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## The Three Kings — Triumphal Image of Christian Rulers



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The past academic year 1993 —1994 has been most productive for me personally, and I am much indebted to the Kolleg for making it so. In what follows, I will sketch what I have done, then give some impressions about the makeup of this "class of '94," and finally some suggestions regarding the future of the Kolleg.

I arrived here having stated my intention to write a book on the evangelical magi, or the *heilige Drei Könige*, but in fact I first planned to complete another book: on homosexual behavior in the Americas at the time of the Iberian conquests. Both these books have indeed been finished and are now being considered by various presses. The first is provisionally entitled *The Journey of the Magi: a World History of a Western Story*, the second *Like a Woman: Gender Construction and Political Order at the Time of the European Conquest of the Americas*. Indeed, I was so successful in completing these books that, in the last two months at the Kolleg, I found

myself working on quite other projects, two small articles and a small book that I came here with no real hope of working on. These articles are relatively complete, the one re-editing and commenting on a Roman treatise (*incunabulum*) on homosexual behavior, dated ca. 1480, the other examining one aspect of the famous Pazzi Conspiracy in Florence, dated 1478: the so-called Florentine Synod said to have met to defend Lorenzo de' Medici against the attacks of Pope Sixtus IV. I have also made substantial progress on an English translation with apparatus of the *Hodoeporicon* of Ambrogio Traversari.

The book on the evangelical magi argues that for 1500 years whether in past theatre or in the fine arts, the image of the magi was the main triumphal image of Christian rulers, and until the sixteenth century was used by these rulers as a means of legitimating their own authority. European rulers played the magi in art and festival, and, essentially through *sacre rappresentazioni*, participated in the legitimating aura of the "Three Kings". The book begins with the Roman triumph, and continues until the present day: The last picture in this book rich in images is of a destroyed Cologne parading the relics of the Kings through the streets in 1948, attempting through this Journey of the Magi to reorganize the city and its political geography.

The book on native homosexual behavior as observed by Iberians in the early days of the Iberian Conquest is essentially about the characteristic American institution of the "berdache", biological males who, for their entire lives, dressed and acted like women in every imaginable way. The argument of this book is that the berdaches were an important part of the construction of what we would today call the state, which, I argue, consisted in the ability of big men to convert, through social construction, lesser men into "women". Introduced by two long chapters on the European sexual universe in 1492, the book continues with chapters on the berdache in military and diplomatic, religious, and daily life in what we would today call Latin America.

These labors have been much aided by my chance to collaborate with the fine group of scholars who have been my colleagues. Near the end of 1993, I presented one slice of my magi project to them in a Tuesday colloquium. Not only were the comments challenging. The subject of the Three Kings easily captures the visual imagination, with the result that, especially over the Holidays, several of these colleagues clipped out various articles and pictures from newspapers regarding the quasi-dramatic appearance of children and adults playing the magi across much of Europe on 5 or 6 January and sent me postcards of paintings or other representations of the magi. They were enough taken with my hypothesis that the third magus has strong feminine qualities in late medieval art that

they tested that hypothesis on all the images of the magi they subsequently encountered. Finally, my colleague Kurt Wölfel actually turned up a painting in Soest (Westphalia) in which, for all intents and purposes, the third king is dressed like a woman, with a woman's veil and crown, a picture I have now brought into the book itself. Thus the collaboration with colleagues has been invaluable to me. As a practical matter, this collaboration ended with several of these colleagues reading various chapters of the penultimate draft of the magi manuscript.

Collegiality is obviously a desideratum among such a relatively small group of scholars, and I feel that the rector generally maintained the right tone in encouraging the same: gentle and often subtle nudging for the fellows to participate in Kolleg events. This was facilitated by excellent lessons in the German language, so that, by the new calendar year, foreigners could participate in the general discourse if they wanted to. In general, the hard scientists chose not to learn the language of their hosts, leading to a colloquium at the end of the academic year in which a talk on the treatment of epileptic patients delivered in the host language was not attended by any of the hard scientists, including a medical doctor, because they did not know the language. I do not know how to deal with this problem other than through a genial polyglot, chosen annually for the purpose, who would take it upon him or herself to force these bridges.

Still on the matter of collegiality, it must be said that there were simply not enough women among the colleagues this year. Still, one must then go on to praise all those responsible for the amazing makeup for the coming year 1994—95, in which one third of the fellows will be women. The hearts, and the heads, of the selectors are in the right places. Not only is this statistic unparalleled in the remainder of academic life in Germany, it exceeds the usual achievement in the United States and other countries as well. It seems to me that this is one area in which the Kolleg, if it repeats these numbers in subsequent years, can be a model for the rest of the country's academic life. The chance to serve as a model for academic advances in Germany is one the Kolleg obviously wants to cultivate in every way. I cannot congratulate it enough on this achievement.

Nor could I be more gratified by my associations with new friends here at the Kolleg. Like at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton when I was a member, I was again brought into everyday contact with people concerned with a broad range of different subjects, each of them challenging and inherently fascinating. The breath of fresh air, the enrichment these mixtures brings to the demands of specialization, have furnished some of the best moments of my life, and this year at the Kolleg is no exception. Suddenly, all sorts of things outside of one's purview matter, and we step out of our footnotes long enough to enrich and recharge our-

selves for the coming years without that stimulation. I will remember all of my colleagues vividly and with a warm smile.

Regarding the future of the Kolleg, the most pressing need for those in charge is to change Berlin's weather. If that indeed cannot be negotiated, the depression that can accompany this weather must simply be negotiated. On balance, this is all well and good, because the access to music and museums and theatre here has been phenomenal for me, and that is a strong calling card. Next, let me compliment the Kolleg for the various tours and other vehicles providing us access to the city. Indeed, I would say that the single most important accoutrement of my stay here were the piano and camera recitals that brightened many of our evenings in the Kolleg itself. So as for the future, do keep these institutions and access to them !

In considering this question of the future of the Kolleg, I would insist again on the precedence to be given to equalizing access to the Kolleg for women before turning to another area I feel strongly about. This is the library. The bottom line is this: The Kolleg is not presently a place where one can start or develop a research project, but only where one can finish something that has already been bibliographed. The reason for this is computer inadequacy at the national and regional levels. The talented library staff, and certainly its dedicated director Frau Bottomley, waste a great deal of time on the telephones determining whether book X is to be found in a local library, when all of this would be easily available to the scholar if a decent computer system was in place.

I would identify the retarded state of library computer facilities in the Republic, and specifically in and around Berlin, as the single most pressing retardant to scientific research nation-wide. In my view, the turtle-like movement of information is a central threat to the economic well-being of the country, not to mention to its scientific apparatus. The country needs a crisis conversion of its information resources to those of a modern state and a high-powered national commission to make information accessible to the public through computers. My unspecialized but strong conviction is that other countries are simply leaving Germany in the dust in regard to information retrieval.

The central question for the Kolleg is whether there are ways in which — similar to the leadership role it can take regarding the presence of women in German academic life — it can serve as a model for efficient library utilization. Thus the Library's proposal to make library catalogues available to all fellows through Internet, besides its obvious utility for scholars, can also have a key public relations value for the Kolleg once it is in operation. Doubtless, no decisive breakthroughs can be made at the Kolleg level until the government has decided to modernize information services for the

general public in its libraries. But it should be possible for the Kolleg to show other, larger institutions the way by key innovations that visiting fellows would then carry back to their universities. Optimally, the visiting fellow should one day be able to sit at his or her computer terminal, generate bibliographies, determine the location of books, and order them.

I do not want to conclude this report without praising the quality of the permanent faculty and staff, from top to bottom and with only a rare exception. I have rarely seen a group of people who seem to associate with each other so warmly, and while I do hope that in the future the same modification of the gender order can be carried through in the administration as among the fellows, I do praise it lavishly as it is. Perhaps Frau Sanders and the library staff deserve individual praise, but the fact is that person after person is special, capable, and friendly. I have thoroughly enjoyed being here.