figure 6** Jean Solvain, *Le vœu de peste*, 1650. Cathedral of Notre-Dame-du-Puy. Photo: author.

tremendously important source for understanding the ephemeral as well as material nature of processions at Le Puy. The 1444 inventory is especially extensive and includes objects such as standard processional fare such as crosses and candles, as well as special objects such as the Virgin and Child's slippers, some of which still survive in the cathedral treasury.<sup>55</sup> **(Figure 5)** Most significantly, these inventories list the litter (*chadaraïta*) that carried the Virgin in procession during Rogations.<sup>56</sup>

The use of the Virgin statue during processions is also well-documented into the seventeenth century. Jean Solvain's *Le vœu de peste* (1650), for example, illustrates a 1630 procession of the Virgin during a time of plague in Le Puy. **(Figure 6)** The bottom

---

See "Notre-Dame des Armagnacs: Le trésor de la cathédrale du Puy-en-Velay," *Cahiers de la Haute Loire* (1993): 19 – 38.

<sup>55</sup> Medicis, pp. 101 – 130.

<sup>56</sup> Médicis, p. 122. This item reads "quedam chadareta in qua portatur ymago beate Marie in Rogacionibus."



right-hand corner of this large painting, which currently hangs in the northern aisle of the cathedral, bears an inscription that describes the scene to the viewer:

*Voeu faict rendu par tous les Ordres des habitants de la ville du Puy le 22 avril 1630, rendans graces à Dieu de les avoir delivers du male de peste duquel mouruent dix mil et plus desdictz habitants l'année precedente, ceste faveur leur estant arrivée par les priers puissantes de la glorieuse Vierge, leur bonne dame et patronne, de la quelle a esté porté en procession solemnel le saint Image come est icy depainct.*

The vow that was performed by all the orders of the inhabitants of the city of Le Puy on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1630, giving thanks to God for having delivered them from the terrible plague which killed ten thousand or more inhabitants the year before, this favor came to them by way of the powerful prayers of the glorious Virgin, their fair lady and patron, who is carried in solemn procession, the holy statue that is painted here.<sup>57</sup>

The continued use of the Virgin of Le Puy in processions is important. Such centrality was not always given to cult statues, especially as the Feast of the Corpus Christi became more dominant in the late Middle Ages and Early Modern periods.<sup>58</sup> The focus on the Virgin of Le Puy in both textual and visual sources reflects the importance of the statue to Le Puy-en-Velay and its history of processional activity, one that continues to present day.

Thus far, visual and textual evidence for processions at Le Puy affirm them as performances that succeeded in their goal of communal solidarity and public devotion. Yet the scholarship of Natalie Zemon Davis and others have also shown that religious

---

<sup>57</sup> Antoine Jacmon et al., *Mémoires d'Antoine Jacmon, bourgeois du Puy*, Mémoires d'Antoine Jacmon, bourgeois du Puy. Publiés aux frais de la société d'agriculture, sciences, arts et commerce du Puy par Augustin Chassaing (Le Puy-en-Velay. Impr. de Marchessou fils, 1885), p. 35.

<sup>58</sup> Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*, pp. 243 - 269.

ritual could also become a platform for violence.<sup>59</sup> In the case of processions, ecclesiastical and political tensions within the city were made visible through the guise of hierarchy (how the groups were arranged) and exclusion (which groups could participate). Davis and other scholars of Early Modern France have provided ample evidence for such violent acts that occurred during the sixteenth-century Wars of Religion.<sup>60</sup> While this historical event certainly provided an important context for such violence, Davis herself has argued for a broader cultural application of this evidence.<sup>61</sup> Although outbreaks of violence during medieval processions are rarely recorded, it cannot be that processions suddenly—without precedent—became violent in the sixteenth century.<sup>62</sup> Source material, particularly from lay chroniclers, though abundant during this time, is composed largely of textual accounts. The study of possible disorder during processions can be also confirmed through an investigation of the urban planning of Le Puy-en-Velay itself.

---

<sup>59</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France,” *Past and Present* 59 (1973): 51 – 91; David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Barbara B. Diefendorf, “Prologue to a Massacre: Popular Unrest in Paris, 1557 – 1772,” *American Historical Review* 90 (1985): 1076-91.

<sup>60</sup> See among others Barbara Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Philip Benedict, *Rouen During the Wars of Religion*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>61</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Writing ‘The Rites of Violence’ and Afterward,” *Past and Present Supplement* 7 (2012): 8 – 29.

<sup>62</sup> Thanks to the anonymous reviewer for prompting me to think more critically about this issue. There is some evidence for the disruptive nature processions in the Middle Ages but it is far less documented. See Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, “*Discordia et Lis*: Negotiating Power, Property and Performance in Medieval Selestat,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 26/3 (1996): 419 – 446; see also Ashley and Sheingorn, “Ste. Foy on the Loose, Or, the Possibilities of Procession at Conques,” in *Moving Subjects*, pp. 53 – 67.

### ***Archaeological Evidence: The Urban Environment of Procession***

While Rogations processions extended beyond the city walls, urban topography and physical barriers in Le Puy dictated the primary movement of the urban processions. Most of the medieval roads, gates, churches, and other physical monuments in Le Puy-en-Velay have been identified through archaeological and textual documentation, but a few locations remain unknown. Although Le Puy-en-Velay has undergone significant changes in street planning, infrastructure, and neighborhood divisions since the Middle Ages, Bernard Rivet has argued that the urban fabric and general divisions within the city remained largely consistent from the fourteenth into the sixteenth century.<sup>63</sup> As such, we can be more confident that the processional routes were not impeded by the construction of new walls, gates or other urban developments that would have necessarily altered such activity until later centuries.

Early twentieth-century archaeological excavations of walls provide physical evidence for fortifications, gates, and neighborhoods in medieval Le Puy.<sup>64</sup> The first wall around the city was erected in the ninth or tenth century. By 1134, seven gates and seven towers around the city were erected. The wall was at its fullest extent in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, spanning approximately five kilometers.<sup>65</sup> The cathedral itself lies

---

<sup>63</sup> Rivet and Philippe Ramona used fifteenth-century population records, or *compoix* preserved in the municipal archives of Le Puy from 1408, 1456, and 1464 to create a map of the city around 1450. Philippe Ramona, "Le Puy au milieu du XVe siècle: la ville consulaire et ses habitants," *Cahiers de la Haute-Loire* (2005): 205 – 294; Le Puy, Bibliothèque municipale, Fonds Cordial, ms. 16. *Compoix* of 1456; Le Puy, Archives Municipales, CC20, *Compoix* of 1464.

<sup>64</sup> Ulysse Rouchon, "Les Fortifications de la Ville du Puy," *Congrès archéologique de France*, Le Puy (1904): 358.

<sup>65</sup> Geneviève Douillard, "Topographie médiévale de la ville du Puy, jusqu'en 1544," p. 19.

geographically at the highest point of Le Puy and occupied its own jurisdictional district known as the close (*cloître*) that was built within a machicolated wall constructed from 1220- 1240. The border of the cloister ran along the Rue de Frenerie, Rue des Portes and the Rue de Vienne.<sup>66</sup> These streets also served as primary routes for cathedral processions primarily subscribed to clerical participation.<sup>67</sup>

Despite the abundance of visitors to Le Puy, fortifications along the close were not constructed to protect the cathedral from outside threats, but rather because of long-standing tension between the rising merchant class in Le Puy and the cathedral canons. As the city began to expand to the west and south in the thirteenth century, economic and religious factors determined the physical division between the cathedral close (also called the upper town) and the lower town of Le Puy.<sup>68</sup> By the sixteenth century, the areas inside the close were reserved for the noble classes, the Hôtel-Dieu, and inhabitants associated with the cathedral. The richest îles (neighborhoods) lay to the south, occupied primarily by merchants.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> Rivet, p. 18. The extent of clôître determined by Bernard de Montaigu in 1236 and was expanded in 1237 under doyen Guillaume de Chalençon.

<sup>67</sup> Rivet, p. 204.

<sup>68</sup> Generally the northern and southern divide was separated by the rues Portail d'Avignon, Chaussade du Bessat, du Palais Rochetaillade, and Montpeyroux. See Douillard, "Topographie médiévale de la ville du Puy."

<sup>69</sup> Although nobility inhabited the upper town, it was not as wealthy as the lower town due to charitable foundations associated with the cathedral in this area. The chapter of the cathedral and the affiliated University of Saint Mayol actually owned many of the land plots in the more affluent areas of the city, thus the cathedral benefited from the high rents and taxes on these properties. The fortifications around Le Puy and the close itself were demolished in the eighteenth century as tensions between the upper and lower town declined.

The threat of infighting during processions served as a means to assert power in Le Puy. According a 1488 inventory record from the chapter, the canons of Le Puy issued a sort of “cease and desist” order to the priory of St. Pierre le Monastier and all other churches in Le Puy prohibiting them from having procession before the cathedral's designated event occurred.<sup>70</sup> The parish of St. Pierre-le-Monastier's resistance to this mandate created an instance of anticipated ritual violence, in which this church vied for their right to process through the city streets. This “race to procession” added conflict guised in ritual to the rival churches in Le Puy, which warranted an official sanction. The ritual movement of procession through the city could therefore create sacred space and simultaneously render this same space a belligerent zone of social disorder.<sup>71</sup> Because of this, the ritual movement of procession and pilgrimage influenced the urban planning of Early Modern Le Puy. Failure to consider the role of the city streets in the execution of these processions or to ignore the impact of access during the procession could end tragically.

One instance of such tragedy sparked by procession permeated the communal memory of Le Puy-en-Velay for centuries. Médicis recounted a procession of the Virgin in 1255 in which the citizens of Le Puy attempted to push through a gate where a small replica of the Virgin of Le Puy was placed. So unruly and dense was this crowd who squeezed through the small entrance under the statue that some people were trampled to

---

<sup>70</sup> Jean-Baptiste Payrard, *Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de N.-D. du Puy*, Inventory No. 114 (129), dated 11 July 1488.

<sup>71</sup> See note 59 and discussion of Natalie Zemon Davis above.

death.<sup>72</sup> While Médici's, writing in the early sixteenth century, could not have witnessed this event himself, his vivid recording of this legendary event demonstrates how sites within the city were already becoming places of medieval memory for the Early Modern devout of Le Puy. For Médicis, then, rather than the repetition of the annual procession, it was the trauma of a single manifestation of this ritual that remained present in the minds of later generations. Procession thus took on two simultaneous meanings as present-day ritual and site of memory, a phenomenon that continues to this day.

### ***Conclusion: Re-Presenting Le Puy Processions at Le Puy***

In this study, I have attempted to uncover the late medieval and Early Modern processions in Le Puy-en-Velay through an examination of liturgical texts, maps, inventory records, chroniclers' accounts, and remains of visual culture. The processions in Le Puy were more than ordered ritual action, they were events with multiple parts, people, and motivations. These ephemeral events were mechanisms that encouraged collectivity while also acknowledging the hierarchies and divisions within the church and social networks of the city.

While examining a variety of both visual and textual evidence for processions can help understand the formal and historical significance of these prevalent and persistent ceremonies, examining static fragments as evidence of such fluid events can also be rather reductive. Instead, mapping through experience has provided a novel means for

---

<sup>72</sup> Médicis, *Le livre de Podio*, p. 189.

uncovering cultural memories embedded in a place.<sup>73</sup> Timothy Ingold has suggested that places exist within a system of interrelated movement, wherein the present can be located within the context of past memories, journeys, and stories connected to that space.<sup>74</sup> The irregular route created through this exploration of space therefore creates a sort of “sketch map” based less on physical boundaries than on the relationship between significant sites.<sup>75</sup> In this way, the modern processions of Le Puy are connected to their past forms not only through physical fragments that remain, but also through the spatial relationships to people and their actions within these spaces. Likewise, the modern sites of Le Puy are connected to their past locations through the thread of time and memory that is ‘mapped’ cognitively onto the minds of its viewers through walking through these same places. This phenomenological approach thus focuses on the journey rather than points of reference that dominate cartographic realities.

Walking through the city, it is clear that while some medieval streets in Le Puy still exist, the town itself has experienced much growth and change. So have the processions. The modern urban planning of the city does not seem to have taken the processional sites into account as the city expanded. For example, the parish churches

---

<sup>73</sup> See overview for this approach in Edward S. Casey, “How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena,” in *Senses of Place*, eds. S. Feld and K. Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1997).

<sup>74</sup> Timothy Ingold. *Lines: A Brief History* (London: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>75</sup> Ingold, p. 85. Ingold distinguishes this sort of “sketch map” as emphasizing gesture, or movement along surface rather than cartographic maps that defines space through boundaries and borders. Similarly, art-historian Lisa Pon has described the ways in which the procession of a miraculous print, the Madonna of the Fire, sacralized urban space through connecting cultural memories of places along this route through the processional path. Lisa Pon, “Place, Print and Miracle: Forlì's *Madonna of the Fire* as a Functional Site,” *Art History* 31/3 (2008): 303 – 321.

that marked the processional activity of the Rogations processions have been destroyed, replaced now with the Seminary of Le Puy Cathedral. The modern procession has also grown to include new streets in the city that extend beyond the cathedral precinct.<sup>76</sup> It would then seem that the city of Le Puy continues these processions not only for religious devotion but also partly for the sake of cultural heritage, as a way of preserving some semblance of a past tradition in spite of urban change.<sup>77</sup> The exact medieval routes of the procession are thus less important than the ritual of the procession itself.

The act of the procession serves as a site of memory for the community that is independent from the fixity of its routes. These events have become simultaneously commemorative, iterative, and performative. I cannot argue that participating in the contemporary processions at Le Puy render the same experience as their medieval counterparts. Obviously, they cannot. But through the repetition of the procession over centuries, people have engaged with the landscape of Le Puy. The contemporary processions at Le Puy nonetheless succeed not by reproducing medieval rituals, but rather by re-presenting them: renewing their value and unction in a city that has both preserved and altered its paths. 🐼

---

<sup>76</sup> Modern-day processional route (Feast of the Assumption, 2008/2011): depart les grands escaliers, Rue des Tables, Avenue de la Cathédrale, Boulevard Carnot, Rue Pannessac, Rue Courrierie, Place du Marouret, Rue Chaussade, Rue Chèvrerie, Place Cadelade, Boulevard Marchal Fayolle, Boulevard du Breuil, Boulevard St. Louis, Boulevard Carnot, Avenue de la Cathédrale, Rue des Tables, Les grands escaliers. This route was altered in 2010 for the 150<sup>th</sup>-anniversary of the statue of Notre-Dame de France. The procession began at the municipal garden and continued through the streets of the lower town up to the cathedral.

<sup>77</sup> The resurgence of local city historical festivals has its roots in the nineteenth-century. These sorts of events have been argued to tie local urban history to the history of France. See Stephane Gearson, "Town, Nation or Humanity: Festive Delineations of Place and Past in Northern France ca. 1825 – 1865," *The Journal of Modern History* 72/3 (2000): 628 - 682.