

WATER IN MEDIEVAL
INTELLECTUAL CULTURE

Case-Studies from Twelfth-Century
Monasticism

by

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since these themes are some of the most expansive and rewarding areas of research in broader water history. It is my hope that my study will feed back into these areas, enriching their conclusions. The study of water is inherently interdisciplinary and multi-thematic, exerting a pull on material from every corner of medieval studies, as well as further foundational reading from a range of supplemental disciplines.

First, one of the most established areas of study concentrates on Scripture and liturgy. The biblical symbolism of water has been mapped out in studies of the liturgical, historical, and material culture elements of baptism within medieval church history, and within the centuries preceding it.⁶ This discourse has continued within the study of theology and spirituality within the Christian tradition.⁷ These studies connect to a broader theme of water history: the role of water within diverse global spiritual traditions. This research offers a vision of some of the commonalities involved in human spiritual engagement with water, their complexities, and their many variations. There have been anthropological projects engaging with comparative spiritual beliefs through the study of water imagery, with particularly notable contributions from Terje Oestigaard in the area of comparative religion, and Veronica Strang in the context of indigenous societies.⁸ A 2013 themed edition of the *Worldviews* journal, guest edited by Strang, has provided a host of new studies, together with a volume introduction that surveys a great deal of the recent literature.⁹ A parallel strand of social science research based around the relationship between agency and materiality has dovetailed with that focused upon water. These works are particularly relevant to this book, for they support the complex relationship between material culture and the human behaviour that underpins it.¹⁰ To my

⁶ For examples of books contributing to the study of baptism in the late classical, early, and high medieval eras, see Cramer, *Baptism and Change in the Early Middle Ages*; Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*; Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism*. For a recent example, see Sonne de Torrens and Torrens, *The Visual Culture of Baptism in the Middle Ages*. We can see from a comparatively heavy emphasis on liturgical studies that not only the study of baptism but the study of religious ritual has come to speak loudly, both to the medievalist and to those seeking to use material on the Middle Ages to study other topics.

⁷ For a historical view, see Weiss, 'A River Runs Through Them', pp. 40–43. For signs of continued use and adaptation, see Russell, 'Hydrotheology', pp. 161–84.

⁸ This is something of a *passim* statement, since these themes run through the entirety of Oestigaard and Strang's publication trajectories.

⁹ See *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology*, 17 (2013), Special Issue: 'Living Water'. See in particular the introduction by Krause and Strang at pp. 95–102.

¹⁰ The work of Tim Ingold, cited frequently, is the most apparent influence of the discourse of material agency upon this book. For a seminal study, see Gell, *Art and Agency*. For further