SACRED SPACE, RELICS, AND PERFORMANCE: THE CHAPEL OF THE VIRGIN MARY, KARLSTEIN CASTLE

by

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(Under the Direction of Asen Kirin)

ABSTRACT

Of the many palaces built by Charles IV of Luxembourg (r. 1347-1376), Karlstein Castle is the sole structure which bears his name (1348-1372). Located thirty kilometers southwest of Prague, Karlstein stands as the physical manifestation of the emperor's desire for legitimacy and eternal salvation. Among the three structural units, a gradation of elevation is created to symbolize the progression from the earthly plane into the heavenly realm. The middle structure, the Lesser Tower, serves as the intermediary location of the complex and houses the Chapel of the Virgin Mary. An apocalypse cycle decorates the walls of the chapel, depicting the events of the eschaton per the Book of Revelation. Moving into the Chapel of the Virgin Mary is a crucial component within the ideological design of Karlstein and is a necessary step towards achieving enteral salvation.

INDEX WORDS: Karlstein, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Charles IV, Book of Revelation, *Apocalypse Cycle*, Relics, Semi-Precious Stones, Medieval Bohemia

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Introduction

Mortality is a universal reality faced by humans, a condition which leads one to question one's eternal fate after death. Answers are sought and created to rationalize this notion of ephemerality and used to soothe feelings of uncertainty. During the Middle Ages, this anxiety would be translated into visual programs, commonly viewed on cathedral facades, or decorating the interior of sacred spaces. Charles IV of Luxembourg (1316-1378) manifested this concern throughout his private residence, Karlstein Castle (1348-1372) (Figure. 1).[1] Located thirty kilometers southwest of Prague, Karlstein was built atop a lush, hilly landscape, an ideal topography that acts as a natural fortification for the complex. Taking advantage of the intrinsic defense system provided by the landscape, Charles IV housed his personal relic collection across the various sacred spaces of the castle complex, including stones from the sacred sites in the lives of the Virgin and Christ, objects associated with Christ's Passion, and of the various saints that he venerated.

Designed as a tripartite structure, the units of Karlstein are configured to follow the natural terrain, where a sense of gradation is created throughout the varying heights of the buildings. As a visitor moves through the complex, they begin in the lowest unit, the Imperial Palace, progress upwards into the Lesser Tower, and complete the act of procession in the Great Tower. The Chapel of the Virgin Mary was built in the middle of the structural complex, the Lesser Tower. This inherently intermediary location gestures to the Virgin's status as an intercessor and will be the location this paper focuses on. Frescoed onto the south, east, and west

[1] This paper will refer to the German spelling of Karlstein instead of the Czech spelling "Karlštejn." Charles IV was coronated as king of Bohemia in 1346 and as Holy Roman Emperor in 1355.

walls of the Chapel of the Virgin Mary is an apocalypse cycle according to the visions of John in the Book of Revelation (Figs. 2-5); precious relics are embedded in the west wall's window niche, and a relic cycle decorates the east side of the south wall. Indeed, Karlstein is a deeply symbolic and theatrical structure, via the necessitation of movement and the themes encoded within the structural spaces, which are complimented and supported through the visual programs found across each unit.

In this paper, I will provide a comprehensive and interpretive reading of the Chapel of the Virgin Mary's visual and architectural programs through investigating the function of the space, the presence of precious objects, the hermeneutical influences, and the ritual performance encoded within the imagery. By examining these various elements, I intend to define the role of the Chapel of the Virgin Mary and underscore its importance within the castle complex. In addition, this paper will also discuss the chapel's role as a reliquary and how the imagery aids the interpretation of the sacred objects within the chapel, alongside its ability to prepare the viewer for the heavenly sphere. This space, and its significance, has not been written about in great detail, and though scholars have discussed the chapel, its relevance has been diminished when compared to the Chapel of the Holy Cross in the Great Tower. Nevertheless, the apocalypse cycle, and the Chapel of the Virgin Mary more generally, is worthy of a focused analysis due to its ability to project Charles IV's status as a spiritual authority through the imagery and precious objects which occupy the space, as well as his feelings towards his personal fate, remaining as the only apocalypse cycle that he commissioned throughout his vast patronage.

History of the Castle Complex

In 1348, Charles IV founded Karlstein just one year after his coronation as King of Bohemia. Benesch von Weitmühl (d.1375), chronicler of Charles IV, briefly mentions the event

of Karlstein's foundation along with the other occurrences from that year.[2] In the same year, a deed issued by Jan Jindrich, Charles IV's brother, gave the nearby village of Žebrákova to the dean of Karlstein in exchange for daily mass at the newly built Church of St. Palmatius, located in the nearby village of Karlstein; to validate this decree, Charles IV signed a document to approve this donation, also in 1348.[3] Each of these records are recognized as the verifying sources for the castles foundation date.

In celebration of his new castle, Charles IV has been cited as stating, "Nostri proprij nominis adiectione pro nostra maiori memoria duximus appellandum, ut uidelicet karlstein a karolo nominetur," thus proclaiming his intention for bestowing his name onto the structure.[4] Naming a physical location after oneself evokes the longstanding tradition of a ruler infusing their identity with a place as a means to memorialize their legacy; this act by Charles IV calls upon the past while simultaneously anticipating renaissance humanism and the resulting surge of individualism stemming from that period. Identifying himself with the rulers of the past was part of the political strategy employed by Charles IV to establish and project his legitimacy throughout his reign as King of Bohemia, and eventually, as Holy Roman Emperor upon his coronation in 1355.

As King of Bohemia, Charles IV inherited a state recovering from the instability which marked the first quarter of the fourteenth century; namely, the aftermath following the assassination of Wenceslaus III (1289-1306) and the dissolution of the five-century rulership of

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[2] Beneš Krabice of Weitmil, *Cronica ecclesie Pragensis*, ed. Josef Emler, Fontes rerum bohemicarum, IV (Prague, 1884), 516.

[3] František Kavka, "The Role and Function of Karlstein Castle as Documented in Records from the Regin of Charles IV, in *Magister Theodoricus, court painter to Emperor Charles IV: the pictorial decoration of the shrines at Karlštejn Castle,* ed. Jiří Fajt (Prague: National Gallery, 1998), 17.

[4] "With the addition of our own name for our greater memory, we have decided to call it Karlstein, so that it is named after Charles," as quoted in Josef Neuwirth, "Karlstein und die Schicksale seiner Gemälde," in *Mittelalterliche Wandgemälde Und Tafelbilder Der Burg Karlstein in Böhmen* (Prag: J.G. Calve, 1896), 1, and Dobroslava Menclová, *Karlštejn* (Prague: Pražské nakladatelství V. Poláčka, 1965), 20.

the Přemyslids in Bohemia. With no heir to ascend to the throne, Bohemia searched for a new monarch and relied upon the husbands of Wenceslaus's sisters to lead the country. After two failed kingships, John the Blind (1296-1346), husband of Elizabeth of Bohemia and father to Charles IV, was selected to become King of Bohemia in 1310 and ruled until his death in 1346. Although his reign was long and successful, John the Blind's status as a foreign king was apparent. In an effort to avoid this distinction, Charles IV associated himself with his Přemyslid heritage and placed himself as the earthly successor to his ancestor, St. Wenceslaus.[5] With this, Charles IV established his status as a spiritual authority and strengthened this tie by amassing an impressive relic collection of over three hundred objects.[6] In utilizing the religious and political powers of relics, Charles IV elevated the prestige of both his kingship and Prague by intensifying the cultic topography in the city through dispersing his collected relics.[7] Nevertheless, this was not solely a political maneuver, as Charles IV retained a personal relic collection which was kept within the chapels of Karlstein.

The eminence of Charles IV's private relic collection led to his request for indulgences to be granted upon one's visitation and veneration of the holy objects in the Coronation Cross of Bohemia, a reliquary housed in Karlstein (Figure. 6). This request was approved by Pope Innocent VI in 1359 and granted pilgrims indulgences of seven years and seven quadragenes.[8] Although it is unknown if Charles IV's initial intention was for Karlstein to house personal his

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[5] Robert Suckale and Jiří Fait, "The Circle of Charles IV," in *Prague: The Crown of Bohemia, 1347-1437*, eds. Barbara Drake Boehm and Jiří Fajt (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art Publications, 2005), 33-44.
[6] David C. Mengel, "Bohemia's Treasury of Saints: Relics and Indulgences in Emperor Charles IV's Prague," in *Les saints et leur culte en Europe centrale au Moyen Âge: (xie-début du xvie siècle),* eds. Marie-Madeleine de Cevins and Olivier Marin, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 61.
[7] Kateřina Horničková, "My Saints: "Personal" Relic Collections in Bohemia before Emperor Charles IV," *Medium Aevum Quotidianum* 64 (2012): 50.
[8] Jaromír Homolka, "The Pictorial Decoration of the Palace and Lesser Tower of Karlštejn Castle," in *Magister Theodoricus, court painter to Emperor Charles IV: the pictorial decoration of the shrines at Karlštejn Castle* (Prague: National Gallery, 1998), 97-99. Here, Homolka provides the transcriptions of the foundational charter and indulgence approval.

relic collection, in time, this became its adopted function throughout its forty-year construction period.[9]

Constructing Karlstein was a continuous project throughout the reign of Charles IV, and was finally completed in 1372, just six years prior to his death. Therefore, the oscillating functions of the castle complex can be understood as a part of building process. This mutability is viewed in the Chapel of the Virgin Mary, which may have originally been a residential chamber, due to the peculiar layout of the space and the seeming discontinuity between the relic and apocalypse cycles. In 1357, the Chapel of the Virgin Mary was founded, and the space was converted into the location where the cantorial hours would be recited at sunrise and sunset.[10] Undeniably, Karlstein and the encompassing structures of the complex have had several modifications to their original design and function over the course of its existence, but these changes have ensured the castle's survival in the centuries after the death of Charles IV.

By the late sixteenth century, Karlstein was in a dilapidated state. Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II (1552-1612) renovated the space to prevent it from falling into a state of complete desolation. Over the course of the refurbishments by Rudolf II, several alterations such as additional staircases were added to the structure, and as a result, the complex in its current state diverges from the logical, hierarchical flow originally built.[11] Within the Chapel of the Virgin Mary, a window was added to the south wall, the northern wall demolished, and the frescos were whitewashed in 1596.[12] Rudolf II's intentions were likely not to efface the imagery, instead, this was to preserve and lighten them after years of staining caused by candle smoke, but the damage

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[9] Paul Crossley, "The politics of presentation: the architecture of Charles IV of Bohemia," in *Courts and Regions in Medieval Europe,* ed. S. Rees Johns, R. Marks, and A. J. Minnis (New York: Woodbridge, 2000), 142.
[10] Homolka, "The Pictorial Decoration of the Palace and Lesser Tower of Karlštejn Castle," 97-99.
[11] Dobroslava Menclová, *Karlštejn* (Prague: Pražské nakladatelství V. Poláčka, 1965), 40.
[12] Josef Neuwirth, "Die Wandgemälde der Karlsteiner Marienkirche," in *Mittelalterliche Wandgemälde Und Tafelbilder der Burg Karlstein in Böhmen* (Prag: J.G. Calve, 1896), 22.

from this process has resulted in the loss of the complete fresco cycle and rendered parts of the existing imagery illegible.

Fortuna Critica

Karlstein has been a topic of interest in scholarship for over a century. Many studies primarily concentrate on the ideological function of the castle complex and the iconographic program of the topmost space, the Chapel of the Holy Cross. Analyses of the Chapel of the Virgin Mary are commonly included amongst these sources; however, these texts typically discuss only the chapel's relic cycle and not its apocalypse frescos. Josef Neuwirth's 1896 book, *Mittelalterliche Wandgemälde und Tafelbilder der Burg Karlstein in Böhmen*, was first to identify the different phases of the castle complex, including the periods of construction, renovations, and restoration efforts.[13] In his focused chapter on the Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Neuwirth distinguishes the various scenes of the relic and apocalypse cycles and transcribes the text that appears on the wall surfaces.[14] Furthermore, Neuwirth indicates that the apocalypse cycle was rediscovered merely thirty-nine years prior to the publication of his book, making his source the first to acknowledge the presence of the cycle within the modern era. Neuwirth's discussion is positivistic and historiographic in nature and remains a foundational source for the subsequent authors who engage with the chapel and Karlstein at large.

In 1957, Dobroslava Menclová applied Neuwirth's account to interpret Karlstein as the projection of Charles IV's political ideology.[15] Menclová explains that Karlstein exemplifies Charles IV desire to secure his status as a pious and individualistic ruler, one worthy of

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[13] Josef Neuwirth, *Mittelalterliche Wandgemälde Und Tafelbilder der Burg Karlstein in Böhmen* (Prag: J.G. Calve, 1896). Title translated as "Medieval Mural Paintings and Panel Paintings of Karlstein Castle in Bohemia."
[14] Chapter titled "Die Wandgemälde der Karlsteiner Marienkirche," and is discussed between pgs. 21-42.
[15] Dobroslava Menclová, "Karlštejn a jeho ideový obsah," *Umeni/Art* V (1957): 277-300. Article title translated as "Karlstein and its Ideological Content."

dedicating his name and memory to a structure. As such, Menclová describes the political significance of the Passion relics and their accompanying imagery in the Chapel of the Virgin Mary and how they helped facilitate the ideological function of Karlstein. Additionally, Menclová is the first to note that the space of the Chapel of the Virgin Mary was likely a residential chamber initially which was later converted into a chapel space, hence the difference of imagery viewed between the relic cycle and the apocalypse cycle. Menclová's 1965 book, *Karlštejn,* analyzes the complex at greater length, but does not include an extended discussion of the apocalypse cycle.[16] Nonetheless, Menclová's reading of Karlstein remains a fundamental source and has shaped later dialogues concerning the role of the castle.

Several decades later, František Fišer introduced and connected the hermeneutical influences of the apocalypse cycle, identifying Alexander of Minortia and Nicholas of Lyra as the key theologians whose commentaries on the Book of Revelation shaped the visual elements of the cycle.[17] Fišer designates the particular scenes which connect to the commentaries of the previously mentioned theologians; however, his analysis does not account for the greater themes found throughout these hermeneutical texts and their relationship to the apocalypse cycle.[18] Following Fišer's book, an edited volume, *Magister Theodoricus, Court Painter to Emperor Charles IV: the Pictorial decoration of the Shrines at Karlštejn Castle*, was published by the National Gallery Prague in 1998.[19] In the edited volume, Jaromír Homolka provides a historiographic description of the various components that comprise the Chapel of the Virgin

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[16] Dobroslava Menclová, *Karlštejn* (Prague: Pražské nakladatelství V. Poláčka, 1965).
[17] František Fišer, *Karlštejn: vzájemné vztahy tří karlštejnských kaplí* (Kostelní Vydří, Czechia: Karmelitánské nakl, 1996). Book title translated as "Karlstein: Mutual Relations Among the Three Karlstein Chapels."
[18] Specifically discussed in the chapters: "Apokalypsa" pgs. 160-183 and "Apokalyptickálitanie Všech Svatých" pgs. 184-197
[19] Jiří Fajt, ed., *Magister Theodoricus, court painter to Emperor Charles IV: the pictorial decoration of the shrines at Karlštejn Castle,* (Prague: National Gallery, 1998).

Mary's space and includes a transcription of documents pertaining to the chapel his chapter.[20] Homolka's chapter continues to be the key source in English that examines the Chapel of the Virgin Mary at length. In 2000, Paul Crossley contributed to the English scholarship of Karlstein, and more particularly the apocalypse cycle in his chapter, "The politics of presentation: the architecture of Charles IV of Bohemia."[21] Crossley provides a condensed and concise examination of the chapel and the significance of its program, although this is not the main focus of the chapter as several of Charles IV's commissions are analyzed.

More recent publications have discussed the Chapel of the Virgin Mary in relation to the relic cycle and the metaphorical themes of the castle at large. Jan Royt argues the dating of the relic cycle in his chapter "The Dating and Iconography of the So-Called Relics Scenes in the Chapel of Our Lady at Karlštejn Castle."[22] Royt contends that the relic cycle was a part of a secular space and would have been completed around or before 1357, thus establishing the timeline of the apocalypse cycle to be around 1363-1365. On a broader scale, Milada Studničková has examined the various metaphorical themes of Karlstein in her chapter, "Karlstein as a Theological Metaphor."[23] Studničková identifies the Mariological themes encoded within the Chapel of the Virgin Mary and interprets this quality as functioning within the greater design of the castle complex. This chapter stands as the most recent source that interprets the Chapel of the Virgin Mary beyond a basic identification of the imagery and themes

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[20] Jaromír Homolka, "The Pictorial Decoration of the Palace and Lesser Tower of Karlštejn Castle," in *Magister Theodoricus, court painter to Emperor Charles IV: the pictorial decoration of the shrines at Karlštejn Castle* (Prague: National Gallery, 1998), 46-105.

[21] Paul Crossley, "The politics of presentation: the architecture of Charles IV of Bohemia," in *Courts and Regions in Medieval Europe,* ed. S. Rees Johns, R. Marks, and A. J. Minnis (New York: Woodbridge, 2000), 99-172. The Chapel of the Virgin Mary is discussed between pgs. 140-158.

[22] Jan Royt, "The Dating and Iconography of the So-Called Relics Scenes in the Chapel of Our Lady at Karlštejn Castle," in *Court Chapels of the High and Late Middle Ages and Their Artistic Decoration*, ed. Jiří Fajt (Prague: National Gallery of Prague, 2003), 64-67.

[23] Milada Studničková, "Karlstein as a Theological Metaphor," in *Prague and Bohemia: Medieval Art Architecture and Cultural Exchange in Central Europe*, ed. Zoë Opačić (Leeds: Maney, 2009), 168-182.

found across the space. As of 2024, the latest source that engages with contents of the Chapel of the Virgin Mary is a 2023 article, "Blood in Stone and the Second Coming: On the Meaning of the Wenceslas Chapel in St. Vitus's Cathedral in Prague and the Karlstein Chapels," written by Petr Uličný.[24] Uličný briefly describes the apocalypse cycle and the symbolism of the *crux gemmata* in the window niche but does not expand upon existing ideas concerning the imagery in this article.

Previously written sources concerning Karlstein have established the ideological and theological significance of the castle complex more generally. These sources are invaluable and provide a significant foundation for an examination concerning the space to be built upon these existing texts. In spite of this, concentrated analyses relating to the Chapel of the Virgin Mary and the apocalypse cycle remain sparse. This absence in the literature is commonly associated with the lack of significance attributed to the chapel, whether due to its size or placement within the castle complex. Nevertheless, the abundance of symbolism encoded within the chapel's space participates within the greater function of the castle complex and allows for an extended interpretive analysis to be made. Over the course of this text, I intend to elucidate how the function Chapel of the Virgin Mary is salient within the design of Karlstein and demonstrate its significance within the larger artistic and architectural programs of the castle complex.

Description of the Architectural Space

Height became a matter of importance within medieval architectural development. Cities pushed their building projects, mainly sacred structures, to new extremes to convey their prestige and forge their proximity to God.[25] Palatial structures such as Karlstein also incorporated this

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[24] Petr Uličný, "Blood in Stone and the Second Coming: On the Meaning of the Wenceslas Chapel in St. Vitus's Cathedral in Prague and the Karlstein Chapels," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 86, 2023: 145-194.
[25] Asen Kirin, "Contemplating the Vistas of Piety at the Rila Monastery Pyrgos," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 59 (2005): 98.

architectural design, where one can experience a journey of upward progression when moving amongst the structural units (Figure. 7). One must begin in the Imperial Palace, the lowest unit, and encounter a series of stairways throughout the complex to access the higher structures. This movement is both performative and emblematic, as one starts in the earthly plane, then moves into an intermediary space, and finalizes their tour in the heavenly realm; echoing the three divisions of time: past, present, and future. Amongst each structure, the accompanying visual programs reinforces this notion of the varying periods of time through their selected imagery and is supported through the carefully curated precious objects which occupy these spaces. To note, the focus of this thesis is the Chapel of the Virgin Mary and the apocalypse cycle, but in order to understand the deeper meaning of the chapel, it is necessary to explain the complete ensemble of the castle complex.

Representing the temporal plane and the historical past, the Imperial Palace communicates the esteemed ancestry of Charles IV. Previously decorating the great hall, the Luxembourg Genealogy cycle presented the mythologized lineage of Charles IV, including biblical patriarchs, ancient Greco-Roman heroes and gods, and Germanic kings, culminating with the members of the Luxembourg dynasty (Figure. 8).[26] Currently identified from a sixteenth century manuscript which illustrated the various figures featured in the cycle, the Luxembourg Genealogy cycle was damaged due to the plaster on the wall chipping away beginning in the fifteenth or sixteenth century.[27] Nevertheless, it established the eminence, albeit mostly fictious, of Charles IV's ancestry and visually projected his legitimacy by establishing him as the rightful heir to these historic patriarchs. While the Imperial Palace construes the time of the past, the Chapel of the Virgin Mary stands as the symbol of the present moment.

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[26] Homolka, "The Pictorial Decoration of the Palace and Lesser Tower of Karlštejn Castle," 51-52.
[27] Ibid, 51.

Crossing the threshold from the past into present time, a viewer accesses the meeting point between the mortal and divine realms in the Chapel of the Virgin Mary. Entering from the eastern side, the viewer is immediately exposed to the imagery on the west wall; however, movement is required within the space to view the various components of the apocalypse cycle on each wall (Figure. 9). In the present moment, the viewer encounters the point of their final judgment in the wake of immersing themselves in the apocalyptic imagery. As this weighs upon the viewer, they will return back to the west wall, where the window offers a moment of illumination, giving life to the imagery and inviting the viewer to sit on the stone bench set within a window niche (Figure. 10).[28] Sitting in the niche, the viewer is prompted to consider the imagery pertaining to Christ's and the Virgin's lives that shelters them and contemplate their contents in relation to the remainder of the apocalyptic program that they face. Here, one is guided to consider where they may spend their eternal fate, perhaps in the hellish landscape conveyed through the apocalypse cycle, or the heavenly setting of arcadia, the vista viewed when peering out of the window (Figure. 11).[29] This moment of reflection, however, would not have been such a daunting, threatening experience due to the protective qualities which emanate from the relics and semi-precious stones set within the niche alongside the naming of the chapel itself.

From its namesake, the Chapel of the Virgin Mary evokes the intercessory and protective powers of the Virgin, and subsequently serves a function within the architectural space. Namely, the Chapel of the Virgin Mary and its transitory function is an allegory for the womb of the Virgin, a space where one is incubated prior to their progression into the heavenly realm.[30] This assigned purpose of the space underscores the aspect of mortality that humans face, thus

[28] Neuwirth, "Die Wandgemälde der Karlsteiner Marienkirche," 21.
[29] Kirin, "Contemplating the Vistas of Piety at the Rila Monastery Pyrgos," 124-133.
[30] Studničková, "Karlstein as a Theological Metaphor," 173.

presenting the start and ending of life, and in turn, perhaps seen as the beginning and ending of church history. Charles IV held a lifelong devotion to the cult of the Virgin, a sect which he both fostered and followed throughout his lifetime, stemming from his visionary experience on the feast day of the Assumption of the Virgin in 1333.[31] Therefore, naming the chapel after the Virgin not only showcased his reverence for the mother of Christ, but also instills the importance of the space within the architectural program, with the Virgin acting as the attendant who aids one's progression to the heavenly realm through their passage from this space.

To enter the heavenly sphere within Karlstein, one must travel through the drawbridge accessed from the sacristy in the Lesser Tower and climb the staircase to reach the highest point of the castle complex, the Great Tower. Decorating the walls of the staircase is the St. Wenceslaus cycle (Figure. 12), the genealogical cycle of Charles IV's Přemyslid ancestry, a sanctified lineage which contains two saints, Ludmila and Wenceslaus. The act of climbing up stairs and obtaining assistance from saintly figures draws upon the Byzantine icon of the *Ladder of Divine Ascent* (Figure. 13), where upon reaching the final destination, one is granted access into the heavenly sphere and its earthy manifestation, the Chapel of the Holy Cross.[32]

Upon reaching the architectural apex of Karlstein, one reaches the Chapel of the Holy Cross, the terrestrial representation of Heavenly Jerusalem and the time of the future (Figure. 14). Byzantine styled panel paintings of saints with their relics encased in the frames as well as the remainder of the apocalyptic narrative adorn the walls of the chapel space, thus facilitating the holy presence of the chapel in conjunction with the golden arched ceilings. The spatial position of the Great Tower permits one to be in the closet proximity to God that the structure

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[31] Charles IV, *Karoli IV Imperatoris Romanorum Vita Ab Eo Ipso Conscripta; et, Hystoria Nova de Sancto Wenceslao Martyre*, 61-65.
[32] Studničková, "Karlstein as a Theological Metaphor," 175.

allows through its increased elevation.[33] In addition, this configuration suggests, upon Christ's second coming, he will descend from the Chapel of the Holy Cross, a conduit of heaven, back to earth to facilitate his role in the final judgment of mankind.[34]

In order to access to the various structures of Karlstein, the act of procession is necessary; echoing the ceremonial rituals which took place across royal buildings on the morning of a king's coronation when the new monarch would walk from the private spaces of the castle to the public areas during the march to his enthronement.[35] Karlstein's use of this design emulates structures such as the papal palace of Benedict XII in Avignon (begun 1334), where the hierarchical space creates a transition from the public to private spaces, and promotes the act of inward reflection upon ascending the higher structures and experiencing solitude.[36] At its core, Karlstein's architectural design serves a purpose to elucidate Charles IV's legitimacy and spiritual authority, and also critically engages with the contemporaneous architectural design patterns. Imagery, too, has the same function within the castle complex, where the relic and apocalypse cycles that decorate the Chapel of the Virgin Mary each reinforce Charles IV's dogma.

Description of the Imagery in the Chapel of the Virgin Mary

Mural paintings and manuscript illuminations were the two of the most common forms of painting in medieval Bohemia. Frescoes became popularized in the twelfth century and continued to be the primary medium that decorated sacred spaces into the fourteenth century.[37]

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[33] Crossley, "The politics of presentation: the architecture of Charles IV of Bohemia,"154.
[34] Ibid, 177.
[35] Richard Němec, "Solitude or Performance? The Papal and Royal-Imperial Residences of Benedict XII and Charles IV in Avignon, Prague and Karlštejn," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 170 (January 1, 2017): 140.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Jan Royt, "Romanesque Painting," in *Medieval Painting in Bohemia,* (Prague: Charles University, Karolinum Press, 2003), 16.

John the Blind began to incorporate secular subject matter within his patronage, including muraled coat of arms which decorated his dining hall.[38] Charles IV followed this example and incorporated secular and religious narrative across Karlstein, each of which are viewed within the cycles that decorate the Chapel of the Virgin Mary.

Within the Chapel of the Virgin Mary, each wall is delineated by three or four registers: an upper register inclusive of votive imagery, the middle register(s) containing the narrative of the apocalypse, and a fictitious architectural landscape in the lowest section. Above and below each register, there is Latin text that accompanies the imagery on the walls, both identifying the narrative and extending it beyond what is viewed on the wall surface.[39] Indeed, the apocalypse cycle reads like an illuminated manuscript from the imagery and the accompanying text, and perhaps drew from the Velislav Bible (1325-1350) (Figure. 15), where the narrative images and text are formatted in the same manner as the Karlstein cycle.

As aforementioned, upon entering the space, one encounters the imagery on the west wall. Read from right to left, the narrative that occupies middle register of the west wall begins with a scene of the Woman standing on the moon as she cradles her infant under a canopy and ends with the scenes of the Woman fleeing from the dragon and the beast expelling a flood from its mouth (Figures. 16-17) (Rev. 12:1 and 12:14-16).[40] Traditionally, the woman of the

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[38] Jan Royt, "Painting in the Reign of King John of Luxembourg," in *Medieval Painting in Bohemia,* (Prague: Charles University, Karolinum Press, 2003), 32.

[39] Each transcription derives from Neuwirth's chapter "Die Wandgemälde der Karlsteiner Marienkirche," pgs. 23-41. For reference, the bible verses that are referenced in the text of this paper identifies the scene(s) depicted in the apocalypse cycle. In the footnotes, the transcriptions of the entire Latin text that appears on the walls, as provided by Neuwirth's text, and may extend beyond the verse indicated in the text of the paper. Every word of the verse may not be included due to the imagery's damage and may be substituted by text in brackets.

[40] Note: when referring to the woman in a scene of the apocalypse the word is capitalized, otherwise it is lowercased; dragon, however, remains lowercased. Scene 1: Rev. 12:1, 5 "Et signum magnum apparuit in celo • mulier • amicta • sole • et • luna • || sub pedibus • eins • et • in • capite • eins • corona • stellarum • Et • mulier • peperit • || filium • masculum • qui • recturus • erat • omnes • gentes • in • virga • ferrea." Scenes 2, 3: Rev. 12:3-4 "Et visum • est • aliud • signum • in celo • et • ecce • draco • magnus • rufus • habens • capita • septem • et cornua • et • in capitibus • ejus • diademata • septem • et • cauda • eius trahebat • terciam • partem • stellarum • cæli || et •

apocalypse has been interpreted as an allegorical representation of the Virgin and as a symbol of the church.[41] Her explicit predominance within this cycle instills her importance and is visually articulated through the immediacy of her imagery and the enlarged sizing of these scenes when compared to the remainder of the cycle.

In the first scene, the Madonna and Child type is referenced; the infant grasps for his mother as she her directs her gaze towards him, similar to Duccio's panel that bears the same name as this visual type (Figure. 18). Each of the two figures possess a notable sense of individuality by the manner their facial features are rendered; this, alongside the delineation of the scene, underscores their significance within the overall cycle. Scholars have theorized that the facial characteristics of the woman emulate those of Anna von Schweidnitz, Charles IV's third wife, due to the similarities found between her depiction in the apocalypse cycle and her appearances in other frescos as well as illuminated manuscripts (Figures. 19-20).[42] Including Anna von Schweidnitz's countenance may indicate a sense of grief and devotion from Charles IV following her death during childbirth one year before the apocalypse cycle began, and perhaps serves as an attempt to both honor her memory and ensure her salvation.[43] In addition, the depiction of the child, a conduit of Christ, may be a reference to Charles IV's firstborn son and heir, Wenceslaus IV, who was born to the king and Anna von Schweidnitz two years prior to the cycle's commission.

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misit • eas • in terram." Rev. 12:13-16 "Et • persecutus • est • draco • mulierem • que • peperit • masculum • et • date • sunt • mulieri • due • ale • aquile • magne • ut • volaret • in desertum • in locum • suum • || Et • misit • serpens • ex ore • suo • post • mulierem • aquam • tanquam • flumen • ut • eam • faceret • trahi • a flumine • et • adiuuit • terra • mulierem • et • aperuit terra • os suum • et • absorbuit • flumen • quod • misit • draco de ore suo."

[41] Sergi Doménech García "The Woman and the Dragon—The Formation of the Image of the *Mulier Amicta Sole* in the Revelation of St. John in Western Medieval Art" *Religions* 14, no. 1: 18 (2023): 3.

[42] Barbara Brauer, "The Prague Hours and Bohemian Manuscript Painting of the Late 14th Century," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 52. Bd., H. 4 (1989), 520. Examples include the frescoed donor portrait in the oratory of St. Catherine and the *Prague Hours* manuscript.

[43] Anna von Schweidnitz died during the birth of their third child, who was stillborn.

A rocky, treacherous terrain occupies the majority of the background of the second and third scenes on the west wall. Bestowed with a set of wings, the woman flies away from the dragon and seeks shelter (Figure. 17). An encircled cross is rendered in the composition beneath the right side of the woman, seemingly acting as an amulet that guides her into safety. This seal is also viewed on the left side of the dragon right before its tail, again acting as a protective emblem, perhaps for the viewer, within the narrative sequence. Connected to the left side of the west wall, the window niche reiterates this theme of protection through its imagery and the precious objects which comprise the architectural unit.

Decorating the walls of the window niche are scenes from the lives of Christ and the Virgin, including Christ's Resurrection and the Harrowing of Hell on the left side, the death and Coronation of the Virgin in the vault, and the Pentecost on the right side (Figure. 21).[44] In the scene of Christ's Resurrection, the savior emerges from a tomb ornamented with a semi-precious stone and outlined with gold (Figure. 22). Explanatory text is found beneath this scene and defines the relics that are encased within the wall of the niche and includes the stones that were collected from the locations of Christ's tomb, the Virgin's gravestone, Christ's manger, Virgin's death location, the last supper, where the doubter Thomas touched the wounds of Christ, and Christ's ascension.[45] Beneath the reliquary is a *crux gemmata* (Figure. 23), a cross adorned with seventeen red and purple semi-precious stones and is also outlined in gold. From the left side, the

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[44] Crossley, "The politics of presentation: the architecture of Charles IV of Bohemia," 149. Due to the various amounts of damages within the chapel's space, many of the paintings in the niche are illegible. Additionally, there are limited, if any, images of the right side and the vault.

45 "In • hoc • sepulcro • domini • hee • reliquie • retinentur • primo • de • lapide • sepulcri • domini • per • angelos • amoto • || Item • de • lapide • sepulcri • marie • posito • Item • de • statua • ad • quam • Christus • fuit • ligatus • Item • de presepe • domini • Item • de || loco • ubi • Christus • vidit • irhusalem • et fleuit • Item • de • || • [monte d]e quo christus • predicauit • Item alia particula de statua • predicta • || Item de • loco • ubi • christus • fecit • cenam • cum • discipulis • suis • Item • de loco ubi sanctus • thomas • christum • palpauit • || Item de • loco • ubi • beata • virgo • mortua fuit • Item • de • loco • ubi • christus • ad • celum • ascendit • Item • de • loco • ubi • christus • stetit."

niche is connected to the west side of the west wall, the space that includes the entrance to the Oratory of St. Catherine.

Over the doorway to the Oratory of St. Catherine is the depiction of a choir of angels that are flanked by two figures robed in red garments, likely being the donor portraits of Charles IV and Anna von Schweidnitz (Figure. 24). This section of the west wall has been understood as the imagery which signifies the contents of the oratory, Charles IV's private chapel, rather than participating with the sequence of events from the apocalypse cycle; although these portraits correspond with the oratory, they also follow along with the theme of devotional imagery formerly viewed on the upper register on the wall.[46] When looking towards the upper register of the west wall, one would see the votive imagery that contained the images of saints and the family members of Charles IV. Though these images are currently illegible, the figures have been identified from the surviving text on the walls which includes the names of Anna von Schweidnitz, listed as Anna Regina, St. Ludmila, St. James, St. Andrew, St. Simon and Judas, St. John the Evangelist.[47]

Turning to the left, the viewer faces the south wall where the relic cycle and the beginning of the apocalypse cycle is rendered. On the east side of the south wall, the imagery of the relic cycle presents Charles IV's accruement of the Passion relics which appears on a projected wall surface (Figure. 25). As mentioned previously, the abrupt shift in thematic narrative, the relic cycle has been speculated to have been a decorative feature of a residential room or a hallway, and was likely preserved to serve as a historical documentation of the events

[46] Crossley, "The politics of presentation: the architecture of Charles IV of Bohemia," 148.
[47] "Chorus prophetarum Anna regi[na Ludmi]la S. Jacobus S. Petrus S. Andreas S. Simon et Judas S Johannes evangelist Anna impera[trix]."

of Charles IV's relic collecting and to instill his status as a priest king.[48] In the first scene of the relic cycle, Charles V of France hands Charles IV pieces of the crown of thorns and the true cross.[49] The second scene features a nobleman passing Charles IV a piece of the sponge; however, their identity remains unknown and has been speculated to be Louis I of Hungary, Pierre de Lusignan, or Ludovico Gonzaga.[50] Charles IV places his gifts into the golden Coronation Cross of Bohemia in the final scene. Similar to the west wall, votive imagery was previously found above the relic cycle and included the image of Charles IV and his first wife, Blanche of Valois, and the holy trinity, which are also known from the existing text.[51]

On the left side of the projected wall is text from the Book of Revelation which indicated the former altar space (Figure. 26) (Rev. 8:3-4); there is, however, no accompanying imagery with this text, as the first scenes of the apocalypse cycle begin on the west side of the south wall.[52] In its original state, the apocalyptic narrative would have begun with the scene of the lamb and the scroll which is indicated through the partial text above the surviving imagery (Rev. 5:9). Presently, the apocalypse cycle develops from the depiction of the four horsemen of the

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[48] Menclová, "Karlstein a jeho ideový obsah," 292. Menclová states that in its original context, the relic cycle likely had a similar function as the Luxembourg Genealogy cycle.

[49] Royt, "The Dating and Iconography of the So-Called Relics Scenes in the Chapel of Our Lady at Karlštejn Castle," 64. The identity of this monarch is debated throughout scholarship, with attributions varying between John II (r. 1350-1364) or his son, Charles V (r. 1364-1380). Royt clarifies in this chapter both the dating of the relic cycle (1357) and the identification of the French monarch who is rendered. Namely, the gifting of the relics was prior to Charles V's coronation as king, a point in which would make his depiction in the royal crown both inappropriate and inaccurate and is confirmed by other depictions of him crownless prior to 1364 in manuscripts.

[50] Ibid; Uličný, "Blood in Stone and the Second Coming: On the Meaning of the Wenceslas Chapel in St. Vitus's Cathedral in Prague and the Karlstein Chapels," 155. It is difficult to ascertain who exactly gave the relic of the Holy Sponge to Charles IV, as many different theories have been produced. Most Recently, Uličný has stated that the figure is possibly Byzantine Emperor John V Palaiologos.

[51] "karolus • Hilus • imperator | Bianca • Regina | sajncta • trinitas."

[52] Rev. 8:3-4 "angelus venit || et stetit ante || altare habens || thuribulum aureum || sunt • et • data • illi || incens||a • mult||a • ut • daret || de • oracionibus • || sanctorum • omnium || super • aureum || altare • quod • est || conspectum • || ante tronum || dei • et • || ascendit • fu||mus • in • cens||orum de • or||acione • sanc||torum • de • manu • ange||li • coram de||o • et acce||pit angelus || thuribulum || aureum • et con||pleuit • illud || de • ingne • al||taris • et • mis||it • in • terram • et."

apocalypse (Figure. 27) (Rev. 6:2-8).[53] Again, an encircled cross is rendered, and appears over the horsemen who are advancing towards their prophesied destruction of humanity. When turning left again, the viewer encounters the east wall, where the narrative sequence continues and depicts the disastrous events of the eschaton.

Presented from left to right, the sequence of events is read in the same manner as the western script. In the upper middle register of the left side, an angel blows his trumpet and opens the sixth seal in the first scene (Figure. 28) (Rev. 9:13).[54] Below the winged figure, an additional angel releases the four angels of the Euphrates to kill one third of mankind (Rev. 9:14-15). The second scene is conjoined with the first and shows riders on horses with lion jaws and snake tails who stride towards the humans to terrorize them in the final days of the world (Rev. 9:16-17).[55] Separated by a strip of text that explains the second scene, the third scene jumps to chapter ten verse one, where John is depicted kneeling and consuming the scroll fed to him by an angel with fiery legs (Figure. 29).[56] Next to this image is the fourth scene that shows John measuring the temple (Rev. 11:1).[57] Elijah and Enoch are presented as the witnesses who stand before the crowd in scene five (Figure. 30) (Rev. 11:3).[58] Scene six displays the beast rising from the abyss

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[53] Rev. 5:9 “Et cantabant canticum novum dicentes: Dignus es domine accipere librum et aperire signacula eins; quoniam occisus es et redemisti nos deo in sanguine tuo.” Rev. 6:5-8 “ex • omni • tribu • et • lingua • et • populo • et • fecisti • n[os] de[o nostro regnum et sacerdot]es • et • regnabimus • Cum aperuisset • agnus quartum sigillum • equus || pallidus et qui sedebat super eum nomen illi mors et [infernus sequebatur eum et data est illi pot]|estas super partes terre et interficere • Cu[m aperuisset] agnus sigillum • terfcium et] ecce • equus niger et •]|[qui se]debat super eum habebat • stataram in manu sua et audiui || vocem in medio animalium dicencium • bilibris tritici denario • Cum • aperuisset agnus • sigillum dicens veni et vide • super eum datum • est • ei.”

[54] Rev. 9:13-15 “Sextus • ange[lus] • tuba • cecinit • et • audiui • vocem • unam • ex • cornibus altaris aurei quod est ante oculos dei [d]icentem • sexto • || angelo • qui • habebat • tubam • solue • • angelos • qu[i alli]galti] • sunt • in • [flufmine magno] euphrate • et • soluti • sunt • ang[el]i • qui • [parati •].” The verse is completed by separating strip: “erant • [i]n • horam • [e]t • diem • et • mensem • et annum • vt • occiderent.”

[55] Text for chapter 9 verses 16 and 17 does not appear on the walls.

[56] Rev. 10:1 “Et • uidi • angelum • fortem • descenden[tem] de • celo • [amict]um [nub]e || et • yris • in • capite eius et facies • eius • erat • ut • [so]l • et.” Verse completed by strip next to scene “que • [lo]cuta • sunt • VII • tonitrua • noli • ea • scribere.”

[57] Rev. 11:1 “[Et datus est mihi] • ca[lamus similis] virge • [et dictum] est michi [surge et • metire •] templum • dei”

[58] Rev. 11:3-5 “[Et d]ab[o] • duobus • testibus • meis • et • prophetabunt • diebus • mille • ducentis • || amicti • saccis • hii • sunt • due • oliue • et • duo • candelabra • in • conspectu • domini.” Rev. 11:6 appears in the strip to the right “Hi • habent • potestatem • claudendi • celum.”

and the deceased bodies of Elijah and Enoch appear in scene seven (Figure. 31) (Rev. 11:7-8).[59] In the eighth scene, the bodies of Elijah and Enoch are given the spirit of life and is joined with scene nine where the onset of the earthquake is depicted (Figure. 32) (Rev. 11:11-13).[60]

Following the progression of the events from the eleventh chapter, the lower middle section of the eastern wall also begins with an angel blowing their trumpet to open the seventh and final seal in the first scene (Figure. 33) (Rev. 11:15).[61] Christ emerges out of the golden ark in the second scene and is positioned under a canopy (Figure. 34) (Rev. 11:19).[62] Thunder, lightning, and destruction dominate the imagery of the third scene, with the aftermath of the earthquake conveyed through the crumbling of a building (Figure. 35) (Rev. 11:19). Scene four transitions into the twelfth chapter where the woman of the apocalypse is displayed laying down as the seven-headed dragon looms over her body (Figure. 36) (Rev. 12:1).[63] Again, an encircled cross is rendered over the woman, protecting her from the imposing serpentine. The narrative jumps to the latter verses of the twelfth chapter in scenes five and six where Michael and his angels fight the dragon and the spirits of hell, where Satan is eventually cast out in his defeat (Rev. 12:8-9), and amid this is the scene of the rejection of the brothers in hell (Figure. 37) (Rev.

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[59] Rev. 11:7 “Bestia • que • ascendit • ab • aby[sso] || faciet • aduers[sum] ill[os be]ll[um] et,” and is continued on the strip to the right “vincet illos • et • occidet • eos.” Scene 7: Rev. 11:8-9 “Corpora • [eo]rum • iacebunt • in • plateis || ciuitatis • magne • ubi dominus cruci” completed by strip to the right “fixus • de • tribubus • uidebunt • de • populis • et.”

[60] Rev. 11:11, 13 “Post • dies • tres • spiritus • vite • ad • eo • intrabit • in • eos • et • steterunt • super • pedes • eius • Et • in • illa • hora • factus • est • te[rre motus magn]us et [cecidit civitatis pars]| decima • et • occisa • sunt • [in terre motu nomin]a hominum [septem].” Inscription down southeast corner comes from Rev. 11:14 “Veh secundum • abiit • et • ecce • veh • ven[iet].”

[61] Rev. 11:15-17 “Veh secundum • abiit • et ecce • veh • tercium veniet cito • et • angelus tuba cecinit • et facte sunt voces magne in celo • dicentes • factum est regnum huius • mundi dei nostri • et christi eius • et regnabit in secula seculorum amen • et XXIIII • seniores • qui in conspectu dei sedent in sedibus suis || ceciderunt • in facies suas et adorauerunt eum dicentes • Gracias agimus tibi • domine • deus • noster • omnipotens.”

[62] Rev. 11:19 “Et apertum • est • templum • dei • in • celo • et • visa est archa testamenti eius • in • templo • eius • et facta sunt • fulgura et voces • et terre motus • et grando • magna.”

[63] Rev. 12:1-3 “Et signum magnum apparuit in celo mutier [in utero] habens clamabat parturiens et cruciabatur vt || pariat • Et visum est aliud signum in celo et ecce draco magnus rufus habens capita septem.” Text to left of the fourth scene derives from Rev. 12:4 “Et draco stetit ante mulierem que erat paritura • vt cum peperisset.”

12:10-12).[64] In the far-right corner of the final scene of the east wall, a figure in a turban is shown crouching down amongst the demons which surround him (Figure. 38). Although little is known about the uppermost register of the east wall, it can be assumed that it followed along with the theme of votive imagery as well.

Rotating one final time to the left, one faces the north wall (Figure. 2). In its present state, the north wall is bare, only maintaining the architectural imagery that was painted during the nineteenth century renovation. Due to the amount of damage the frescos suffered; this section of the chapel's program is left up for debate. Scholars who have studied the space have surmised that the north wall would have likely featured imagery from the thirteenth chapter of the Book of Revelation.[65] Here, the entryway into the sacristy is found eventually leads to the access point of the great tower; therefore, it is reasonable to believe that this would have been the concluding section of the narrative, as one is able to continue their journey throughout the complex from this point.

The imagery of the apocalypse cycle alone appears as a seemingly confrontational narrative, presenting the viewer with the possibilities of their eternal fate come the time of the final reckoning. Nevertheless, the inclusion of relics and semi-precious stones within the chaoel's space mitigates this feeling of uncertainty and instead provide a sense of comfort for the viewer while intaking the apocalyptic imagery.

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[64] Rev. 12:7-9, 10-12 "Factum • est • prelium • magnum • in • celo • mihahel • et • angeli • eius • preliabantur • [cu]m dracone • et • draco • preliabatur • et • angeli • eius • et non valuerunt neque locus inventus est amplius eorum in celo • Et proiectus [e]s[t] d[ra]co ille magnus se[rpens]| Et audiui vocem magnam • in • celo • dicentem nunc factum • est • salus et virtus • et • regnum • dei nostri et potestas christi eius quia proiectus est accusator fratrum nostrorum qui [accusabat] • Ve terre • et mare • quia descendit diabolus ad vos."

[65] Crossley, "The politics of presentation: the architecture of Charles IV of Bohemia," 138; Uličný, "Blood in Stone and the Second Coming: On the Meaning of the Wenceslas Chapel in St. Vitus's Cathedral in Prague and the Karlstein Chapels," 155.

Sacred Objects: Relics and Semi-Precious Stones

Relics inherently provide a sense of spiritual protection for the devotee and define the space that they occupy. When placed within a sacred structure, relics acquire the ability to communicate with the imagery and the physical space that surrounds them. For instance, the imagery of the relic cycle describes the contents of the Coronation Cross of Bohemia, which was placed in the northern altar of the Oratory of St. Catherine (Figure. 9).[66] From this axial arrangement, the scenes of the relic cycle conversed with and signaled the presence of the relics in the adjoining room through this sense of longitudinal dimensionality created between the imagery and the reliquary. [67] This element of dialogue amongst relics and physical space is continued within the window niche in the Chapel of the Virgin Mary.

Flat walls primarily comprise the space of the Chapel of the Virgin Mary; however, the arched shaped niche in the west wall stands out from its differing form and draws in the viewer's attention. By placing relics in this structural unit, the objects of sacred matter are given a sense of corporality, as the structure indicates their existence and gives them a sense of body, which is emphasized through the materiality of the relics themselves.[68] Stone relics collected from the sites of Christ and the Virgin's lives physically connects a person to the devotional location from which the relic is obtained from, in turn, breaking the boundaries of time past and time present.[69] From their placement in the wall of the niche, a viewer is unable to tactilely engage with these relics. Nevertheless, the viewer's bodily engagement with the relics becomes redefined through

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[66] The floorplan shows the relic cycle on letters d-e and its relationship with the northern altar.
[67] Royt, "The Dating and Iconography of the So-Called Relics Scenes in the Chapel of Our Lady at Karlštejn Castle," 64.
[68] Ann Marie Yasin, "Sacred Installations: The Material Condition of Relic Collections in Late Antique Churches," in *Saints and Sacred Matter: The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*, eds. Cynthia J. Hahn and Holger A. Klein (Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2015), 143.
[69] Holger A. Klein, "Materiality and the Sacred: Byzantine Reliquaries and the Rhetoric of Enshrinement," in *Saints and Sacred Matter: The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*, eds. Cynthia J. Hahn and Holger A. Klein (Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2015), 231.

the act of physically sitting in the space. The divine presence of the stone relics are imbued within the structural unit which is instilled through their signification, thus giving the relics a new form of visibility via the defining text and the interpretive quality of the surrounding narrative imagery.[70] In other words, the viewer is able to access the divine powers of the relics through this sense of semiotic visibility provided by the text and the images, and spiritually engage with the objects of sacred matter while presently seated in the space.[71] This dual sense of physicality guides the mediation experience of the viewer, which is supported through the semi-precious stones that are set in the structural unit.

Semi-precious stones, like relics, were coveted items during the Middle Ages and were used to elevate one's political and religious status. In the beginning stages of pilgrimages, semi-precious stones were connoted with the same significance held by stone relics, possessing the capacity to summon the presence of Christian events or figures.[72] Adorning sacred spaces with semi-precious stones was understood as a device to evoke the heavenly realm alongside functioning as a protective emblem through their mystical qualities.[73] Indeed, the metaphysical traits of semi-precious stones also heightened the sacred powers of relics. When luxuriously framed, the relics enclosed are seemingly given an increased sense of spirituality through the "performativity of ostentation," as described by Jaś Elsner, a theatrical element viewed in the scene of Christ's Resurrection, and reiterated by the *crux gemmata*.[74] Referencing the cross erected by Theodosius II on Mount Golgotha, the *crux gemmata* engages with the history of

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[70]Aden Kumler and Christopher R. Lakey, "*Res et Significatio*: The Material Sense of Things in the Middle Ages." *Gesta* 51, no. 1 (2012): 1-5.
[71] Ibid, 13.
[72] Barry Fabio, "Relics, Tabernacles, Throne Rooms," in *Painting in Stone: Architecture and the Poetics of Marble from Antiquity to the Enlightenment*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 210.
[73] Ingrid Ciulisová, "The Power of Marvellous Objects: Charles IV of Luxembourg, Charles V of Valois and Their Gemstones," *Journal of the History of Collections* 33, no. 1 (March 2021), 9.
[74] Jaś Elsner, "Relic, Icon, Architecture," in *Saints and Sacred Matter: The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*, eds. Cynthia J. Hahn and Holger A. Klein (Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2015), 17.

imperial Christian rulers and the thematic narrative across the chapel space.[75] Surrounding the cross are delicate tendrils sprouting out of the cross which symbolizes the tree of life and the life-giving powers of the cross and, through the inscription of the relics, it also articulates the redemption of mankind through Christ's sacrifice.[76]

When placed into a sacred structure, these precious objects can participate and assist with the themes presented in both the architectural and visual programs to garner a sense of protection for the devotee as well as elevating the prestige of the patron. Moreover, this sense of dialogue found within comprising elements of the space can also be viewed through the space's engagement with the contemporary written commentaries which influenced the imagery.

Hermeneutical Interpretation

Karlstein's apocalypse cycle, amongst the other visual articulations of the Book of Revelation, were based upon the biblical text and influenced by the contemporary written commentaries. Franciscans were the primary group who wrote commentaries on the Book of Revelation during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Members of the Franciscan order believed St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) obtained an apocalyptic role during his lifetime, stemming from his message of poverty and his receival of the stigmata in 1224; thereby elevating his status to a modern Christ-like figure, one who is conscious of the events during the apocalypse.[77]

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[75] Robin M. Jensen, "Adoratio Crucis: Monumental Gemmed Crosses and Feasts of the Cross," in *The Cross: History, Art, and Controversy*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), 101.
[76] Homolka, "The Pictorial Decoration of the Palace and Lesser Tower of Karlštejn Castle," 84; Uličný, "Blood in Stone and the Second Coming: On the Meaning of the Wenceslas Chapel in St. Vitus's Cathedral in Prague and the Karlstein Chapels," 156.
[77] Nicholas of Lyra and Philip D. Krey, "Acknowledgments," in *Nicholas of Lyra's Apocalypse Commentary*, (Kalamazoo, Mich: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997) 1-4.

Alexander of Minortia (d. 1271) provided the framework for the commentaries written during the fourteenth century in his 1249 text, *Expositio in Apocalipsim*.[78] Alexander read the Book of Revelation as a source of Christian historiography and used this theoretical lens to interpret the history of the church in the periods of the past, present, and future.[79] In this framework, the varying periods of church history, such as its inception and phases of persecution, are correlated with the events of the apocalypse and eventually develops into a history of salvation.[80] Five decades later, Peter Olivi (1248-1298) completed his commentary in 1297. Olivi's commentary questioned the ideas of Franciscan obedience, believing the order was too restrained, and advocated for the strict following of the vow of poverty within his apocalyptic timeline.[81] Olivi's interrogation of Franciscan tenets, and the followers his writings amassed, were deemed as heretical and his writings were renounced and burned.[82] Following the fallout from Olivi's controversy, Alexander of Minortia's commentary became the primary influence for the texts written in the fourteenth century, beginning with Petrus Aurioli.[83]

Petrus Aurioli (1280-1322) wrote his commentary on the Book of Revelation between 1319-1320. Though Olivi and his writings were not officially condemned by the church until 1326 by Pope John XXII (r.1316-1334), Petrus was mentored by the head of the church and became aware of the increasingly negative responses which Olivi's text was receiving; therefore,

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[78] Also known as Alexander of Bremen.
Felicitas Schmieder, "Inscribing the Orient into a historiography of the past, present, and future of Latin Europe: Alexander Minorita's *Expositio in Apocalipsim*," in *Collection de l'Ecole française de Rome volume title: Les récits historiques entre Orient et Occident (XIe-XVe siècle)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2019), 253.
[79] Ibid, 254.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Nicholas of Lyra and Krey, "Acknowledgments," 5-6. Olivi included an overlapping period during the fifth and sixth periods of church history which assigned a negative role to the papacy as persecuting those, the group dubbed the "Spirituals," who observed St. Francis' teachings most strictly. Additionally, Olivi believed the sixth period surpassed all others, an idea which also enticed controversy amongst theologians.
[82] David Burr, "Olivi's Commentary on Revelation," in *The Book of Revelation*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019), 186.
[83] David Burr, "Petrus Aurioli," in *The Book of Revelation*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019), 207.

his commentary of the Book of Revelation strays from the ideas of Olivi and looked to Alexander of Minortia's text to base his interpretation. Petrus' writings convey that the progression of the Book of Revelation is a narrative of Christian history, from its advent, the periods of persecution, and the torment from the anti-Christ in the wake of the apocalypse. In his commentary, Petrus places an emphasis on the sevenfold pattern which corresponds to John's six visions of the future apocalyptic events in order to convey the historical timeline of the church; a form of repetition found throughout the Book of Revelation, with the ending of the world in chapter 7 and becoming anew in chapter 8.[84] In other words, Petrus allocates the various apocalyptic visions to historical times, for example, the woman and the dragon who appear in the sixth vision is equated to the third period of time which involved the persecution of Christians.[85] In short, historical narrative is a continuous factor within the writings of Petrus and is a component which influenced the commentary written by Nicholas of Lyra.

Nicholas of Lyra (1270-1349) followed the historical technique of Alexander of Minorita and Petrus in his commentary of the Book of Revelation which was completed in 1329 and found in his exegetical text, *Postillae perpetuae in universam S. Scripturam* .[86] Nicholas treats the Book of Revelation as a historical document of the past, and after chapter 17, he interprets the text as the events of the present and future; however, amid his text he begins to essentially revise his stance at several points of his interpretations.[87] Written from a literalistic perspective, Nicholas' commentary embroils the diametrical opposites of the villains and heroes of the church's history with a sense of ambiguity.[88] Portraying the various figures in this manner was a

[84] Ibid, 208-209.
[85] Ibid, 210.
[86] David Burr, "Nicholas of Lyra," in *The Book of Revelation*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019), 212.
[87] Ibid, 213.
[88] Ibid, 214

response from Nicholas to the power struggles he witnessed throughout the Franciscan order and his belief that the Book of Revelation should not have the ability to function as a propagandistic mechanism; he thereby detached St. Francis' role as an apocalyptic figure, in his rejection of the apocalypse obtaining this function.[89] In essence, Nicholas wanted to leave room for interpretation following the events of chapter 17 due to the limits that arise if the entirety of the Book of Revelation is to account for all of historical time; therefore, the methodical nature of his writings does not constrict the possibilities for the events of the present or future.[90]

Shortly after its completion, the *Postillae perpetuae in universam S. Scripturam* was widely disseminated across Europe, with excerpts of Nicholas' text found in over ninety Czech manuscripts, making this a plausible influence for the apocalypse cycle.[91]Additionally, Charles IV held relationships with Franciscan scholars such as John of Marignola (1290-1360), who was appointed court chaplain of Bohemia in 1353 by the king prior to his promotion as Bishop of Bissignana.[92] Though his tenure in Prague was short, Charles IV commissioned Marignola to write a history of Bohemia, a project that would keep the two in contact for the following seven years.[93] Indeed, it is likely that Charles IV and the members of his clergy would have been exposed to Nicholas' commentary and could have incorporated parts of its theological components within the composition of the apocalypse cycle, a program in which Charles IV presumably offered his input.[94] As aforementioned, František Fišer established that various

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[89] Nicholas of Lyra and Philip D. Krey, "Introduction: Nicholas of Lyra's Apocalypse Commentary (1329)," in *Nicholas of Lyra's Apocalypse Commentary*, (Kalamazoo, Mich: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), 22.
[90] Burr, "Nicholas of Lyra," 214.
[91] N.A, "Výklad Mikuláše Lyry na evangelium sv. Matouše," *Museikon. A Journal of Religious Art and Culture* vol. 3, no.3 (2019), 188; Sharon Hermon, "Illuminated manuscripts of the court of king Wenceslas IV of Bohemia," *Scriptorium, Tome* 9 no.1 (1955), 118, Hermon catalogues Lyra's psalter as a part of the collection of Wenceslas IV, son of Charles IV.
[92] S. Harrison Thomson, "Learning at the Court of Charles IV," *Speculum*, vol. 25, no. 1 (1950), 11.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Crossley, "The politics of presentation: the architecture of Charles IV of Bohemia," 151.

scenes of the apocalyptic narrative were influenced by Nicholas' text in both the Chapel of the Virgin Mary as well as the Chapel of the Holy Cross, including the scene of Christ in the Ark where he presents himself to the viewer (Figure. 34).[95] Fišer, however, believes that the majority of the visual components attempt to emulate John's visions rather than presenting the content from the existing commentaries.[96] Here, I believe that contemporary writings were more substantial to the visual elements and the formatting of the apocalypse cycle.

In particular, the visual continuity of the narrative of the apocalypse cycle elucidates this notion of interpreting the Book of Revelation as a continuous narrative, an intentional device implemented within the iconographic program. This is seen mostly clearly on the east wall where the narrative continues in each subsequent scene, and the background color, for the majority of the scenes, remains consistent, and as stated previously, reads like an illuminated manuscript. Furthermore, the completion of the twelfth chapter from the east wall onto the west wall supports this idea as well. Although these scenes are not aligned next to each other due to the visual emphasis given to the scenes on the west wall, they can be read together as the viewer engages with the physical movement the space requires. By structuring a narrative in this arrangement, viewers are able to understand that the events which follow each other are progressive instead of episodic. Alongside this, the continuous movement of the viewers body allows for the narrative to attain this sense of continuity. Other fourteenth century depictions, however, do not follow

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[95] Nicholas of Lyra and Philip D. Krey, "Chapter 11: The Two Witnesses: Silverus and Menas; Enoch and Elijah; The Double Literal Sense," in *Nicholas of Lyra's Apocalypse Commentary*, (Kalamazoo, Mich: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), 136. Here, the italicized text is biblical text and the rest is the commentary written by Nicholas of Lyra. "The plague ceased, and this is what is said, *Then God's temple in heaven was opened*, That is, the Church militant in which the material temple was opened to solemnly celebrate the feast. *And the ark of the covenant was seen* That is, Christ, whose offering and presentation in the temple through St. Simeon and Anna the prophetess was memorialized in the Feast of Purification, which spread from Constantinople to other parts of the world."

[96] Fišer, "Apokalypsa," in *Karlštejn: vzájemné vztahy tří karlštejnských kaplí* (Kostelní Vydří, Czechia: Karmelitánské nakl, 1996), 160-162.

this same logic in their interpretations of the Book of Revelation, oftentimes depicting the various scenes of the biblical story as distinctly separate.

More than ten years after the completion of the apocalypse cycle in the Chapel of the Virgin Mary, the *Angers Apocalypse Tapestries* (1373-1380) and the Westminster Abbey Chapter House apocalypse cycle frescoes (1378-1379) were commissioned and are the closet contemporaries to the Karlstein cycle (Figures. 39-40). Louis I, Duke of Anjou, ordered the tapestry cycle for his castle in Angers, France. Monumental in size, the tapestries were only used for special occasions, including weddings and other ceremonies.[97] The narrative sequence is segmented due to the framing which delineates the space of the tapestry, losing the sense of continuity that is otherwise seen in the Karlstein example. This is also viewed in the frescoes in the Westminster Abbey Chapter House, where the configuration of the cycle is separated amongst the various scenes of the narrative. Although the Karlstein apocalypse cycle does have a moment in which the narrative breaks on the west wall, this was a device employed for emphasis, and does not discount the flow of the imagery on the east and west walls. When compared to the contemporaneous examples, though different in context and disposition, the apocalypse cycle in the Chapel of the Virgin Mary resembles the idea of narrative continuation conveyed in the written commentaries and becomes an intentional component of the iconographic program.

Additionally, the apocalypse cycle, in its entirety, may have reflected the sevenfold pattern outlined by Petrus Aurioli and reiterated by Nicholas of Lyra, from the inclusion of seven chapters of the Book of Revelation within the apocalyptic program (chapters five, six, nine, ten,

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[97] Natasha O'Hear, "The *Angers Apocalypse Tapestry*: A Fourteenth-Century Walking Tour of the Book of Revelation," in *Contrasting Images of the Book of Revelation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Art: A Case Study in Visual Exegesis*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 43.

eleven, twelve, and thirteen).[98] Other visual elements within the apocalypse cycle can be connected to these commentaries as well. On each wall, the symbol of the encircled cross occupies at least some part of the visual composition, a seal in which Nicholas identifies as a protective emblem for Christians during the events of the eschaton.[99] Also from Nicholas' commentary, one can draw the connection between depiction of the bodies of Elijah and Enoch described as cadavers (Figure. 31), and the wings bestowed the woman, which appear similar to those on the insignia of the Holy Roman Empire, which stand as the symbol of the Roman Empire and Heraclius (Figures. 16-17).[100] Within the commentaries by Alexander of Minortia and Nicholas of Lyra, Heraclius (575-641), a Christian Roman Emperor, has been attributed as the angel who fights against the persecution of Christians by the Persian Kings Chosroes I (501-579) and Chosroes II (570-628) within the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of the Book of Revelation.[101] Upon his defeat in the twelfth chapter, Chosroes I hands over his title to Chosroes II, who in turn, becomes the dragon of the apocalypse.[102] Therefore, the appearance of the man in the turban on the last scene in the lowest register of the east wall can be identified as Chosroes I, who is defeated in the twelfth chapter and prefigures the dragon while maintaining his human form (Figure. 38).

Ultimately, the visual additions to the apocalypse cycle and its greater structuring emulates the contemporary commentaries written on the Book of Revelation. Through the

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[98] Burr, "Petrus Aurioli,"208-209; Nicholas of Lyra and Philip D. Krey, "Chapter 5: Christ (Human and Divine) Reveals the Course of History to John)," in *Nicholas of Lyra's Apocalypse Commentary*. (Kalamazoo, Mich: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), 74-75.
[99] Nicholas of Lyra and Philip D. Krey, "Chapter 9: Followers of Heretic: Vandals, Italians, Goths," in *Nicholas of Lyra's Apocalypse Commentary*. (Kalamazoo, Mich: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), 113.
[100] Ibid, 118; Nicholas of Lyra and Philip D. Krey, "Chapter 12: Pagans, Saracens, Schismatics, Disciples of Christ," in *Nicholas of Lyra's Apocalypse Commentary*. (Kalamazoo, Mich: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), 145.
[101] Nicholas of Lyra and Krey, "Acknowledgments,"16; Crossley, "The politics of presentation: the architecture of Charles IV of Bohemia," 153.
[102] Nicholas of Lyra and Philip D. Krey, "Chapter 12: Pagans, Saracens, Schismatics, Disciples of Christ," 142.

narrative arrangement and the obligation of movement in the space, the viewer preforms alongside the visual elements to a facilitate a moment where one can access a moment of divine truth, an experience which is assisted by the ritual performance encoded within the imagery.

Ritual Performance in the Imagery

During the Middle Ages, a visual experience was understood as something complex, one which stretched beyond its basic role as one of the five senses. Encountering visual programs such as the apocalypse cycle was not a common occurrence for the majority of individuals who lived in this period, unlike the contemporary climate where images constantly bombard daily life. The medieval reception of images was dependent on the active immersion of the viewer's sight, body, and soul during the visual process.[103] Vision enabled a viewer to access higher degrees of spiritual thought and is defined by Augustine in his treatise *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*.[104] Augustine delineates three levels of vision: corporeal, the literal act of seeing; spiritual, the images encountered in one's dreams or imagination; intellectual, the access to divine truth.[105] Therefore, the function of images was not solely didactic nor devotional, rather, they possessed the power to teach moral lessons and religious tenets, and elicit moments of higher visuality, or revelation. In addition, the visual articulation of the Book of Revelation is reliant upon the visions of John, where the testimony of God, a component necessary for revelation within the Christian context, was transmitted to John in the wake of his divine visionary experience, and is translated into the Chapel of the Virgin Mary[106] Here, the imagery of

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[103] Michael Camille, "Before the Gaze: the Internal Senses and Late Medieval Practices of Seeing," in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. R. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 202.
[104] Cynthia Hahn, "Vision," in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. C. Rudolph (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2019), 72.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Natasha O'Hear, "Hermeneutical Reflections and Visual Exegesis" in *Contrasting Images of the Book of Revelation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Art: A Case Study in Visual Exegesis*, (Oxford: Oxford University

the apocalypse cycle in the chapel acquires a performative quality from the ritual use of the space, which in turn, can garner a higher spiritual experience for the viewer upon ingratiating themselves with the various components that comprise the space.

The foundational charter from 1357 guides the thematic program of the space in its extensive preamble which cites the mystery of Christ's salvation and the redemptive qualities of the relics contained in the space.[107] Within the apocalyptic narrative in the Chapel of the Virgin Mary, the imagery showcases the beginnings of the apocalyptic chaos and the eventual defeat of evil. Across the imagery, the viewer is faced with the possibilities of spending their eternal fate in either heaven or hell, which are conveyed through the juxtaposing narratives on the west and east walls. Although, neither of these locations are explicitly rendered, the hellish landscape of the eschaton, viewed on the east wall, and the triumph over wicked powers of the devil, viewed on the west wall, allude to the locations where one may spend their afterlife. In this arrangement, the imagery does not imply a certain finality and the absences in the program allows for an interpretive quality within the space that extends beyond the visuals, thereby aligning with the theological writings of Nicholas of Lyra. In other words, the ending of the world is established by the apocalyptic cycle, but one's fate remains susceptible to redemption which is bolstered through the imagery, relics, and semi-precious stones encased within the window niche.

Press, 2011), 201; Robert J. Dobie, "Reason and Revelation," in *Thinking through Revelation: Islamic, Jewish, and Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 5.

[107] Homolka, "The Pictorial Decoration of the Palace and Lesser Tower of Karlštejn Castle," 97-99. "pro nostra salute sponte Cruci affigi/ et acerrime mortis in ea subire supplicum est dignatus/ ut sua morte/ nos perditos/ a morte revocaret ad uitam O uere felicem salutifere Crucis aram/ margaritis eximijs/ sanguine Christi uernantibus expolitam/ O clauum clarissimum/ illius uenerabilibus membris infixum/ et rutilantissimo rose cruoris stillicidio purpuratum quem dauiticum canit eloquium forma pre filijs hominum speciosum/ O uenerandam spongiam/ qua fons interne eterneque dulcedinis/ aceto et felle potatur/ O inclitam lanceam lateri Saluatoris immissam/ per quam fluxerunt largilue redemptionis pariter et regenerations nostre salutifera sacramenta/ quibus fideles anime in presenti exilio/ spirituali dulcedine confortantur/ et fluida incolatus mundani uita consummata feliciter/ pro fidei et uirtutum meritis/ quod iam rite celebrant per spem/ in illa uisione felici/ merentur/ per spem perpetuo contemplari".

From the design of the program, the holy powers of the relics are activated through the imagery of the apocalypse cycle, and thereby confirm the veracity of the apocalyptic scenes. Put otherwise, the events of the apocalypse lead to the moment of final judgment which one must face in order to achieve salvation, a notion which is reinforced through the specific relics that are placed in the window niche. In turn, the space adopts the function as a reliquary chamber, an environment where one becomes kinetically intertwined with the sacred objects and the imagery which interprets them. Indeed, the Chapel of the Virgin Mary does not align with the traditional model of a reliquary but works as an apparatus to prepare the mortal subject for the heavenly sphere. Therefore, the space requires a form of performativity which is invoked from the movement and visual engagement by the subject to understand this dynamic, thus producing a psychological and sensorial effect upon the viewer.

Contemplating fate is inherently a psychological experience, provoking one to parse through their virtuous and sinful behaviors, and prompting the feeling of uncertainty to linger. Within the Chapel of the Virgin Mary, both the imagery and the performance enacted in the space construes a psychological quality beyond this act of rumination. Specifically, the function of the chapel served as the location where, per the foundation charter, the cantorial hours would be recited, chanted, and sung by members of the chapter at sunrise and sunset, while interchangeably sitting and standing during the recitation.[108] Here, the sensuous duet amongst the rituals performed, the visuals, and the acoustics activates the imagery, and allows for a revelatory moment to be produced.[109] In essence, a revelation is an experience inherently bound to the sense

[108] Ibid.
[109] D.V. Gladkova and D. Yu Dorofeyev, "A Visual-Acoustic Duet of Painting and Music in Medieval Aesthetics," *E3S Web of Conferences* 266 (January 1, 2021): 3-7.

of sight, and through stimulation of the senses in conjunction with the imagery and relics, one is able to achieve this moment of clarity in this reliquary-like space.[110]

Conclusion

Anxieties concerning eternal fate preoccupied the thought process of individuals and the artistic practice throughout the Middle Ages. The Chapel of the Virgin Mary conveys this sense of uncertainty, but instead of directly confronting the viewer, this space acts as an intercessor to protect and guides them into the heavenly realm. This role of the chapel marks its importance within the design of the castle complex, as one cannot move forward in the complex without encountering the present moment of time. Indeed, Karlstein requires the viewer to participate in the act of procession in order to achieve their ideal fate, a performance in which activates the space through the viewer's physical engagement.

In this paper, I have discussed the placement and role of the Chapel of the Virgin Mary, the function of precious objects, the hermeneutical influences, and the ritual quality encoded within the imagery to illustrate the symbolic significance of the space. In addition, I have underscored the relationship between the visual formatting of the apocalypse cycle and the commentaries of the Book of Revelation, as well as identifying the chapel's function as a reliquary through the interpretive quality the relics obtain in relation to the imagery. Here, one can access the mindset of Charles IV through examining this space as it reflects his desire to project status as a spiritual authority alongside revealing his feelings toward his eternal salvation. By examining these various elements, this paper has illustrated the importance of the Chapel of the Virgin Mary within the greater design of the castle complex, being not only an intermediary location, but one in which elicits a sense of eschatological hope.

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[110] O'Hear, "Hermeneutical Reflections and Visual Exegesis," 200.

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Figures

Figure 1. *Karlstein Castle Complex* Karlstein, Czechia, 1348-1372. Image source: https://www.hrad-karlstejn.cz/en/photogalleries/43104-exterior

Figure. 2 *North Wall in its Current State*, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365, original destroyed in 1596. Image source: https://www.hrad-karlstejn.cz/en/visitors-information/tours/5042-karlstejn-castle-chapels-exclusive-tour

Figure 3. *South Wall*, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_29-33.jpg

Figure 4. *East Wall,* Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_0-1-2.jpg

Figure 5. *West Wall*, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_34-5-48-9-50-53-5.jpg and https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_34-5.jpg

Figure. 6 *Coronation Cross of Bohemia*, gold with semi-precious stones, 1357, The Treasury of St. Vitus, Prague. Image Source: Ciulisová, Ingrid, and Martin Henig. "An Imperial Portrait Cameo of Antonia Minor in a 14th-Century Reliquary Cross in Prague." *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 174 no.1 (2021): 6–15, pg. 7.

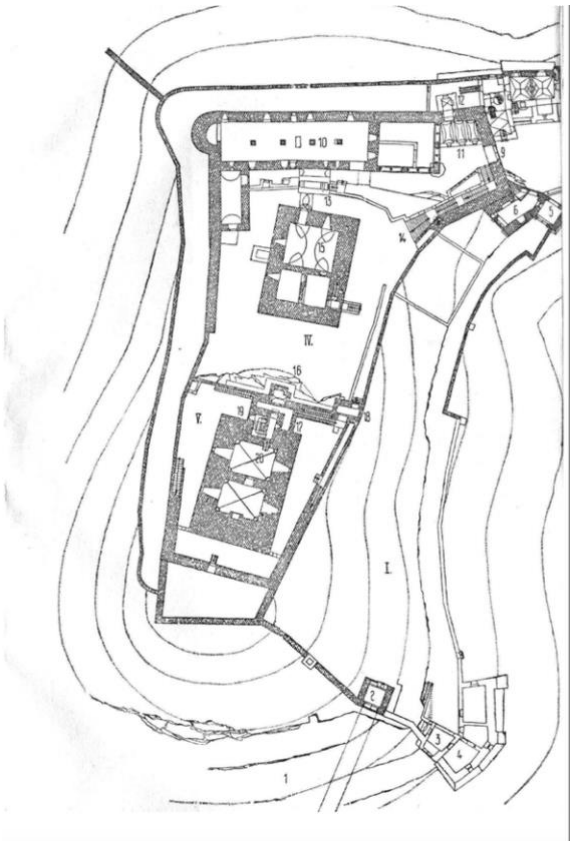

Figure 7. *Karlstein Castle Complex* Karlstein, Czechia, 1348-1372. Image source: Menclová, Dobroslava. *Karlštejn*. Prague: Pražské nakladatelství V. Poláčka, 1965, pg. 8.

Figure 8. *Noah, Drawing,* Codex Heidelbergensis, 1574-1575. Archives of the National Gallery, Prague. Image source: Fajt, Jiří, ed. *Magister Theodoricus, Court Painter to Emperor Charles IV: the Pictorial Decoration of the Shrines at Karlštejn Castle*. Prague: National Gallery, 1998, pg. 52.

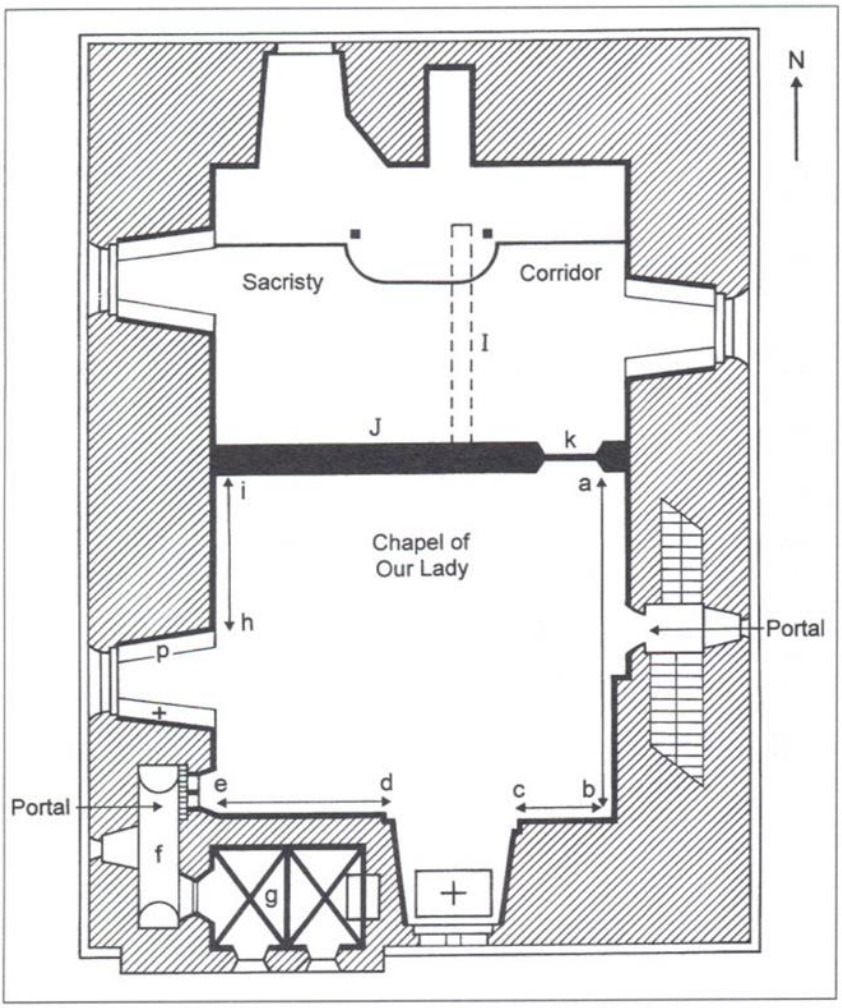

Figure 9. *Floor Plan of the Chapel of the Virgin Mary*. Image source: Crossley, Paul. "The Politics of Presentation: The Architecture of Charles IV of Bohemia." In *Courts and Regions in Medieval Europe*. Edited by S. Rees Johns, R. Marks, and A. J. Minnis, 99-172. New York: Woodbridge, 2000, pg. 138.

Figure. 10 Detail: *West Wall Window Niche*, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365, original destroyed in 1596. Image source: https://www.hrad-karlstejn.cz/en/visitors-information/tours/5042-karlstejn-castle-chapels-exclusive-tour

Figure. 11 *View of the Vista Surrounding Karlstein*, Karlstein, Czechia, 1348-1372. Image source: https://www.hrad-karlstejn.cz/en/photogalleries/43104-exterior

Figure 12. *Mural depicting the Legend of St Wenceslas, St Wenceslas bakes the Host and takes it into the temple,* Great Tower Staircase, Karlstein Castle, 1365. Image source: Fajt, Jiří, ed. *Magister Theodoricus, Court Painter to Emperor Charles IV: the Pictorial Decoration of the Shrines at Karlštejn Castle*. Prague: National Gallery, 1998, pg. 155.

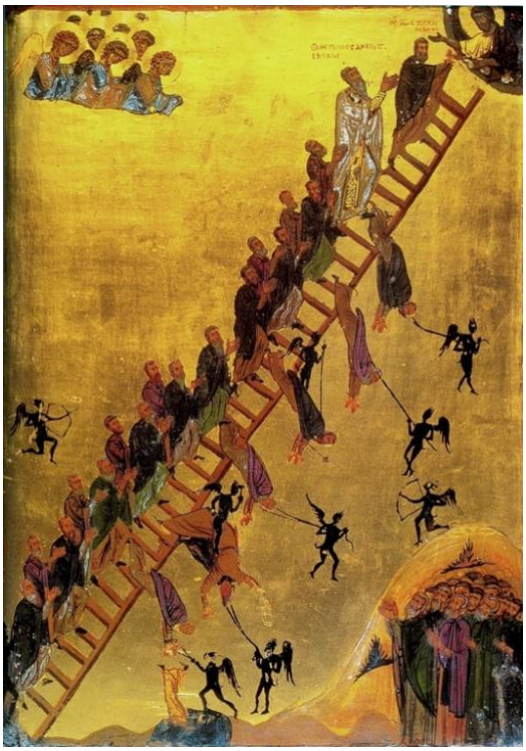

Figure. 13 *Icon of the Ladder of Divine Ascent*, late-12th century, Saint Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai. Image source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Ladder_of_Divine_Ascent_Monastery_of_St_Catherine_Sinai_12th_century.jpg

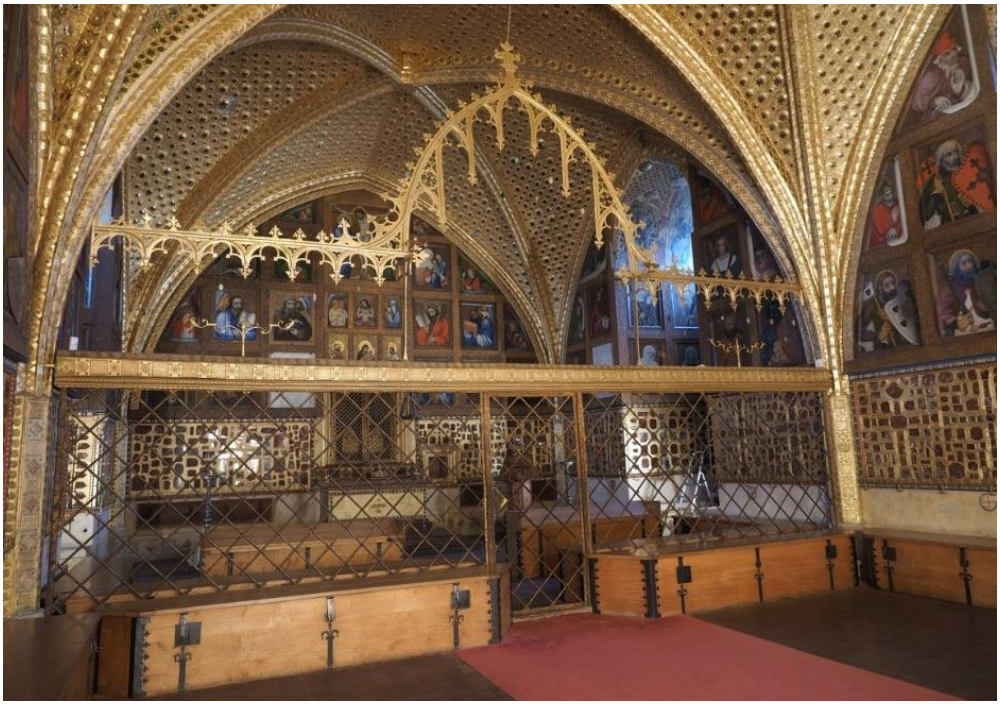

Figure 14. *Chapel of the Holy Cross*, Great Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1365. Image source: https://www.hrad-karlstejn.cz/en/photogalleries/43100-2nd-tour

Figure. 15 *Velislav Bible* (MS XXIII C 124, fl. 130v) 1325-1350, Prague, National Gallery of the Czech Republic. Image Source: Panusková, Lenka, ed. *The Velislav Bible, Finest Picture-Bible of the Late Middle Ages: Biblia Depicta as Devotional, Mnemonic and Study Tool*s. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018, pg. 151.

Figure. 16 *The Woman Clothed with the Sun and Standing on the Moon with Her Child* (Scene 1), Lower Register of the West Wall, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_53-5-1.jpg

Figure. 17 *The Woman Withdrawals into Shelter* (Scene 2), *Dragon Expels the River Causing the Flood* (Scene 3) Lower Register of the West Wall, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_34-5-48-9-50-53-5.jpg

Figure 18. Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Madonna and Child*, Tempera and gold on wood, 1290–1300, Metropolitan Museum, New York City. Image source: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/438754

Figure. 19 *Donor Portrait of Charles IV and Anna von Schweidnitz*, Oratory of St. Catherine, Karlstein Castle, 1357. Image source: Fajt, Jiří, ed. *Magister Theodoricus, Court Painter to Emperor Charles IV: the Pictorial Decoration of the Shrines at Karlštejn Castle*. Prague: National Gallery, 1998, pg. 141.

Figure. 20 *Queen in Prayer,* Prague Hours (Ms. V.H. 36, fl. 77r.), late fourteenth century, National Gallery of the Czech Republic. Image source: Brauer, Barbara. "The Prague Hours and Bohemian Manuscript Painting of the Late 14th Century," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 52. Bd., H. 4 (1989): 499-521, pg. 519.

Figure. 21 *West Wall Window Niche,* Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: Uličný, Petr. "Blood in Stone and the Second Coming: On the Meaning of the Wenceslas Chapel in St. Vitus's Cathedral in Prague and the Karlstein Chapels." *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 86 (2023): 145-194, pg. 154.

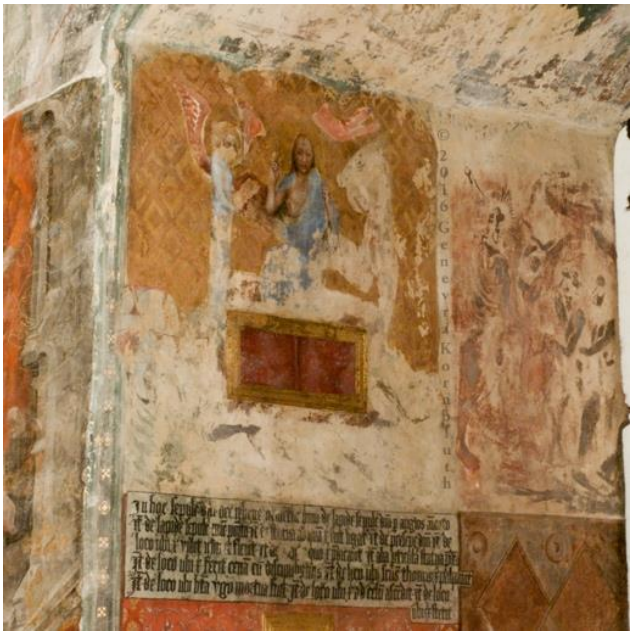

Figure. 22 *Christ's Resurrection* in the West Wall Window Niche, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_47-1.jpg

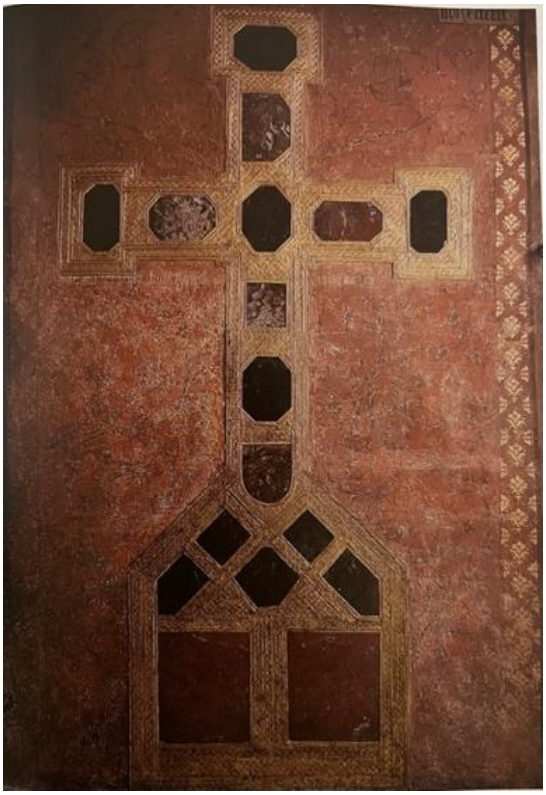

Figure. 23 *Crux Gemmata* in the West Wall Window Niche, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: Fajt, Jiří, ed. *Magister Theodoricus, Court Painter to Emperor Charles IV: the Pictorial Decoration of the Shrines at Karlštejn Castle*. Prague: National Gallery, 1998, pg. 87.

Figure. 24 *The Choir of* Angels and *Donor Portraits of Charles IV and Anna von Schweidnitz (?)*, West Wall, Chapel of the Virgin Mary (West Corner), Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_46.jpg

Figure. 25 *The Relic Cycle*, Lower Register of the South Wall (East Corner), Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1357. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_41-2-5.jpg

Figure 26. *Text from the Altar*, South Wall, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_40.jpg

Figure. 27 *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, Lower Register of the South Wall (West Corner), Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_27.jpg

Figure. 28 *The Sixth Angel Blows Trumpet Unleashing the Sixth Seal* (Scene 1) and *Horsemen Charge Towards Humans Seated on Horses with Lion's Jaws and Snake Tails* (Scene 2), Upper Register of the East Wall, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_5-8.jpg

Figure. 29 *John Eating the Scroll* (Scene 3) and *John Measuring the* Temple (Scene 4), Upper Register of the East Wall, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_14-5.jpg

Figure. 30 *Elijah and Enoch as the Witnesses Standing Before the* Crowd (Scene 5), Upper Register of the East Wall, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_16-7.jpg

Figure. 31 *The Beast Rises from the Abyss* (Scene 6) *The Dead Bodies of Elijah and Enoch* (Scene 7), Upper Register of the East Wall, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_20.jpg

Figure. 32 *The Spirit of Life Enters Elijah and Enoch* (Scene 8) and *The Beginning of the Earthquake* (Scene 9), Upper Register of the East Wall, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_21-2.jpg

Figure. 33 *The Seventh Angel Blows Trumpet Unleashing the Seventh Seal* (Scene 1), Lower Register of the East Wall, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_9.jpg

Figure. 34 *The Temple and The Ark are Opened, Christ Emerging Out of the Golden Ark* (Scene 2), Lower Register of the East Wall, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_10-1.jpg

Figure. 35 *Thunder and Lightning, Destruction from the Earthquake* (Scene 3), Lower Register of the East Wall, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_12.jpg and https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_13.jpg

Figure. 36 *The Woman and the Dragon* (Scene 4), Lower Register of the East Wall, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_25.jpg

Figure. 37 *Michael Fighting the Spirits of Hell* (Scene 5) and *The Rejection of the Brothers in Hell* (Scene 6), Lower Register of the East Wall, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_19-23-4.jpg

Figure 38. Detail: *Man wearing a Turban (Chosroes I?),* Lower Register of the East Wall, Chapel of the Virgin Mary, Lesser Tower, Karlstein Castle, 1363-1365. Image source: https://www.kornbluthphoto.com/images/KarlstejnMaryChapel_23-4-2.jpg

Figure 39. *Angers Apocalypse Tapestries*, Musée de la Tapisserie, Château d'Angers, Angers, France, 1373-1380. Image source: https://rebeccamezoff.com/blog/2019/6/3/france-tapestry-tour-episode-5-angers-apocalypse

Figure 40. *Apocalypse* Cycle, Fresco, Westminster Abbey Chapter House, London, England, 1378-1379. Image source: https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/chapter-house-and-pyx-chamber/