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Taking Possession: Rituals, Space, and Authority,

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Abstract: In Early Modern Europe, authority over communities, both people and spaces, was visualized through ritual gestures, acts, and processions. Communities gathered to witness ceremonial entries that drew on accepted forms of gestures and speech, identifying individuals and articulating their place in the urban power relationship. Ceremonial entries by rulers, ambassadors, bishops, and other office-holders, sometimes called *possesso*, *joyeuse entrée*, *adventus* or triumph, drew on ritual acts projecting messages of possession in order to establish reputations of prestige and authority. This introductory essay draws on cultural anthropology and recent historiography to build a framework for understanding rituals of possession that went beyond the traditional triumphal entry to incorporate substitutes, new modes of prestigious display, and attend to conflicts. By "taking possession" of communities, offices, and spaces using accepted ritual forms, early moderns initiated conversations about authority and power that were far more flexible in their scope, practice, and participants than expected.

Keywords: ritual, space, authority, possession, cultural anthropology, triumphal entry.

In describing the norms of triumphal entries, Sergio Bertelli wrote that "to speak of medieval and Renaissance triumphs means to reconstruct forms of collective representation connected directly to the cult of the leader".[2] However, the paradox, or perhaps the truth known by all participants, was that a triumph involved many more people than just the leader, and in practice the leader was often represented rather than present. Nevertheless, entry rituals sent messages to participants and observers (a different kind of participant) about the relationship between the leader and the community, and the intricacies of identity, authority, and legitimacy.[3] This need for more than just the prince's presence underlines the diffusion of power and the pragmatic challenge of representing a distant monarch's authority. As David Kertzer has noted for the modern era, these messages were intrinsic to maintaining political and social life in Early Modern Europe, as is evident in the appearance of triumphal forms in a variety of rituals, both ecclesiastical and lay, across this period.[4] What connects these rituals, and gives meaning to these ritual forms, is the foundational intent to take possession of a community in the name of a secular or spiritual

[1] I would like to thank Elena Woodacre and Thomas V. Cohen for their support of this special issue and valuable advice throughout its development process. In addition, the contributors to this issue have been wonderful and willing collaborators, whose work has urged me to think more flexibly about festive labour and political strategies.

[2] S. Bertelli, *The King's Body: Sacred Rituals of Power in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, trans. R. Burr Litchfield (University Park, PA, 2001), 69.

[3] As Sergio Bertelli noted: "all were actors: participants not spectators." Bertelli, *The King's Body*, 67.

[4] D. I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven, CT, 1988), 1.

leader and to publicize the legitimate authority of that figure.[5] Authority could mean direct rule, occupation of an office, or a more fluid and flexible prestige that equated with political influence. By employing specific words and gestures that projected images implying ownership or authority, one could take possession of cities, churches, offices, and streets in ways culturally understood and accepted in Early Modern Europe.[6]

This issue of *Royal Studies Journal* is devoted to examining the various ways that early modern princes and their representatives "took possession" using ritual forms. In an effort to show the diverse usage of these forms and the ways that representatives operated to maintain princely honour and prestige, the four essays published here explore separate yet related examples of possession rituals. Ellen Wurtzel examines the ceremonial entry into Lille in 1600 of Archduke Albert and Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia, the new rulers of the Low Countries; Cloe Cavero de Carondelet explores how a substitute took possession of a Roman titular church, Sant'Anastasia al Palatino, on behalf of an absentee Spanish primate cardinal; John M. Hunt reveals the effect that carriages had on ambassadorial entries and political rivalries at the papal court; and Charles Keenan follows the challenges faced by Cardinal Legate Giovanni Francesco Commendone as he represented papal universal authority in 1572-73 to secular rulers in Vienna and Warsaw. All four studies focus on relations with elite powers – monarchs, princes, cardinals, and popes – but highlight the complicating aspect of participation by substitutes or representatives.[7] While the phrase "taking possession" assumes active success, these studies reveal a deeper understanding of how relationships of authority were negotiated, articulated, competed for, and ultimately publicized using ritual acts. All four studies examine events that occurred in public or semi-public environments, thereby enlarging the number of participants in these rituals, problematizing issues of space and memory, and inviting observers to function as some of the arbiters of the ritual's success.

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[5] There is a large and useful literature on the theme of rituals of possession. A selection of important studies include: *Ceremonial Entries in Early Modern Europe: The Iconography of Power*, eds. J.R. Mulryne, M. I. Aliverti, and A. M. Testaverde (Farnham, 2015); *Late Medieval and Early Modern Ritual: Studies in Italian Urban Culture*, eds. S. Cohn Jr., M. Fantoni, F. Franceschi, and F. Ricciardelli (Turnhout, 2013); *Festival Architecture*, eds. S. Bonnemaison and C. Macy (Abingdon, 2008); *Europa Triumphans: Court and Civic Festivals in Early Modern Europe*, eds. J.R. Mulryne, H. Watanabe-O'Kelly, M. Shewring, E. Goldring, and S. Knight, 2 vols. (Farnham, 2004); *'All the World's a Stage…': Art and Pageantry in the Renaissance and Baroque*, eds. B. Wisch and S. Scott Munshower, 2 vols. (University Park, PA, 1990); B. Mitchell, "The triumphal entry as a theatrical genre in the Cinquecento," *Forum Italicum*, vol. 14 (1980), 409-425; B. Mitchell, *Italian Civic Pageantry in the High Renaissance: A Descriptive Bibliography of Triumphal Entries and Selected Other Festivals for State Occasions* (Florence, 1979); J. Landwehr, *Splendid Ceremonies: State Entries and Royal Funerals in the Low Countries, 1515-1791: A bibliography* (Nieuwkoop and Leiden, 1971).

[6] Citing Giovanni Bonifacio's *L'arte de' Cenni* (Vicenza, 1616), Barbara Furlotti reminds us that "by the end of the sixteenth century gestures, postures and body language were highly codified in Italy, especially when enacted by those in positions of authority." B. Furlotti, "The performance of displaying: Gesture, behaviour and art in early modern Italy", *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. 27 (2015), 1-13 (1).

[7] On the issue of representation see H. Fenichel Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley, 1967). As a concept, representation has been especially popular in the fields of early modern literature, drama, art, and cartography, with other fields recently gaining ground. On the challenges of representation in Early Modern Europe see *Representing Imperial Rivalry in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, eds. B. Fuchs and E. Weissbourd (Toronto and Berkeley, 2015); *Realities of Representation: State Building in Early Modern Europe and European America*, ed. M. Jansson (New York, 2007); *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland*, eds. M. J. Braddick and J. Walter (Cambridge, 2001).

Whatever "possession" was to be had or "taken" by actors in the rituals also needs exploring. Possession was deeply relative, rarely equated with ownership in the fullest legal extent, and ranges widely in meaning, consequence, and limitations. None of these putative "possessors" owned the space they entered, but all could lay claim to various types of authority based on their nobility, office, or deputized roles.[8] Authority, either office-based or invoked through awe and display, was the basis of possession. Lavish display and the reminder of distant monarchs or local power blocs also smoothed conflicts and heightened respect, easing the projection of possession. This framework problematizes our understanding of how taking possession functioned as a ritual deed, a metaphor of authority, and a conversation between groups, while offering a valuable opportunity to explore a concept central to ritual life. In Early Modern Europe authority was bound up with appointments, offices, allegiance, reputation, and display, often emanating from or referencing a distant monarch as these four articles show.

In essence, these articles reveal the repetition of certain forms and themes. The rituals described draw on forms reconstructed and reimagined from classical Roman triumphs and the papal ritual called *possesso*.[9] While Roman triumphs and triumphal entries celebrated a relationship with one individual (a ruler or general) representing a state, the papal *possesso* was part of the ritual that legitimized the pope as Bishop of Rome. By crossing the city in this capacity the pope showed himself to his parishioners thus establishing a bond, publicized his occupation of the episcopal office alongside his role as prince of the Papal States, and physically passed through the city's important spaces, beating selective bounds.[10] In a fashion similar to many secular monarchs, the pope's train included his own household and family members, the College of Cardinals and their households, Rome's municipal office-holders and members of local baronial families. As Bernard Picart's engraving of a *possesso* procession from 1723 reveals (Figure 1), this event appropriated urban space, incorporated many of Rome's citizens as participants, and demanded much festive labour. The *possesso* combined elements of ancient triumphal culture but also emphasized the themes of urban possession and legitimation of an office-holder, while revealing the local power hierarchy through its participants. As such, it offered an important ritual model in Rome and elsewhere for individuals who wished to assert a public identity, authority, or reputation and validated official responsibilities.[11]

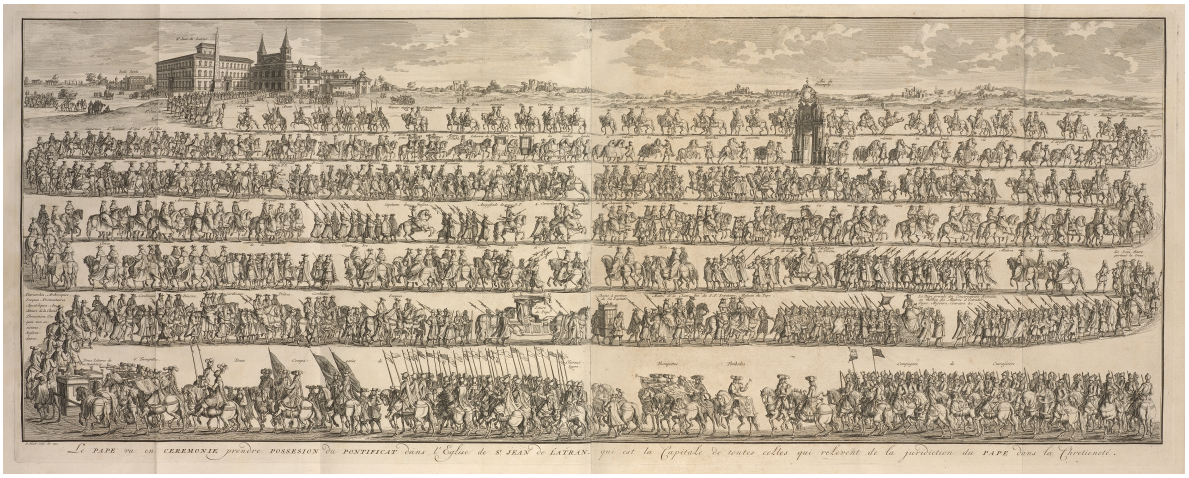
[8] For an example of this during the age of discovery see P. Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World 1492-1640* (Cambridge, 1995).

[9] Lucia Nuti has noted that although the ritual of crossing the city to "take possession" of the cathedral had occurred since the twelfth century, the term *possesso* came into use only during the pontificate of Sixtus IV (r. 1471-84) and replaced the more essentialist terms *processo* and *processione*; "Re-moulding the City: The Roman *possessi* in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century", in *Ceremonial Entries in Early Modern Europe: the Iconography of Power*, eds. J.R. Mulryne, M. I. Aliverti, and A. M. Testaverde (Farnham, 2015), 113-133 (113).

[10] M. Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge, MA, 2007); I. Fosi, "Court and City in the Ceremony of the Possesso in the Sixteenth Century", in *Court and Politics in Papal Rome, 1492-1700*, eds. G. Signorotto and M. A. Visceglia (Cambridge, 2002), 31-52.

[11] *Cérémonial et rituel à Rome (XVIe-XIXe siècle)*, eds. M. A. Visceglia and C. Brice (Rome, 1997).

Fig. 1. Bernard Picart, *The Pope in Ceremony Will Take Possession of the Pontificate*, 1723, engraving, 46 cm x 100 cm, Plate 17 in *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program.



While each study in this issue focuses on a different micro-historical variant on the theme of taking possession, the emphasis on authority, identity, and legitimacy reveals deeper concerns and ways of thinking that are broadly characteristic both of early modern ritual and elites in this period of conflict, change, and ritualized communication. Micro-historical studies allow the deconstruction of situations in which ritual gestures and acts were employed. Through deep contextualization historians can understand the stakes risked by actors and the possible outcomes seen through their eyes. Don Handelman's paradigm of models and mirrors is suggestive of the persuasive force and narrative power invested in such rituals.[12] Similarly, Émile Durkheim described them as embodying rules of conduct projected to the public.[13] Thus, displays of authority support the legitimation of office-holders and create reputations of strength that guide public perceptions and individual acts. As a group these articles ask whether Clifford Geertz and David Kertzer were right: did rituals provide a narrative in which individuals structured and articulated their own reality?[14] If so, how did rituals provide opportunities to build narratives about the past, the present, and potential futures for individuals and groups? Could actors construct layered narratives in rituals by adding secondary messages that were destined for a spectrum of observers? What relationship did rituals of possession have to "real power"? How did observers translate the prestigious ritual forms into the contemporary currency of influence? How were calibrated gestures of strength and legitimacy used in both high and low social settings, and often by the same actors?

[12] D. Handelman, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an anthropology of public events* (New York, 1998).
[13] É. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, ed. M. S. Cladis, trans. C. Cosman (Oxford, 2008).
[14] C. Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, NJ, 1980); C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected essays* (New York, 1973); D. I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven, CT, 1988).

Rituals as Narrative Opportunity

The ritual act of "taking possession" could signal a transient presence (ambassadors), or one that was intermittent or distant (papal legates), or a new and continuous authority (archduke or cardinals). Across Early Modern Europe these rituals of entry and possession were repeated in many places, spaces, and times. The core gestures and messages might become familiar, which could bore or jade the observer. Nevertheless, as Giacinto Gigli's account of carriages in Rome shows, the voyeuristic gaze appreciated strength and remembered spectacle. Edward Muir has argued that rituals "exist in the transience of the moment".[15] Thus, at every opportunity there was pressure to increase the ritual's affect through grandeur, linking the argument for possession to a larger message of importance, often based on historicized reputation, political threat, sanctity, charisma, or wealth.[16] This could be difficult when the actor was transient or temporary, or only represented a monarch, as ambassadors, legates, and cardinals did. How did these actors use ritual forms and cultural expectations to imprint themselves and their authority on spaces and minds that could soon see another actor attempt the same trick?

Sergio Bertelli's comment about triumphal entries' focus on leadership reveals an opportunity. All rituals of possession established conversations between the possessor and the possessed. These conversations traditionally identified the origin and foundation of the possessor's authority. The ritual's gestures sketched the geographical bounds within which that authority worked and introduced groups that interacted with, depended on, or validated that authority. Cloe Cavero de Carondelet's article analyzes a version of the *possesso*, the ritual by which the king of Spain's new cardinal "took possession" of his titular church in Rome, much as the pope in his role as bishop took possession of St John Lateran Cathedral. By accepting the keys from the titular church's canons, physically treading the space, opening its doors to the public, and saying mass, the cardinal affirmed his authority, visualized his occupation of office, and proved his ability to fulfill the required responsibilities. This ritual enacted a narrative of possession and proof through which the cardinal delineated a new powerbase, promised to cultivate its welfare, enlarged his identity, and joined his prestige with a new community. The ritual of possession built upon narratives already in place, adding the new cardinal to the church's own historical narrative and appropriating the church, its canons, and its local meaning into the cardinal's professional narrative.

However, as Cavero de Carondelet details, this process was complicated by the presence of a substitute acting in place of the absentee cardinal, which prompted a third narrative. In addition to projecting messages about the church and the cardinal as sites and emblems of the Spanish king's authority, the ritual offered a vision of individual ambition and professional

[15] E. Muir, "Gaze and Touch: Ritual in the Renaissance and Reformation", *Ideas from the National Humanities Center*, vol. 2 (1993), 4-14 (6).

[16] On the subject of displays of magnificence and public reputation see G. Richardson, "'As presence did present them': Personal Gift-giving at the Field of Cloth of Gold", in *Henry VIII and the Court: Art, Politics and Performance*, eds. Thomas Betteridge and Suzannah Lipscomb (Farnham, 2013), 47-63; P. M. Dover, "The Economic Predicament of Italian Renaissance Ambassadors", *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 12 (2008), 137-167; D. S. Chambers, "The Economic Predicament of Renaissance Cardinals", *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, vol. 3 (1966), 287-313.

relationships below the level of the cardinalate. For Alonso Manrique de Lara, participation in the *possesso* ritual offered a narrative vehicle that enhanced his own prestige as a member of the Spanish diplomatic community in Rome and a would-be cardinal. For substitutes, "taking possession" provided access to forms of prestige and messages of power that hinged on the monarchs or institutions that they represented. These actors did not hold that power personally, but stood in its place and could benefit from the association, while, in Manrique de Lara's case, worked to enlarge the Spanish king's powerbase in Rome. The existence of a double or triple narrative highlights the reciprocal relationship that existed in many rituals between rulers, participants, and observers. Rituals of possession demanded a visualized leader clothed in authority whose actions could be witnessed by the community in order to assert legitimacy in accepted ways. But the leader need not be present in the flesh, and could, as the acts of substitutes showed, be a leader by contract so long as he met the observers' expectations.

Charles Keenan explores another example of substitutes acting out authority via rituals of possession. In this case the substitute was a papal legate *a latere*, who represented the pope and, through his office, held authority to negotiate in the pope's place. The legate publicized his authority through the rituals that accompanied his exit from Rome and entry into cities. His forms and movements mimicked those used by the pope in order to assert his role by permitted imitation. As the legate exited Rome he followed the path of the pope's *possesso* route in the company of the College of Cardinals, prompting observers to recall other occasions when the pope himself had appeared in the same place and company (perhaps observers recalled processions similar to Bernard Picart's engraving.) While on legation, the legate wore red and white robes, conferred benefices, and rode under the *baldacchino*, just as the pope did. By imitation the legate projected a narrative in which he acted as another pope (*alter papa*). As Keenan explains, observers did not question the authority of the legate to act in the pope's stead, but contested the fact that the legatine authority "took possession" of their community and sought to influence local politics. While the dispatch of a legate *a latere* emphasized the situation's importance from the papal perspective, to the local population the legate's presence highlighted intrusion and overreach. To observers of Cardinal Legate Commendone, the narrative produced by the legate's entry ritual had a limited scope. The possession ritual enacted by the legate's arrival could not convince elite observers, namely the Holy Roman Emperor, that the pope and his representative could transfer their ecclesiastical authority into the political sphere. While Commendone succeeded in crafting a successful narrative of representation, the pope failed to convince elite secular observers of his authority as a universal prince. In this case, the ritual that "took possession" produced a narrative that was bounded by the limited expectations of the secular authority.

Crafting narratives using accepted ritual forms could prove challenging when actions designed to assert possession (or a temporary authoritative presence), sent multiple messages to other participants and observers.[17] As Marc Boone has noted for the Low Countries, and

[17] Narrowing the ritual focus and influencing its messages appropriately was precisely the challenge faced by Queen-Mother Catherine de' Medici during her son's tour of more than 100 French towns in 1564 to 1566. As an adolescent monarch, Charles IX was in danger of being overshadowed by his mother or underestimated as a legitimate political force. The tour was designed to show the young king to his people and, using entry rituals, facilitated useful conversations about his authority, strength, and relationship with French towns. L. Briggs,

historians have confirmed for other parts of Europe, much of what prompted change and conflict within urban centers was the "remarkable jockeying for power that centred on specific places rich in symbols of economic, cultural, and political prestige".[18] Ellen Wurtzel's study of Albert and Isabella Clara Eugenia's 1600 entry into Lille reveals how communities could use local sites and institutions to build a narrative about past relations with rulers. This competition for access is linked to a competition for meaning. Wurtzel explores the latter in relation to the city's experience during the Dutch Revolt against the Spanish monarchy. Indeed, Early Modern Europe is full of evidence for the acquisition, appropriation, contesting, and mobilization of claims to offices and reputation, as well as the attendant authority, offices, reputation, and wealth that often derived from possession of prestigious roles or spaces. Ritual gestures and appropriation as a means of articulation were never the domain of a single class or group, but common actions that reveal communal development and contest.

Ritual as a Symbolic Language

Ritual gestures formed a language that was used to articulate identity, authority, hierarchy, and alliances, as well as possession. The latter message could be an amalgam of many gestures that elaborated an individual's identity, elite authority based on hierarchical office, and allegiance through similarity of background, views, or goals. Early modern inhabitants were adept at communicating through ritual, either by individual words and gestures that conformed to a prescriptive rubric, or by building conversations that grouped together many speeches, gestures, and events.[19] In this issue Cloe Cavero de Carondelet parses a possession ritual that integrated a new titular cardinal into the physical space, human community, and liturgical traditions of Sant'Anastasia al Palatino. Manrique de Lara fused the physical-spatial rituals of unlocking the church and ringing its bells with the feudal clientage ritual of greeting the priest and receiving a pledge of allegiance from its collegiate clergy. Based on the political wrangling between the pope and Spanish king that facilitated the cardinal's elevation, and the substitution of a Spanish diplomat for the cardinal, observers might imagine that this pledge was to Spain rather than to a Spanish cardinal. Finally, by performing the mass of St Hilarion and saying the third prayer of St Anastasia, Manrique de Lara accepted responsibility for devotion to its patron and followed in the footsteps of titular cardinals before him. These actions and the meanings that resonated to contemporaries could bridge the

"Representations of the monarchy and peace-making in the royal tour of France (1564-1566)" (Warwick Ph.D. thesis, 2013); P.-L. Vaillancourt and M. Desrosiers, *Les entrées solennelles pendant le règne de Charles IX* (New York, 2007); V. E. Graham and W. McAllister, *The Royal Tour of France by Charles IX and Catherine de' Medici: Festivals and Entries, 1564-6* (Toronto, 1979).

[18] M. Boone, "Urban Space and Political Conflict in Late Medieval Flanders", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 32 (2002), 621-640 (623). See also L. Odde, "Politic Magnificence: Deciphering the Performance of the French and Spanish Rivalry during the Entrevue at Bayonne", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 46 (2015), 29-52; S. T. Strocchia, "When the Bishop Married the Abbess: Masculinity and Power in Florentine Episcopal Entry Rites, 1300-1600", *Gender & History*, vol. 19 (2007), 346-368; L. Nussdorfer, "The politics of space in early modern Rome", *Memoirs of the American Academy of Rome*, vol. 42 (1997), 161-186; L. M. Bryant, *The King and the City in the Parisian Royal Entry Ceremony: Politics, ritual, and art in the Renaissance* (Geneva, 1986).

[19] M. Boiteux, "Linguaggio figurative ed efficacia rituale nella Roma barocca", in *I linguaggi del potere nell'età barocca: Politica e religione*, vol. 1, ed. F. Cantù (Rome, 2009), 39-79; M. A. Visceglia, "Il cerimoniale come linguaggio politico", in *Cérémonial et rituel à Rome (XVIe-XIXe siècle)*, eds. M. A. Visceglia and C. Brice (Rome, 1997), 117-176.

gap between individuals and offer a useful way to fulfill roles, recollect the Spanish presence in Rome, and establish expectations, while maintaining a certain amount of ambiguity.[20]

As speech act theory has argued, and cultural and social historians concur, performative actions can highlight to a large audience the significance of individuals, specific times and places, and can construct a political or social reality.[21] Often such performances carried messages to both actors and observers about the character of the actors, the environment, and the shared cultural understandings that brought them together. Public gestures, verbal cues, and facial responses all had intrinsic messages that established relationships between individuals and the institutions, the classes, and the ethnic groups that they represented.[22] In his article John Hunt explores how traffic rules imposed on carriages created a series of gestures (e.g. first or second movement, lowering curtains, sharing the road, etc.) reflecting a hierarchical order that could be applied anywhere. However, in Rome's diplomatic centre lavish carriages could possess streets visually and spatially, while carriage etiquette prompted bitter proxy wars.[23] Drivers, riders, and grooms all adopted postures that placed them according to their social status and they appropriated precedence by choosing gestures reserved for a higher status. This was a particular problem with the pope's nephew, whose office as Prefect of Rome ranked beneath many ambassadors, but whose kinship with the pope, as Bishop of Rome and prince of the Papal States, brought enormous informal power. While communication theorists have emphasized the implicit willingness to achieve understanding that the communication process entails, in practice, an ambassador had no doubt when a lesser state's carriage stole right of way and diminished his monarch's or state's reputation. The reciprocity implicit in communication between individuals extends to the relationship between actors and observers of a ritual gesture or event, who assumed a mutual intention to communicate and understand by their presence and involvement and, naturally, to respond.[24] To that end, ambassadors and Roman office-holders used the symbolic value of carriages and flouting traffic rules to wage ongoing campaigns for reputation.

Symbols can be bodily, visual, verbal, aural, olfactory, geographic, or architectural. Early modern societies had immense symbolic and ritual vocabularies that included an understanding of their communities built out of layered memories of spatial use and experience, communal history, and cultural meaning. Due to the layered identities accorded to spaces and roles, which made them both symbolic and purposeful, it is essential that historians approach the study of early modern ritual as a multivalent experience. In his study of the experiences of Cardinal Legate Commendone, Charles Keenan notes the similarity of the pope's *possesso* ritual to the cardinal-legate's exit from Rome. Surrounded by fellow cardinals, following part of the same route, and endowed with papal prerogatives, the legate depended on observers recognizing the

[20] B. Stollberg-Rilinger, "The Impact of Communication Theory on the analysis of the Early Modern Statebuilding Processes", in *Empowering Interactions: Political Cultures and the Emergence of the State in Europe 1300-1900*, eds. W. Blockmans, A. Holenstein, J. Mathieu (Farnham, 2009), 313-319 (315-316).
[21] Stollberg-Rilinger, "The Impact of Communication Theory", 313; E. Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton, NJ, 1981), 5-7.
[22] Furlotti, "The performance of displaying", 1.
[23] On Rome as a diplomatic centre that played host to competing interests see J. Norman, "Performance and Politics in the Urban Spaces of Baroque Rome", in *Perspectives on Public Space in Rome, from Antiquity to the Present Day*, eds. Gregory Smith and Jan Gadeyne (New York, 2013), 211-229 (214, 217-218).
[24] Stollberg-Rilinger, "The Impact of Communication Theory", 314.

greater meaning of his itinerary, companions, and dress. Similarly, while en route to his destination, the legate's authority as a papal representative hinged on observers accepting his right to use the *baldacchino*, in the same manner as the pope, and according him a similar status and role. Only if observers accepted the larger meaning drawn from the collected individual symbols, and yielded the pope his theoretical universal rights, could Commendone fulfill his office as an *alter papa* and informal political lobbyist.

Early modern urban environments brimmed with gestures and speech, actors, and observers, frenetic movement, and layered meaning. To understand the strength of ritual as a language spanning classes and resisting singular interpretation, historians must go beyond the slim definition of ritual as "a formalized, collective, institutionalized kind of repetitive action".[25] Seemingly mundane activities in certain spaces or times could become ad hoc ritual gestures, expressing power or symbolizing a greater conflict or discussion.[26] Placed under an historian or anthropologist's microscope, these actions reveal conflicts, alliances, expectations, fears, simultaneous spatial proximity, and class separation, as well as a plethora of cultural norms.[27] Within the untidy space of the city was the opportunity for the negotiation of authority and for the individual to take possession of spaces, identities, reputation, and power. In this fashion, historians catch a glimpse of the demands and attractions that resulted in cities being considered *teatri mundi* ("theatres of the world"). People who came to Rome and other diplomatic centres offered a display in exchange for acknowledgment, or "possession" of their authority (the reverse was true in Lille, where the city offered a display in order to attract and negotiate with its rulers). Reputation proved reciprocal. Ritual leaders and actors journeyed to perform at the theatres of the world and observers became evaluators of real and theatrical worth. Launching reputations involved the investment of wealth, labour, and mobilizing allies. The result might transform metaphor (ritual) into substance (reputation and power) and obtain possession of a profitable public identity or authority.

Rituals, Public Space, and Publicity

A recent collection edited by J.R. Mulryne emphasized the public nature of many rituals, ceremonies, and spectacles, and especially those rituals that sought "possession" or political legitimacy.[28] Not only did entries take place in important public and sometimes open-air

[25] E. Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997), 3.
[26] R. Darnton, "The Symbolic Element in History", *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 58 (1986), 218-234 (223, 228, 229-230).
[27] For recent surveys of this subject see J. Dillon, *The Language of Space in Court Performance, 1400-1625* (Cambridge, 2010).
[28] *Ceremonial Entries in Early Modern Europe: The Iconography of Power*, eds. J.R. Mulryne, M. I. Aliverti, and A. M. Testaverde (Farnham, 2015). See also C. J. H. Sánchez, "Nation and Ceremony: Political Uses of Urban Space in Viceregal Naples", in *A Companion to Early Modern Naples*, ed. T. Astarita (Leiden, 2013), 153-174; A.-L. van Bruaene, "Spectacle and Spin for a Spurned Prince: Civic Strategies in the Entry Ceremonies of the Duke of Anjou in Antwerp, Bruges and Ghent (1582)", *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 11 (2007), 263-284; A. Osorio, "The King in Lima: Simulacra, Ritual, and Rule in Seventeenth-Century Peru", *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 84 (2004), 447-474; J. A. M. Royo, "All the town is a stage: Civic ceremonies and religious festivities in Spain during the golden age", *Urban History*, vol. 26 (1999), 165-189; P. Lopes Don, "Carnivals, Triumphs, and Rain Gods in the New World: A Civic Festival in the City of México-Tenochtitlán in 1539", *Colonial Latin American Review*, vol. 6 (1997), 17-40.

spaces, such as the city gates, city approach, central squares, cathedral square, or streets, but these spaces were large enough to accommodate the attention that they drew, implicitly allowing for more viewers and thus greater public participation.[29] To assert status and reputation, secure office, or elicit an acknowledgement of presence, actors pursued rituals of possession in public or partially public areas. In his analysis of François Rabelais' (*c.*1494-1553) work, Mikhail Bakhtin classified the public square as an important early modern site for communication, separate from specifically domestic or political spaces, and a space in which the actor revealed his or her local identity.[30] Almost all of the rituals of possession examined in this issue occurred wholly or partially in streets or squares, or on the steps of churches or public buildings. These spaces were akin to Bakhtin's public square, as they were openly observable and accessible, but not enclosed by "official" authority.[31]

As Hunt, Keenan, and Cavero de Carondelet's articles reveal, secondary, perhaps colloquial, messages targeted the same observers and emanated from the same ritual forms, but often spoke of rivalries or personal, rather than institutional, ambitions. The ritual actor's local acts and identity framed these messages, which depended on the licence offered by public spaces to go beyond official forms in speaking to observers. By occupying roles traditionally reserved for monarchs and popes, ambassadors and clergy could send colloquial messages and achieve secondary or personal goals, intensely relevant to the actor's vision of political and social society, but definitely outside of the limited message of possession. This combination of primary and secondary messages pervades the study of early modern ritual, enhancing ambiguity and complexity, while exposing and complicating public ritual's use as a negotiation strategy.

Similarly, Edward Muir has argued that ceremonial success depended upon the public gaze, which was constitutive of the power of ritual gestures, which are watched, remembered, and invested with meaning.[32] Publicity was easier to acquire in open spaces. Whether for profit, for protection, or for entertainment, early modern people used the public gaze and accepted it as a norm of civil life.[33] Nevertheless, in each observer individual experience and prejudice jostled with historical examples and cultural models. Spaces offered layered narratives too, which challenged the acceptance of contemporary sights and projected messages. To this end Riitta Laitinen and Thomas V. Cohen have argued that spaces must be considered "cultural" as well as "physical" objects, and not only when studying rituals or issues of identity or possession.[34] How early modern people moved through a city was crucial for indicating their

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[29] C. Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome: The Rise of the Resident Ambassador* (Cambridge, 2015); I. Fenlon, "Theories of Decorum: Music and the Italian Renaissance Entry", in *Ceremonial Entries in Early Modern Europe: The Iconography of Power*, eds. J.R. Mulryne, M. I. Aliverti, and A. M. Testaverde (Farnham, 2015), 144.

[30] K. Hirschkop, "Heteroglossia and Civil Society: Bakhtin's Public Square and the Politics of Modernity", *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, vol. 23 (1990), 65-75 (72).

[31] Hirschkop, "Heteroglossia and Civil Society", 72-73; M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. H. Iswolsky (Bloomington, IN, 1984), 73-74; R. M. Berrong, *Rabelais and Bakhtin: Popular Culture in Gargantua and Pantagruel* (Lincoln, NE, 1986), 10.

[32] Muir, "Gaze and Touch", 6: "Both the gazed upon and the gazers participate in the creation of a ritual".

[33] E. S. Cohen, "To Pray, To Work, To Hear, to Speak: Women in Roman Streets, *c.*1600", *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 12 (2008), 289-311.

[34] R. Laitinen and T. Cohen, "Cultural History of Early Modern Streets – An Introduction", *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 12 (2008), 195-204 (196). Victoria Sanger and Isabelle Warmoes argue similarly for city gates, as does Daniel Jütte for doors: V. Sanger and I. Warmoes, "The City Gates of Louis XIV", *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 30

support of groups, spatial uses, and the characterization of roles. When a legate followed the same path as the pope or paused at a church or city gate, that space received attention, thus recalling earlier connections or events and constructing a current meaning that borrowed from past usage. When a carriage refused to relinquish right of way its occupants implicitly reordered the city's social hierarchy. When a visiting ruler stopped to hear an oration, it indicated a willingness to bestow attention, receive praise, or hear requests from offerants. Likewise, when a community structured a ritual to highlight specific places and groups, it indicated a desire to engage the visitor with a roster of ideas and individuals that were entrenched in the local topography.

David Parkin's assertion that "ritual is held to privilege physical action" underlines the central role of movement in and through space.[35] Actions were tailored to the connotations of spatial environments, the individual's relation to the moment, and the other individuals and groups in attendance. Thus, decoding actions and messages depends on contextualization of time, person, gesture, and space. Scholars continue to explore Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault's assertion that the domination of space was synonymous with power.[36] Since the production of space demanded human activity, which gave the space its specific character, space was not a blank slate, but it could be occupied, "possessed", and could project messages that promoted, manipulated, or buried the past.[37] Examining these processes and observers' responses allow historians to reveal how early modern elites "took possession" and crafted public messages about authority and identity.

Ellen Wurtzel's article exploring the Joyous Entry in 1600 of the new rulers Archduke Albert and Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia into Lille reveals how ceremonial entries were constrained by form and urban flow, but relatively free in content. Occurring in the midst of the Dutch Revolt, the triumphal arches and *tableaux vivants* described a relationship between the city and its sovereigns that highlighted the legitimate descent of authority, collaboration between monarch and urban corporation, and erased memories of heresy and rebellion. An examination of the entry's extant visual and literary accounts reveals that Lille positioned itself as a community loyal to the Habsburg rulers by connecting its past relationships to its present spaces. Rather than recreating a strict chronology, the organizers crafted a local history of associations through the thoughtful placement of theatres. As the procession wound through the city, the visiting monarchs confronted actors who resembled their ancestors and recalled their contributions to Christian history and the urban fabric. This combination both humanized and historicized Lille's rehearsal of its identity, political relationships, and its urban development. Not only did this ritual welcome the visiting rulers and reaffirm their contract with the city, allowing them to "take possession", but it also provided a way for the city to

(2003), 50-69; D. Jütte, *The Strait Gate: Thresholds and Power in Western History* (New Haven, CT, 2015). See also, *Streets: Critical perspectives on public space*, eds. Z. Celik, D. Favro, and R. Ingersoll (Berkeley, 1996), and especially Diane Favro's essay, "The street triumphant: The urban impact of Roman triumphal parades", 151-176.

35 D. Parkin, "Ritual as Spatial Direction and Bodily Division", in *Understanding Rituals*, ed. D. de Coppet (London, 1992), 11-25 (12).

36 H. Lefebvre, "Reflections on the Politics of Space", in *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, eds. and trans. N. Brenner, S. Elden, and G. Moore (Minneapolis, MN, 2009), 167-184; M. Foucault, "Questions on Geography", in *Knowledge/Power: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. and trans. C. Gordon *et al.* (New York, 1980), 63-77 (72).

37 H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991).

describe those relationships, both past and present, thereby "taking possession" of the monarchs and their shared history.

Conclusions

Symbolizations structured perspective, and thus for fear of one's performance falling on deaf ears or the message being spurned, the ritual actor adapted known gestures as a language and used urban space as an amplifier or sounding board.[38] On the other side, observers evaluated the symbols forming messages about people, places, and authority. Witnessing displays of prestigious behavior could result in admiration or a reputation for prestige and power. As this issue shows, observing rituals that identified office-holders could legitimate the presence of those people in office. Individuals and groups represented themselves and their allied nations or masters in ritualized ways in order to publicize their positions in the local hierarchy and communicate with observers about their roles and responsibilities. Public space was the quintessential arena for taking possession of roles and reputations precisely because they needed to be observed in order to be legitimized and widely accepted. Prestige was illusory if gestures designed to display wealth, authority, and power did not prompt a similar public reputation. Thus, the act of "taking possession" occupied public spaces – streets, churches, and palaces – as well as the impressionable minds of people crowded into squares and along sidewalks or perched at windows.[39]

Visualizing the throng of people, tabulating the funds invested in these rituals, and considering the social and political investment of the actors, it is clear that this ritual language was highly charged and offered opportunities for fame and failure. The ritual actors in Cloe Cavero de Carondelet and Charles Keenan's articles felt this deeply. As John Hunt and Ellen Wurtzel's articles show, elaborate display and theatrical extravaganzas had great diplomatic, economic, and cultural meaning. Discussions of Early Modern Europe as a collection of "theatre states", and especially Rome as a "theatre of the world",[40] recalls Clifford Geertz's reminder of the essential truth of power seen in the elaborate Balinese royal rituals: "the pageants were not mere aesthetic embellishments, celebrations of a domination independently existing: they were the thing itself".[41] Every man – indeed every monarch and his representative – used ritualized gestures and actions to send messages of prestige that placed him above his neighbor in the local hierarchy. Staging lavish and elaborate spectacles assured observers of one's strength and sway. In the same fashion, early modern rituals of possession

[38] Stollberg-Rilinger, "The Impact of Communication Theory", 315.

[39] As Anu Korhonen stated, "windows eased exchanges between the street and interior spaces," thus allowing women to witness and participate in public life in ways that work or enclosure within domestic spaces would not theoretically allow; A. Korhonen, "To See and To Be Seen: Beauty in the Early Modern London Street", *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 12 (2008), 335-360 (347).

[40] M. Rosa, "The 'world's theatre': the court of Rome and politics in the first half of the seventeenth century", in *Court and Politics in Papal Rome, 1492–1700*, eds. G. Signorotto and M. A. Visceglia, trans. A. Belton (Cambridge, 2002), 78-98; P. Burke, "Sacred rulers, royal priests: Rituals of the early modern popes", in *The historical anthropology of early modern Italy: Essays on perception and communication* (Cambridge, 1987), 168-182; N. Temple, *Renovatio Urbis: Architecture, urbanism and ceremony in the Rome of Julius II* (London, 2011); M. A. Visceglia, *La città rituale: Roma e le sue cerimonie in età moderna* (Rome, 2002).

[41] Geertz, *Negara*, 120.

allow historians to isolate strategies for asserting authority and parse conflicts waged over legitimacy.

This special issue explores the mechanics of those processes, the strategies employed by the actors, the popular interest in these actions, and the embedded meanings that remain. Authority is assessed on the street, in churches, in palaces, and in the minds of actors and observers, mixing violent attempts to circumvent rivals with the institutionalized descent of office from one office-holder to the next. Rulers appear in all of these rituals – present in Lille and represented by elite office-holders in Rome, Vienna, and Warsaw. Their actions, ritualized and codified, but also improvised at times, show similarities highlighting a language of authority that built reputation. Both secular and ecclesiastical rulers employed this language, adapting it freely, and suggesting that there were more continuities between secular and ecclesiastical ritual than often thought. As these articles show, there were many ways to assert possession, both official and colloquial. Yet, of equal importance, a single observer could just as easily understand messages of power flowing from a triumphal entry as he or she could from a display of ambassadorial road rage. Possession was a universal language that spoke through ritual gestures and actions keenly observed and evaluated, that crossed lay and clerical lines, and resonated deeply with early modern people.

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