

The False King Olaf and His Necklace of Letters¹

Richard Cole

Aarhus University

That so many spurious [bureaucratic and legal] productions should have been executed in those times and that so many pious and indisputably high-minded persons should have had a hand in such dealings, although they were expressly condemned by the law and morality of the age—the psychological implications of these things are well worth pondering.

—Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*²

As the False King Olaf was led to the stake, on the 28th of October 1402, it would have been no comfort for him to know that much of his story had happened before, and would happen again. He was an impostor, posing as a king who had died young, now apparently back from the dead. This was not an unheard-of occurrence in medieval kingdoms (Cheesman and Williams 2002, 87–8; Lecuppre 2006, 67–72). The False Olaf claimed to be King Olaf II of Denmark

1. I am grateful to Nicole Burgoyne, Anders Bøgh, Christian Etheridge, Tom Høctor, Per Ingeman, Brian Patrick McGuire, Stephen Mitchell, and Gauri Pathak for commenting on earlier drafts. I remain responsible for any shortcomings. This research was carried out as part of the project “Bureaucracy in Medieval Scandinavia,” funded by Aarhus Universitets Forskningsfond. This article was prepared while libraries were affected by the pandemic. Apologies are therefore offered where works have not been consulted or cited that otherwise would have been. Several nonstandard or outdated editions and translations of primary sources have been used out of necessity. It has not always been possible to consult sources in their original languages, though I have striven to do so. All translations are my own.

2. Bloch (2014, 99).

and Norway, who had died at the age of seventeen in 1387. Similarly, the False Konradin in 1269 had impersonated King Konradin of Sicily and Jerusalem, dead at sixteen the previous year (Scales 2012, 237; Schreibmüller 1949). Lambert Simnel was a commoner who in 1487 impersonated Edward Plantagenet, attainted at the age of ten. The False Olaf was an alien in the country he wished to govern, propped up by both domestic and foreign actors. In this, he resembled Perkin Warbeck, a half-Walloon Fleming who pretended to be first Edward Plantagenet and later Richard of Shrewesbury, who was backed by English Yorkists, the Scottish court, a Portuguese *converso*, and an army of Cornish rebels (Gairdner 1898, 263–336; Roth 1918–1920). Parallels could be found in European or Islamic royal imposture for nearly every aspect of the case of the False Olaf (Lecuppre 2005, 14–20; Ingram 1882, 77–85). But there is one detail that is unusual. Two sources record a peculiarly Gothic spectacle when pseudo-Olaf was burnt. In Johann von Posilge's *Chronicle of the Country of Prussia* (ca. 1420), it is said that before he was immolated, “wart behangen alumbe mit sinen briffen, die her der konigynne gesent hatte als ir son, und wart eyn crone ufgesetzt” (Posilge 1965, 261) [he was draped with his letters, which he had sent to the queen as her son, and a crown was fastened to him]. The anonymous *Chronicle of Nordelbian Saxony* reports that “uppe sineme houede ene koninglike krone uan papire” (Lappenberg 1865, 100) [upon his head (was affixed) a royal crown of papers].

In what follows, I will interpret the meanings of this theatrical destruction of documents, staged as part of an execution. We will consider the case in the context of royal imposture, but also in the context of documentary culture. I provide (1) background on the real identity of the False Olaf (insofar as anything can be known); (2) a study of the beginnings of the imposture, including to what extent the impostor was coached; (3) some deductions on what letters the False Olaf had with him; (4) a theory on how he came to be given those letters; (5) the symbolism of the making and burning of the crown and the necklace; and (6) hypotheses on the meaning of the letters to the False Olaf's supporters.

The question of who set up the impostor conspiracy is discussed in a separate article, and so is generally not treated here (Cole 2002, 100–6). However, a brief précis of my findings will also provide some background to the affair. On the death of the real King Olaf in 1387, the thrones of Denmark and Norway passed to his mother, Queen Margaret (r. Denmark and Norway, 1387–1412, Sweden 1389–1412).

The young king's demise coincided with the return of four castles in Scania to Danish suzerainty, after they were pawned to the Hanseatic League on a 15-year term following Denmark's defeat in the Dano-Hanseatic War of 1361–1370. The League dragged its feet handing these over, as certain Prussian cities felt the Danes had not paid sufficient war reparations, and that Queen Margaret was not protecting Hanseatic shipping from pirates. The concerns of the Prussian cities were, however, overruled by Lübeck (Bøgh 2003, 296–8, 306–7, 360). In 1398, the Teutonic Order captured Gotland, previously conquered by Margaret's father, King Valdemar Atterdag (r. 1340–1375). By 1402, then, the Order was seeking to negotiate the return of Gotland to Danish hands for a good price while the Prussian third of the Hanseatic League nurtured a grudge against Margaret. The imposture probably began as a ploy by disgruntled Prussian Hansards to inflict revenge on Margaret. Only in its very latest phase was it then picked up by the Order, who were happy to deliver the False Olaf to Margaret in order to sweeten negotiations concerning Gotland (Etting 1987, 94).

WHO WAS THE FALSE OLAF?

No source records pseudo-Olaf's real name.³ Posilge's chronicle does provide the names of his parents: "Und bekante offinlich, her were geborin bie Eygerus eyme dorffe, und sin vatir hette geheysin Wolff und sin muter Margarethe" (Posilge 1965, 261) [He admitted publicly that he was born by Eyger (i.e., the river Ohře) in a village, and his father was called Wolff and his mother Margarethe]. That Posilge can name the impostor's parents but not the impostor himself seems curious at first, but the explanation may lie in the type of document to which Posilge had access. Perkin Warbeck's confession begins "I was borne in the towne of Turney in Flaunders, and my father's name is Iohn Osbeck, which sayde Iohn Osbeck, was Comptroller of the said town of Turney, and my mother's name is Katheryn de Faro" (Grafton 1809, 218). Perkin provides his hometown and parents' names, but not his own name. In the case of Lambert Simnel, no first-person confession survives (indeed, such sources are rare beasts in cases of medieval royal imposture), but the confession of one of the conspirators is preserved. There, the impostor's name is absent, although his father's profession

3. The claims that pseudo-Olaf was also called Wolf (Adolfsson 2007, 184; Starbäck and Bäckström 1885, 31–2) seem to result from a misreading of the primary sources.

and abode are given, “an organ-maker of the University of Oxford” (Pollard 1914, 247; the sources are discussed by Smith 1996). Posilge reproduces the same categories of information and leaves the same omissions. There is a logic in this because in cases of royal imposture, the most important business for the authorities was to rule out any trace of royal blood in the claimant. Once this was done, the only further details that needed to be elicited were those that would incriminate co-conspirators. Beyond this, the impostor’s real identity was irrelevant to contemporary investigators.

Etting has described Posilge’s account as “referatet af retsagen i Kalmar” [the summary of the trial in Kalmar] and “referatet af den offentlige retshandling” [the summary of the public legal action] (Etting 1987, 95). More precisely, it may be that Posilge was drawing in part from a purportedly dictated confession of the type given by Warbeck. Like the False Olaf, Warbeck’s confession is also preserved as an apograph in a chronicle, suggesting that letters of confession could be widely disseminated but quickly became ephemera once the pretender controversy was settled. Only two executive documents have survived concerning the case: one letter from Danish and Swedish knights asking that the impostor be delivered to Denmark, and one from the Teutonic Order assenting (in both instances the matter of pseudo-Olaf himself is not quite the chief matter of the letter, particularly in the second, which is more interested in negotiations regarding ownership of the island of Gotland). However, the case surely generated more documents at the time. Bishop Richard Young of Bangor (d. 1418) was part of an English embassy to Denmark during the affair. In a letter to the Privy Council in England, dated November 2, 1402, he makes an allusion to a now lost report that detailed both the agreement with the Order concerning Gotland and pseudo-Olaf. His tone in the incipit is in the hurried style of a diplomat attempting a quick summa before getting down to his main business, the proposal of marriage between the Danish and English thrones. It is not in itself proof of a confession document intended for circulation with European courts, but it does hint at the sorts of sources that have been lost:

Scire dignemini quod, licet in festo Sancti Jacobi feliciter, laudato Deo, partibus Daciae applicuimus, tamen propter absentiam Reginae, quae in finibus ultimis regni Sweviae cum Prucenis tractatum habuit, tam circa praesentationem personae illius qui falso et fecte asseruit se Regem Daciae et Norwegiae, etc. et ejus combustionem, de quibus aliquando vobis scripsimus, quam alia negotia, statum regnorum, etc.,

concernentia, cum rege Daciæ, etc. seu cum ipsa vel eorum Conciliis usque ad decimum diem mensis Octobris proximo præteritum loqui non potuimus. (Hingeston 2012, 117 [nr. 49])

(You ought to know that happily it has transpired, thanks be to God, on the day of St. James, that we have gone ashore in the country Denmark, but that because of the absence of the Queen, who is at the furthest bounds of the Kingdom of Sweden concluding a treaty with the Prussians, also concerning the parading of a person who faked [*falso*] and falsely claimed to be the King of Denmark and Norway, etc., and [concerning his] burning, of which at length I wrote to you [and] which was another business, concerning the position of the kingdoms, etc., we have not spoken with the King of Denmark, etc., or with her or her Council as of the tenth day of the month of October at the very latest.)

Just as Warbeck acknowledged his birth in Tournai, and Simnel admitted his roots in Oxford, Posilge reports that the False Olaf revealed he had been born in a village on the Ohře. When he was discovered by merchants, who supposedly recognized his likeness to the real King Olaf, he was living “by Grudentz in eyne dorffe, und was komen her in das land” (Posilge 1965, 260) [in a village near Grudziądz, and had come here to this country (i.e., Prussia)]. In pseudo-Olaf’s days, the Ohře ran all the way from Wolfsburg to Litoměřice, meaning that he would have been Saxon or Bohemian by background, although if the latter, his parents’ names indicate he was a German-speaking Bohemian, not a Czech. Either way, he would have been an immigrant who had made a fairly serious journey. At the closest point of the Ohře to Grudziądz, it is still almost 280 miles away, and almost 340 miles from the source of the river. According to Posilge, the False Olaf was born in one *dorff* and lived in another *dorff* bordering on Grudziądz. His family were not, then, urban artisans. If they had possessed skills that were useful in the city (smithing, cobbling, cordwaining, etc.), they could have moved to Grudziądz itself, rather than its hinterland. Pseudo-Olaf was therefore in all likelihood a peasant.

Let us assume that pseudo-Olaf, when presented and then soon burnt in Denmark, was around the age that the real Olaf would have been, that is to say, about thirty years old. There is some danger in this assumption, as cases of royal imposture could occasionally be remarkably slapdash about getting ages right. The case of the False Margaret (d. 1301) in Norway had seen a woman in her forties impersonate Margaret, Maid of Norway, who should have been seventeen

(Mitchell 2019, 1). Still, Posilge claims that pseudo-Olaf was a good resemblance: “Her were koning Olff gar enlichin” (Posilge 1965, 260) [He looked very much like King Olaf]. He was therefore likely of an appropriate age. This would mean that he had emigrated to Prussia from either Saxony or Bohemia at a point between the years c. 1370–1400. I treat his intellectual capacity elsewhere, but for now, it will suffice to say that he seems to have had what we today recognize as a mild learning difficulty (Cole 2002, 96–100). It is therefore likely that he migrated to Prussia with his family, as the roughly 300-mile journey would have been a hard undertaking for a lone, perhaps guileless, traveler.

HOW WELL PREPARED WAS THE FALSE OLAF?

Some of our sources claim that the False Olaf had secondhand knowledge of Denmark. One of these sources is relevant to his family background. Hermann Korner (d. 1438) was a Lübecker, first a mercenary and later in life a Dominican monk, who composed a chronicle in three recensions, recording Baltic events in a broader European perspective. The first recension includes only a short note that a pretender had been burnt by Queen Margaret. The second recension adds the detail that the impostor was “ut dicebatur, per quamdam mulierem, que tempore dicti Olavi filii regine apud ipsam reginam existens curie servierat” (Korner 1985, 364) [well informed, it is said, by a certain woman, who in the time of the aforementioned Olaf, son of the queen, was said at the house of the queen herself to have served the court]. The third recension, which switches from Latin to Middle Low German, says: “Dit was eme overst al geleret, also men sprak, van ener vrouwen, de den junghen ghesoghet hadde” (Korner 1985, 546) [He had been taught all about all this, so people said, by a lady who had visited the young man]. Korner gives the impression of reporting hearsay that presumably had reached him between the first and second recensions, perhaps c. 1420. Decades later, sources begin to provide more detail on the mysterious woman who had coached pseudo-Olaf. The North German humanist Albert Krantz wrote the compendious *Chronicles of the Kingdoms of the North*, printed in German in 1545 and in Latin the following year. In his version, the False Olaf “Hat heymlichkeyt von der Künigin gewist / vil gewist was das kind Olauus / in der kindtheyt gehandelt hette. Welchs ym die Amme Olaui gesagt

hette” (Krantz 1545, ccccliii)⁴ [knew many of the queen’s secrets, knew much of things that had happened to Olaf during his childhood, which Olaf’s wet nurse had told him]. In both Korner’s and Krantz’s tellings, wherever it was pseudo-Olaf encountered, the wet nurse, it most likely occurred once he had left Prussia for Kalmar. But in 1595, the Danish politician and historian Arild Huitfeldt (d. 1609) published the first volume of his *Chronicle of the Kingdom of Denmark*, which moved the wet nurse closer to home:

Aar 1402. vaar en Prydz til / som gaff sig ud for Dronning Margretis Søn / Kong Oluff / hand sagde allehaande forborgten Handel / som ingen kunde vide / uden Dronningen selff / om hendis Hemmelighed: men hand vaar Kong Oluffs Ammis Søn / aff huilcken hand meeget hemeligt haffde forfaret om Dronning Margrete / som vel viste det icke saa vaar: thi hendis Søn tilforne paa Falsterboslot vaar død / hans Legeme begraffven til Soer / hans Indvold for Lunde Chor: thi sagde hun paa begge Axele / huilcket da / der det randsagedis / icke fantis. Oc er hand Dagen for Michaelis / bleffue Brent / imellem Falsterbor oc Skanøer. (Huitfeldt 1650, 621)

(In the year 1402 a Prussian turned up who purported to be King Olaf, the son of Queen Margaret. Everywhere he went he spoke of secret occurrences which nobody could know about except the Queen herself, concerning her secrets. But he was the son of King Olaf’s wet nurse, from whom he had discovered many secret things about Queen Margaret, who knew full well that he could not be thus, because her son had long since died at Falsterbo Castle, his body buried at Sorø, his innards in the choir at Lund [Cathedral]. Therefore she said in front of everyone, if he were her son he would have a mole between his shoulders, which, when an examination was made, was not there. And he was burnt the day before Michaelmas [28 October], between Falsterbo and Skanör.)

As an aside, it has previously been suggested that Huitfeldt invented the story of the mole between the shoulders (Etting 1987, 98). However, it seems instead that Huitfeldt was drawing on the *Danish Chronicle* (c. 1520s) by Christiern Pedersen, a leading Danish humanist and Reformer. There, Queen Margaret challenges pseudo-Olaf: “Est du

4. The Latin is the same: *Multa Reginae secreta mouit: multa puerilium actorum recordabatur, instructus à Nutrice dicti Olau* (Krantz 1546, 321).

min sön, da haffuer du en lidell worte mellom dine herder som du wor födder med” (Pedersen 1856, 473) [If you are my son, you will have a little mole between your shoulder blades which you were born with]. Our main purpose in Huitfeldt’s expansion of the tale is the unlikely suggestion that the False Olaf and the real Olaf were milk-brothers. Huitfeldt acknowledges that pseudo-Olaf was Prussian, so for his account to hold on its own terms, the impostor’s mother has to be either (1) a Danish wet nurse who migrated to Prussia and bore a son, or (2) a Prussian who migrated to Denmark, served as wet nurse, and then came home to give birth to pseudo-Olaf. I will shortly conclude that Huitfeldt cannot be considered reliable on this point, but no source should be dismissed without the historian explaining some of their reasoning. There is one aspect of the wet nurse theory that is not as unlikely as it seems on first inspection. Medieval royals preferred to employ noble wet nurses, but recruitment of commoners was not unknown (Newman 2007, 49–50).

However, in all other ways, Huitfeldt’s account is flawed. If the False Olaf’s mother had been a Danish migrant to Prussia, he would have been able to give a much better impression of being Scandinavian. Instead, Posilge tells us, “her wart irfunden unrecht in allin sachin, wen her us deme lande nicht geborn was, und kunde ouch der sprache nicht” (1965, 261) [he was found to be incorrect in all things, as he was not born in the country, and he also could not speak the language]. If his mother had been a Prussian migrant to Denmark, we would need a plausible route for her migration and her way into royal service as a wet nurse. If she was a Dane, we would need to find a route for her migration to Prussia, but we have already seen that this is not viable. The most historically plausible method of migration for a hypothetical single woman from Northern Germany to a Scandinavian town in the fourteenth century would have been through prostitution.⁵ The idea that pseudo-Olaf’s mother had been a migrant Prussian sex-worker, who ended up as a wet nurse to Danish royalty before settling into a peasant life in a rural settlement on the outskirts of Grudziądz without acquiring enough knowledge of Denmark to coach her impostor

5. On sex-work in Late Medieval Denmark more broadly, see Jacobsen (1992, 422, 427); Jacobsen (1995, 81–3, 214); Kristensen and Poulsen (2016, 189, 401); Eriksson (1980, 81). On the difficulties of tracing female migration to Denmark, and the near-invisibility of unmarried women, see Baur (2018, 120–2); Rohwedder (2007, 36, 46, 58). On the tendency for medieval prostitutes to be foreign, in England, especially North German or Flemish, see Mazo Karras (1996, 56–7).

son is so picaresque that it can be discounted—or, more properly, so scurrilous that we can be confident that the sources would record it. The “Margaret” that pseudo-Olaf says was his mother, back in Prussia, according to Posilge, cannot be the woman who supplied him with unsatisfactory information about Danish affairs, according to Korner. Krantz was recounting a popular tradition (“*ein Fabel*”) with the story of the wet nurse, but the detail surely owes more to the folkloric trope of children fed by the same wet nurse enjoying a special bond than historical fact (Strauch 1993, 622; Parkes 2004, 598, 602–4).

THE IMPOSTURE BEGINS

If the wet nurse detail is inauthentic, what can we ascertain with more confidence? We previously noted that the likely date of his arrival in Prussia was around 1370 and that he most likely accompanied his parents. It was around this time that Prussia faced a population depleted by the Black Death and a shortage of immigrants from the German lands (Carsten 1964, 108). It is tempting to speculate that the False Olaf’s parents, Wolf and Margaret,⁶ had taken advantage of an opportunity. A peasant is rarely just a peasant—there are many types of peasant experiences: freeholders who own their land, tenants who rent it, cottars who receive plots for subsistence farming in return for labor, agricultural servants who work the lands of other peasants, and so forth. It is generally in the interests of peasants to move toward increasing autonomy over their own soil (Hilton 1973, 40–1, 77–97). Fourteenth-century Prussia inherited many conditions of frontier European feudalism and often offered much better conditions to migrant peasants than their home regions. Dues were comparatively low, there was a relative degree of peasant autonomy, and the lowest positions of agricultural servitude tended to be filled by Indigenous, Slavic-speaking Prussians rather than newcomers (Carsten 1964, 67, 71–88; Koch 1978, 10, 21). The attraction for people like Wolf and Margaret is clear.

That Wolf and Margaret initially succeeded in inserting themselves into the middling or higher sort of peasantry is suggested by the way

6. There is a coincidence, if Posilge is correct, that the False Olaf’s actual mother’s name was Margaret, and that Margaret was, of course, the name of the mother of the prince he impersonated. But the name and its variants were fairly common in Northern Europe. As I argue elsewhere (Cole 2022, 98–9), it is implausible that the False Olaf had somehow been deluded into believing he *was* the Real Olaf.

that their son's undoing began. According to Posilge, "des fundin yn koufflute und vrogeten yn, ab her czu Denemarkin icht bekant were" (Posilge 1965, 260) [some merchants came across him and asked him if he had any acquaintance with Denmark]. The possibility that some merchants were idly strolling around the Vistulan countryside cannot be discounted, but the most likely place for an international trader to meet a peasant would have been in a market. In pseudo-Olaf's case, this would have been the *Marktplatz* of Grudziądz, which first appears in our sources in 1411, but can reasonably be assumed to have been established in the 1230s when the Teutonic Order reorganized the Slavic *gród* into a town, and extensive German migration began (Frölich 1868, 4–7, 84–8; Liek 1893, 62). From the sixteenth century onward, the Prussian peasantry was maneuvered into increasing serfdom, but around the year 1400, some peasants would still have been participating in market activity as well as rent/due payment, either by selling food as a village unit to a burgher or by selling surpluses in the marketplace as a household (Carsten 1964, 74–6; Nichtweiss 1979, 99–140; Wunder 1978, 53–4).⁷ Records from fourteenth-century Grudziądz show traders dealing in barrels of preserved herrings and in grain (Frölich 1868, 274). Gdańsk, where pseudo-Olaf was taken once his likeness to the deceased Danish king was discovered, was a major Baltic port and an important hub for the distribution of goods between Hanseatic sub-markets. Gdańsk was also the closest coastal city to Grudziądz. Bydgoszcz was marginally closer, but inland, less prosperous than Gdańsk, and in Polish rather than Teutonic hands. The marketplace of Grudziądz would thus have provided the perfect conjuncture for pseudo-Olaf to have encountered traders with Baltic interests—the people who would have means and motive to execute an imposture against Queen Margaret (for more on the merchants' possible motivations, see Cole 2022, 103–5).

PSEUDO-OLAF AND HIS PAPERS

Before he became the False Olaf, our protagonist did not come from a world that knew no bureaucracy. Non-literate bureaucratic rituals

7. In a broader Eastern European context, see Hoffmann (1989, 91–2). Though in an English setting, on the access of peasants to town markets, see Hilton (1990, 45–7, 73; more on the seigneurial dimension 196–7; 1979, 217) and Biddick (1985). More generally, Wolf (1973, 64–6).

such as the passing of twigs before witnesses to formalize land transfers were a part of Prussian peasant legal praxis (Carsten 1964, 81). Similar rituals are known from other feudal economies, including Denmark (Bloch 2014, 121; Villadsen 1944, 5). Land registers (Middle Low German *lantboke*) were maintained in Prussia as they were elsewhere in feudal Europe. While much of peasant administration happened informally, village life did generate documents: legal conflicts could produce written resolutions, feudal relationships could be formalized in writing, and trading in markets could generate receipts (Clanchy 1993, 46–51; Poulsen 2010, 429–48; Dobrowolski 1971, 296–7). Of course, how often pseudo-Olaf personally dealt with paperwork is unclear. If, as posited earlier, he visited Grudziądz to trade or convey payment to specialists, then it is possible that he handled receipts, but if he had some intellectual impairment, his duties might also have been restricted to manual tasks such as carrying produce.⁸ Either way, a dramatic acceleration in his relationship with the written word occurred when he arrived in Gdańsk. The conspirators set him up with a court, including a *herold*, literally a herald, but in this case, also a scribe. Posilge says:

Das irfur eyn burger von Grudentz, Tyme genant von der Nelow, und holdte yn, und tate ym gutlichin, und etliche kouflute der lande Denemarkin und Norweyn qwomen aldar, und furtin yn ken Danczk, alzo das das gemeyne volk yn alle hilden for eynen koning, und gobin im gros ere und legetin im vor die hant, war her habin wolde, uf ein gut hoffin. Und czu im qwam ein herold, der im alle ding usgab, und lys in ingesegel grabin, under deme her schreib, und sante botin us czur konigynne von Dennemarkin, wie her ir son were, und were czu lande komen, und welde gerne arm sin bleben sine tage; nu hett in der pabist dorczu getwungen, do her im bichte, her sulde czin szu lande und sin righe vordern. (Posilge 1965, 260–1)

(A citizen of Grudziądz, who was known as Tyme von der Nelow, heard of [the resemblance between Olaf and the peasant], and met him, and treated him well, and a number of merchants of the countries of Denmark and Norway came here, and brought him to Gdańsk, so that all the common people hailed him as a king, and gave him great honor and brought to him whatever he asked for, in a great court. And a herald came to him who proclaimed everything for him, and

8. Historical diagnoses have tended toward mental illnesses (Etting 1987, 95–6; Etting 2004, 138; Erslev 1898, 426; Erslev 1892, 425).

had a seal carved for him. He wrote and sent a message to the Queen of Denmark, [saying] that he was her son, and wished to come to the country, and would very much have spent his days in poverty; but now the Pope had forced him, ordering him that he should preserve his country and his kingdom.)

It sounds as though this *herold* was in fact a scribe with commercial experience, possibly the junior member of a merchant household, or a scrivener of the type that successful merchants employed in their back offices (Middle Low German: *schrivarekämmer* or *schrivekuntör*; see Dollinger 1971, 164). My confidence in this assessment stems from several details: (1) The “herald” was apparently more than the sort of townsman who had picked up some functional literacy necessary to their normal profession. He was not one who could write his name and pick out the relevant phrases in a letter, but one who had the scribal knowledge either to commission a seal or fashion one himself. (2) The herald was active while pseudo-Olaf’s court was in Gdańsk, but apparently did not accompany his liege to Scandinavia. The public execution of those involved in imposture plots was generally root and branch, and the fact that our sources only record the False Olaf being burnt strongly suggest that the pretender and his documents made it to Falsterbo, but the man who wrote them stayed at home, beyond the reach of the Danish authorities. The Prussian chronicler Simon Grunau (fl. 1517) has an eccentric version that features a Gdański trader being examined alongside the impostor, but being unaccountably let off (Grunau 1876, 704–6). However, Grunau’s account is so surreal and fairy-tale-like that it can be safely omitted. In a trading hub such as Gdańsk, it would have been relatively easy to find lettered men either in the mercantile sphere or in the grey area where town officials overlapped with merchant households. (3) As we shall see, I accept the detail in the *Chronicle of Nordelbian Saxony* that pseudo-Olaf wore a paper crown when he was burnt, and I interpret the crown as being made of his letters. Therefore, his letters must have been on paper, not on parchment/vellum. By c. 1400, paper was the preferred material of North German traders and Hanseatic urban administrators (Britnell 1997, 17–8; Jenks 2013, 68–9; Van Huis 2015). The use of seals was known on paper letters as well as parchment (Magerøy 1993, 137).

One wonders what the scribe’s documents said. Posilge implies that some were letters addressed to Margaret stating pseudo-Olaf’s claim to be her son, which is plausible. However, Margaret did not correspond with the False Olaf directly concerning his visit to her—unsurprisingly,

given that his court would have had no legitimacy in her eyes. A letter issued by Danish and Swedish noblemen on June 17, 1402, addressed to the Teutonic Order, says that Queen Margaret has heard that “eyn bove, velscher unde vorreder komen is in Pruzen, de zich hed koning Olaf” (Karlsson 1903, 72 [nr. 2924, sdhk nr. 15869]) [a scallywag, forger (*velscher*, also “foreigner”) and traitor has arrived in Prussia, who calls himself King Olaf]. To deliver her message, she charged Folmar Jakobssøn (d. 1413), a Danish aristocrat who had supposedly held the real Olaf in his arms as the young king died, and Wulfhard Wulflam (d. 1409), a Hanseatic diplomat and confidant of Margaret, at that time, mayor of Stralsund.⁹ A reply was issued from Marienburg on July 21, 1402, stating that Knights of the Teutonic Order will deliver “den man, der sich eynen konyng von Denemark nennet” (Karlsson 1903, 77 [nr. 2928, sdhk nr. 15898]) [the man, who names himself as a king of Denmark]. The False Olaf was therefore probably not carrying any documents pertaining to his passage, as it had been organized by chanceries other than his own. He may have had edicts intended to appeal to commoners. As cited above, Posilge wrote that in Gdańsk, “all the common people hailed him as a king, and gave him great honor and brought to him whatever he asked for, in a great court.” The first personnel of the court were perhaps those sorts of townspeople whom Hilton characterizes with the Marxian term “lumpenproletariat”: those so desperate that they could not or would not see that a king of Denmark could hardly guarantee the liberation of the downtrodden in Pomerania (Hilton 1973, 187). However, pseudo-Olaf’s handlers must have been careful to make only limited efforts in the production of emancipatory paperwork. Hanseatic cities could be tinderboxes of social unrest, and dissent in Hanseatic cities was violently extinguished (Dollinger 1971, 133–40; Heß 2016).

One letter carried by the False Olaf when he arrived in Scania was probably a supposed papal bull backing his claim. We have already seen that Posilge records that part of pseudo-Olaf’s backstory was that he “would very much have spent his days in poverty; but now the Pope had forced him, ordering him that he should preserve his country and his kingdom.” Contrary to Grunau’s colorful version, the impostor

9. On Folmar Jakobssøn: Erslev (1896, 470–1). See also Bøgh (2003, 255, 286). On Wulfhard Wulflam: Pyl (1898). Wulf was a colorful figure, who ended his days by being assassinated in a graveyard by the son of a former friend whom he had murdered (Kratz 1865, 462–3).

does not seem to have come to Scandinavia with any of his handlers. Neither does he appear to have given a particularly enthusiastic performance of being the real king, so he could probably not have been trusted by the conspirators to mention the detail about the pope. A document would therefore have been the most reliable way for the conspirators to make sure the message of papal backing was conveyed. However, this letter in particular would have been seriously fishy to any educated person. Firstly, there was no precedent for *ex cathedra* papal intervention in royal succession controversies in Scandinavia. Archbishops or bishops could be involved, but this was something quite different from the pope himself commenting. Secondly, popes seldom supported impostor-type claimants. Indeed, secular rulers normally received papal support against impostors (Pocock 1887, 114). Thirdly—and most seriously—we have seen that pseudo-Olaf’s letters were apparently of paper. But papal dispatches were always written on parchment (Patrick Zutshi, personal communication, April 22, 2020). Here, the apparent background of the False Olaf’s scribe in commerce was a serious shortcoming. The merchant preferred paper and Middle Low German. The pope preferred parchment and Latin.

THE ROLE OF MERCANTILE BUREAUCRACY

The role of Tyme von der Nelow has been treated only in passing by previous commentators (Etting 1987, 91; Erslev 1892, 423–5), but it is central to our investigation of what letters the False Olaf may have carried. In Posilge’s account, he is a concerned “citizen of Grudziądz” who escorts pseudo-Olaf to Gdańsk, seemingly out of the goodness of his heart. (In Grunau’s chronicle, the collection is made not by one Grudziądzki but by a group of Gdańskie.) This Tyme is a mysterious character. Firstly, modern editors of von Posilge have created doubt about his name. In the 1866 (reprinted 1965) edition by Theodor Hirsch, Max Töppen, and Ernst Strehlke, he is “Tyme von der Nelow.” But in the 1823 edition by Johannes Voigt and Friedrich Schubert, he was “Tyme von der velow” (Voigt and Schubert 1823, 153). Owing to the travel restrictions and organizational dysfunction brought about by the pandemic of 2020–2021, I have not been able to compare the manuscripts of Posilge’s chronicle to explain this. However, being able to do so would bring limited clarity, as none of the five surviving copies are autographs. I am inclined to think that “der Velow” is more plausible, hypothetically as an unusual lenition of “der Below,” being

a traditional name for the Rega river in Pomerania (v. Restorff 1827, 17).¹⁰ The name is also attested by another merchant, Barteken von der Velow, active in Elbląg in 1396 (Hoppe 1986, 213 [s. a. 1396, nr. 1744]). Finding this Tyme in other sources is challenging. His name (also Timme, Timo, Thimon, Thiemo, Thymo, Thymmo, Thymon, Tymme, Thymmo, etc.) was common among Hanseatic traders. Moreover, if Tyme were a Grudziądzki, commissioning ships out of Gdańsk as his nearest port, then the range of places where his name could be expected to turn up is considerable. In the early fifteenth century, Gdańskie captains were making journeys as far to the west as Iceland, Ireland, England, and Norway.¹¹

The best indication we have that Tyme really existed, and that his first name at least was not a plotter's alter ego, is a record from a history based on the Grudziądz town archives. There, it is noted that one Thymo of Grudziądz lost 400 Marks worth of herring, salt, horses, and carriages, following the destruction inflicted on the town in 1410, during the Polish–Lithuanian–Teutonic War (Frölich 1868, 102). One wonders if this is the same Thymo who received two marks and fifteen shillings' worth of coriander sweets at Gdańsk, at some point in the Spring of 1409, on behalf of the Teutonic Order's Grand Master, Conrad (Link and Sarnowsky 2008, 333). It seems unlikely that Tyme von der Nelow/Velow escorted pseudo-Olaf to Gdańsk out of charity. After all, if the plotters were waiting for someone to find their Olaf-lookalike and bring them to international attention by chance, they would have been potentially setting themselves up for a long wait. It makes more sense, then, to suppose that Tyme was part of the plan from the start. The loss of herrings and salt (popular trading commodities) and wagons and horses (means for conveying

10. Germanic languages usually lenite on medial not initial consonants.

11. The voyage of Captain Peter Dambecke to Iceland in 1435: see HANSDoc Database, <https://hansdoc.dsm.museum/Docs/14350000XXX00.html> (accessed June 11, 2020); the murder of Eynwolt Everdes on the ship of the same captain, while docked in Iceland, in 1434: see HANSDoc Database, <https://hansdoc.dsm.museum/Docs/14340209GDA00.html> (accessed June 11, 2020); The capture of the Gdański Captain Hinricus Weytgot in Plymouth in 1403 (Bugge 1910, 823 [nr. 665]). The same captain was in the Netherlands in 1401 (Thoe Schwartzenberg en Hohenlansberg 1768, s. a. 1401). On Gdańskie in England, see Jenks (2013, 94). In 1392, one Nicholaus Havomester sailed directly from Gdańsk to Bergen (Bugge 1910, 735 [nr. 621]). In 1439, a Dutch ship carrying Icelandic stockfish was raided at Dalkey in Ireland, apparently by Gdańskie sailors ("mercatores et Marinarij de Danske in Prucia") with English captains, including one from King's Lynn, as a result of English mercantile migration to Gdańsk (see Bugge 1915, 110–1 [nr. 822]).

them) suggests that Tyme had a warehouse operation in Grudziądz. Gdańsk would have been the nearest node of the Baltic herring trade, and so he would likely have maintained premises there too. Regardless of whether the “Thymo” who procured exotic confectionery for Conrad von Jungingen in Gdańsk is our man or a namesake, Tyme of Grudziądz would appear to have been a man with a more than trivial enterprise, and could be expected to employ a number of workers. It is therefore tempting to surmise that the False Olaf’s herald-scribe may have been one of Tyme’s clerks in Gdańsk.

CROWNS AND NECKLACES

The practice of humiliating a failed pretender by forcing him to wear parodic costume is not unknown, in Denmark and elsewhere. In September 1534, Captain Clement had arrived in the Northern Jutish city of Ålborg and raised a peasant army, loyal to the deposed Christian II of Denmark (r. 1513–1523) (see Tvede-Jensen 1985). He was defeated in December by Johan Rantzau (d. 1565), loyal to King Christian III (r. 1534–1559). Although Captain Clement was in fact a mercenary serving a royal claimant, propaganda misremembers him as a pretender with his own royal aspirations. Huitfeldt says that “udi det Aar 1536 er hand Halshuggen / ok lagt paa fire Steyler / oc bleff set en Bly Krone paa hans Hoffvit / fordi hand lod sig hylde aff Almuen” (Huitfeldt 1650, 1432) [he was executed in the year 1536, and lain upon four wheels (i.e., quartered after being broken on the wheel) and a lead crown was put upon his head because he had himself hailed (as king) by the commoners]. An anonymous Danish chronicle of c. 1560 makes a clearer suggestion that Clement was forced to wear the crown during his torture:

Och hand da giorde forligelsemaal met de Lybske, och drogh saa neder til Jytland emod skipper Skipper Clemmind, som tilforn haffde fanget stoer seygeruindingh moed Adelen. Saa affslo hand hannom wid Randers; der bleff och skipper Clemmind fangen och ført til Wyborge, och bleff saa steyglit och sat en bly krone paa hans hoffued. [A: der som och Skipperen fangen bleff, och ført til Wyborge, och steyglit met en bly krone paa hoffuedit]. (Rørdam 1873, 544)

(He [Christian III] made a peace treaty with the Lübeckers, and then went down to Jutland to face Captain Clement, who previously had won a great victory against the nobility. Then he defeated him at Randers. That is also where Captain Clement was captured and brought to

Viborg, and then was broken on the wheel and had a crown of lead put on his head [alternative manuscript: and was broken on the wheel with a crown of lead on his head].)

That this performance really happened is suggested by the inclusion of a cartoon of Captain Clement and his mocking crown in Marcus Jordan's map of Denmark, completed in 1585 and dedicated to Rantzau's son.¹² Moving away from Denmark but toward *paper* crowns, Duke Richard of York (d. 1460) was decapitated after his capture by Lancastrian forces at the Battle of Wakefield; his head was supposedly put on a spike at York, adorned with a paper crown (Strohm 2006, 79–80). If a lead crown represents the dullness of a pretender's claim, then paper represents its fragility. An example closer to the matter of paperwork is the case of Didrik Brus, a Schleswiger priest who got into a disagreement with Bishop Godske Ahlefeldt (d. 1541). Their feud was complex, even involving a charge from the bishop that Didrik had murdered his own brother. For our purposes, the important part is that in the Winter of 1515, and into the next year, Didrik was tried for deploying forged documents in a previous trial at the Rota Tribunal in Rome. His sentence included the detail that he should be "crowned with a paper crown, [and] he shall be subjected to a humiliating public exhibition on the steps of old Saint Peter's basilica. Thereafter he shall be taken to the Rota, where he shall stand the whole day" (Ingesman 2016, 106).¹³ Here, the paper crown is not the sign of the pretender, but of the forger. Thirteen years after the death of pseudo-Olaf, Jan Hus was (rather more famously) burnt at the stake. Several sources record the role of a paper crown, here, a probable eyewitness account of uncertain attribution:

They . . . placed on his head a paper crown with three revolting demons drawn on it, and next to them the title "this man is a heretic." He embraced the crown with all his heart, saying, "The crown which my Saviour and Redeemer bore for my sake on his sacred head was heavy and oppressive. But this one, which is light and easy to bear, I

12. The image can be seen in Tvede-Jensen (1985, 90). In other contexts, the lead crown could be a positive symbol. Emperor Conrad (r. 1027–1039) was buried with one naming him the defender of Rome, perhaps symbolizing his status as a *rex aeternus* or *vindex aeternus*, because lead does not corrode, nor is it likely to be melted down in the future by someone hungry for treasure (Wolfram 2003, 132). In the Early Modern period, the lead crown became a symbol of the monarch's nobility in bearing the heavy duties of state (Gilbert 1939–1940, 159–60).

13. Regrettably, travel restrictions mean I have not been able to visit the archives to reproduce the original. Nonetheless, Ingesman's translation is obviously beyond reproach.

ardently long to kiss for your sake, my Lord Jesus Christ.” . . . Then he was taken out and went to the cemetery, and they impiously burnt before his eyes the books and treatises of his that they had received. Then, wearing the crown, he was led through the midst of the crowd of onlookers, comforting the little flock of the Lord, to the place of torment. (Fudge 2011, 68–9)¹⁴

This is clearly not the paper crown of a forger, as per Didrik Brus. Indeed, the executioners themselves make clear that they are alluding to the practice of burning heretical texts, because they make the immolation of Hus’s works a part of the performance. There may yet have been a suggestion that Hus was a pretender operating alongside the accusation of heretic. The crown depicting three demons and the label appears frequently both in manuscript art and woodcuts depicting the burning. In some instances, it resembles a doctoral cap. In others, it resembles a papal tiara. In these latter instances, Hus becomes a near-perfect victim of the paper crown as a polysemous symbol: As a sign, the paper crown worn by a burnt victim can include both heretic and pretender, so Hus is to be humiliated via a sign that, by not specifying which, accuses both (a quantum superposition of mockery, one might say).¹⁵ However, I say “near-perfect” because Hus astutely seized on a typological cock-up committed by his tormentors.¹⁶ Christ obviously had His own mocking crown, of thorns not of paper. As revealed in the gospels, derisory words were attached to the cross, for example, John 19:19: “And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS” (KJV). The parallel with Hus’s situation was therefore not exact. For example, the words were written on Hus’s crown rather than attached to his stake. But the resemblance was convincing enough for Hus to inflict an embarrassing rhetorical blow on his opponents in his last moments.

In the case of the False Olaf, our sources give slightly different accounts of his accoutrements during the execution. As seen, Posilge

14. Here, too, I was unable to access the Latin text.

15. The polysemy of the paper crown also included one positive connotation (cf. the lead crown in the notes above). By the Early Modern period, they were being worn to celebrate Twelfth Night in Germany and the Netherlands (Van Wagenberg-Ter Hoeven 2007). This may be the origin of the modern British custom of wearing paper crowns during Christmas dinner.

16. On typological thinking, see Haki Antonsson (2018, 496–7, 502–5).

depicts him wearing a crown and a sort of necklace or bunting: “He was draped with his letters, which he had sent to the queen as her son, and a crown was fastened to him.” However, Posilge does not specify the material of which the crown was made. The *Chronicle of Nordelbian Saxony* says that the crown was paper but makes no mention of the necklace. It also provides a fuller account of the burning:

Also de junge koning uor sine moder quam, se wart utermaten sere tornich unde sprak, se hadde ene nywerle myt ogen geseen, unde graf uan stunden an dat ordel, men scholde ene bernen also enen uelschener. Dar worden upgerichtet twe maste unde in der hogede wart eme en stoel bereyt unde setteden ene dar bouen up, uppe sineme houede ene koninglike krone uan papire. Pyk unde sweuel unde uur worpen se under em unde uordempeden ene. Darna uorbrande se ene. (Lapenberg 1865, 99–100)

(When the young king came before his mother she was really very furious and said she had never set eyes upon him before, and deliberated for hours about the punishment, but [decided] he should be burnt like a forger [*uelschener*]. Then two posts were erected and at the top a stool was prepared and he was fixed up there to the structure, upon his head a royal crown of papers. They put pitch and sulphur and urine under him and smoked him. Then they burnt him.)

Another difference between the two chronicles is the scaffolding upon which he was burnt. Posilge mentions no such construction, but the description given by our Nordelbian is involved and sober enough to suggest he was working from an eyewitness account. Etting (1987, 112) thinks it probable that the False Olaf was tied to a ladder that was toppled over into the flames. This cannot be discounted, although it may simply be that two masts were used—one to support the stool, and one to which pseudo-Olaf was tied to prevent him falling from his grim seat. Crucially, Posilge’s account and the *Chronicle of Nordelbian Saxony* at no point provide mutually exclusive information. In fact, they speak for each other on points where one falls silent. Given that pseudo-Olaf’s edicts were used to adorn him, it would also make more sense that his crown was fashioned out of one or more of his letters, rather than using all his letters to make the necklace and then having to find new paper for his crown. It is noteworthy that the papers were hung about his person, rather than on the frame. (One nineteenth-century historian [Voigt 1834, 229–30] claims that the letters were indeed hung on the stake, but this appears to be a

misinterpretation of Posilge.)¹⁷ The executioners thereby avoided the mistake that would later be made at Constance when Jan Hus was executed, of accidentally echoing the execution of Christ. No fools were the beadles of Falsterbo.

A SPECTACLE AND ITS LOGIC

This leads us to the question of *why* pseudo-Olaf and his papers were burnt: What was the punitive logic underlying this particularly performative penalty? Etting posits: “Sandsynligvis er han blevet opfattet som kætter, måske fordi man mente, at djævelen havde besat ham” (Etting 1987, 95) [He was probably viewed as a heretic, maybe because people thought that he had been possessed by the devil] (see also Etting 2004, 138). It is true, of course, that burning at the stake was the common sentence for heresy, but there are serious problems with this explanation. Firstly, no source makes any magical or demonic accusations against the False Olaf, except for Grunau’s chronicle, which is unreliable. Secondly, while heresy was an elastic charge (it was, after all, the worst thing of which one could be accused in medieval Christendom, and therefore a common smear), it was by no means identical with possession. Indeed, some medieval cases show that ecclesiastical courts could be careful to distinguish between the two (Flanagan 2005, 35–7).

Here, we should pay attention to the congruences in language between the angry letter from the Danish and Swedish nobility demanding the False Olaf’s delivery, and the chronicle sources. The letter calls him first, “yn bove, velscher unde vorreder” [a scallywag, forger and traitor]; second, “eyn vorreder unde eyn bove” [traitor and a scallywag]; third, “den tuscher unde boven” [that impostor and scallywag]; and fourth, “eyn [boser], velscher, vorreder, tuscher” [a wrong’un, forger, traitor, impostor] (Karlsson 1903, 72 [nr. 2924, sdhk nr. 15869]). *The Continuation of Detmar’s Chronicle* was composed in Lübeck by multiple authors from 1395 to 1482 (Ahlers 1957, 619). There, the entry on the False Olaf begins: “Dessulven jares leet

17. The interpretation is understandable because Posilge uses no pronoun here: “Do wart eyn gros mechtig fur gemachet, und wart behangen alumben mit sinen briffen.” However, to accept Voigt’s reading, we would have to believe that it is the fire being hung with the letters. This may be intended in the sense of “the place of the fire” or the pyre before it was lit, but in the same sentence, the crown is mentioned, which indicates that Posilge’s train of thought was focused on pseudo-Olaf’s attire.

margareta, konyngynne van dren ryken, enen tusscher bernen uppe valsterbode”¹⁸ (Hirsch, Töppen, and Strehlke 1965, 463) [In this year, Margaret, Queen of The Three Kingdoms, had an impostor (*tusscher*) burnt at Falsterbo]. We have already seen that Posilge’s chronicle depicts Margaret deciding that “he should be burnt like a forger [*uelschener*].” Some of these epithets are nothing more than invective: being a scallywag has obviously never been a crime. The charge of treason applies properly to one’s own subjects. True, when the letter was issued, the council could not have excluded the possibility that pseudo-Olaf was a Scandinavian in Prussia, but it seems more likely that the phrase here is being used more broadly, to denote any person who wishes the kingdom harm. The closest concept medieval Danish law had to treason was *avighskjold* (shield turning), and that seems to have been imagined as a crime that only a noble could commit, as an element in rebellion or defection.¹⁹ The repeated accusation that actually *was* a crime is that of forgery. This must refer to Pseudo-Olaf’s letters.

The canonical Danish law codices (*The Jutish Law*, *The Scanian Law*, *The Zealandic Law*, all from the thirteenth century) are quiet on the issue of forgery. *The Jutish Law* describes the crime of *fals*, which it intends to cover only what we would think of as counterfeiting money (Tamm and Vogt 2016, 291–2). However, as we shall see, other Danish sources have more to say. The *Jutish Law* notwithstanding, medieval thinkers seemed to have conceived of “forgery” (Latin *falsus*, Middle English *falsnesse*, Middle High German *valscherie/velscherie*, Middle Low German *valscherie*, etc.) as something broader than we think of it today. In legal writing, it was normal for forgery to be mentioned in the same breath as counterfeited, clipped, or adulterated coins and goods. In medieval Latin, the verb *falsare* had a similar range, encompassing both counterfeiting and imposture (Niermeyer 1976, 406–7). We have seen that this is the term used by Bishop Richard in his account of the False Olaf, which I have translated as “faked.”

In vernacular speech, words for forgery were synonymous with any kind of falsehood. Medieval English examples from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries show that the forger of documents was punished in the same way as the trader who used deceptive weights and

18. The story is repeated verbatim in *The So-Called Rufus Chronicle* of around the same time (Koppmann 1902, 28–9).

19. For example, *King Eric’s Zealandic Law* (c. 1220s–1240s) (Tamm and Vogt 2016, 175). See also the *Royal Compact of King Christian II* (1513) (Wegener 1856–1860, 62 [nr. 16]).

measures, the person who pretended to a profession in which they were not qualified, or even a hustler at board games (Benson 2000, 38–41). For this latter case, the punishment could bear more than a few resemblances to Pseudo-Olaf’s fate. In London in 1376, a hustler and his moneyman, found guilty of using dodgy dice and a suspicious board for a game called *quek* “should have the punishment of the pillory, to stand thereon for one hour in the day; and that the said false chequer-board should be burnt beneath them, the Sheriff causing the reason for their punishment to be proclaimed” (Riley 1868, 396). Indeed, a forger at the pillory in medieval England could also expect to have their “documents burnt or tied to their body” (Benson 2000, 41). The logic was that the illicit object should be destroyed and the person who introduced it to the world, humiliated.

The Jutish Law recommends the amputation of the hand as a punishment for *fals*. This is a normal sentence in the context of other medieval European law codes (Hiatt 2004, 8). However, some German legal traditions propose that the crime of forgery, again in its nexus involving counterfeiting, should be punished by death. The *Saxon Mirror* (1220–1233) prescribes beheading for the worst offenses (Ute Bergen 1966, 152–3). *The Law of Goslar* (1340) recommends that “dene vorradere und velschere schal men in kopen bernen” (Bruns 1799, 357) [one should burn traitors and forgers in a vessel (*in kopen bernen*)]. This seems to represent a different sort of logic from our English examples: there is no need to repudiate publicly the product, only to destroy the producer. Strikingly, the best parallel I can find in a medieval legal text for what happened to pseudo-Olaf is from the *Urban Law of Ribe* (1269–1443): the local law of a south Jutish merchant town. There we read that:

Kommær nogher mæth falskt honnyng eldær iærn eldær noghen tyng, thær forfælskæth ær, tyl ath sælæ, er thet en køppmand, thær gæst ær, tha schal han vndlæddych sæch mæth synæ schyppmænd, vdan ær thet een burghære, tha schal han aersagæ sæch mæth xii hans næstæ naboer a pa beggy sythær wyth hannom; wæræ sæch hwath heldær thet tha schal then hauæ syn hals forbroth och thet honnyng schal brendæs och fortæres i eldæn, och thet samme schulæ mand gora wyth thet wox, thær forfælschæt ær, och al andær falsk thyng, thær brendæs kan och fortæres. (Kroman 1952, 30)

(When somebody turns up with counterfeited [*falskt / falsificato*]—perhaps here in the sense of adulterated] honey or iron or any other

thing which has been counterfeited for sale, if it is a merchant who is a foreign resident he should declare his innocence with his shipmates, unless it is a citizen, in which case he should acquit himself with [testimony from] twelve of his nearest neighbors from either side of his house. If he fails in this defense then his life is forfeit and the honey shall be burnt and reduced to ashes by fire, and one should do the same thing with wax when it is counterfeited, and all other counterfeited things, which can be burnt and obliterated.)

Now, the Law of Ribe itself cannot have been the justification used by Margaret. Ribe is some 200 miles from Falsterbo. Some fragments showing that Falsterbo-Skanör had its own law code are preserved from the reign of King Valdemar I The Great (r. 1131–1182) (Eriksson 1980, 131–2). A fuller code survives from somewhere between 1389 and 1412, though frustratingly it is not possible to say whether it predates or postdates the death of the False Olaf (Eriksson 1980, 132–7). Neither contains pronouncements on forgery. Nonetheless, legal thinking along the lines of the *Urban Law of Ribe* does seem to have been at play in the pseudo-Olaf affair, and we need not be surprised that Ribe and Falsterbo-Skanör should have had similar legal regimes by the turn of the fifteenth century: both were commercial centers, where Low German and Scandinavian traders mingled. It is not explicitly stated that the objects to be “burned and obliterated” should be done so publicly, although one suspects this was the idea.

By way of contrast, *The Jutish Law* recommends a variety of ways to destroy forgeries. It is relaxed about *how* the item is disposed of, so long as it is removed from circulation: “What was counterfeited and is so found shall no longer be given out, but it shall either be melted down or cut to pieces or be thrown into the sea, so that no man can find it” (Tamm and Vogt 2016, 292). The *Urban Law of Ribe*, on the other hand, provides one specific method—and one that has potential for a performative aspect because it involves fire: Consigning something to the flames has a natural theater of a higher grade than the bathetic plop of something dropped into the ocean. If a legal principle like this were in use in Falsterbo-Skanör in 1402, one wonders if part of the logic was that pseudo-Olaf was himself “something forged.” If honey or wax can be “forged” in the same way as documents, then perhaps a person can be “forged,” too, particularly if they have used fraudulent letters to present an image of themselves as someone they are not. The False Olaf’s paper crown may have been a traditional accoutrement for a forger in Denmark, as seen also in the case of Didrik Brus. (While

Didrik was prosecuted in the Roman *Rota*, both he and his plaintiff were Danish subjects.) The burning of the False Olaf's person and his letters may have stemmed from the elasticity of the concept of forgery.

CONCLUSION: BURNING PAPERS, BURNING BELIEFS

So far, we have considered the valences of burning pseudo-Olaf *with* his letters. In closing, we will consider the performance of burning the letters themselves. The public destruction of documents in feudal society commonly formed a part of insurrection (Justice 1994; Mauntel 2015). During revolts, the lower orders could confiscate documents, order the issue of new documents under duress, or performatively destroy documents in ways including skewering and immolation. Indeed, the burning of letters was part of the praxis employed by rebels during the Danish Peasants' Revolt of 1438–1441. But, as Christoph Mauntel (2015, 106) has pointed out, the performative destruction of documents could also be a piece of political theater used by elites. To take two examples listed by Mauntel, in 1469, Count Charles the Bold of Burgundy and Flanders (r. 1467–1477) punished the townspeople of Ghent for an earlier infraction by having their charter of self-government publicly cut with a knife. In 1381, in the wake of the English Peasants' Revolt, King Richard II (r. 1377–1399) allegedly went around the country with soldiers, forcing the defeated rebels to watch while their documents, issued during the rebellion, were torn up and discarded. According to one source, the King taunted his vanquished foes during one of these performances by announcing: “*Rustici quidem fuistis et estis; in bondage permanebitis, non ut hactenus, set incomparabiliter uiliori*” (Walsingham 1864, 18) [You used to be peasants and you still are peasants. You will stay in your bonds, not the way they used to be, but now incomparably worse].

A possible case of this “top-down” spectacle of violence against the written word can be found in Danish history too. In 1522, King Christian II attempted to introduce two new law codes, an urban and a national law. The nobility took exception to his legislation, which would have introduced wide-ranging reforms, not least shoring up legal protections for the peasantry. The laws cannot be construed as an emancipation for peasants, and there were plenty of details in them to displease the aristocracy alongside their concerns for the lower portion of the labor force (Scocozza 1976, 126–7). Nonetheless, peasants would have had the right to travel freely between markets across the country, to sell

fish, game, and charcoal of their own production at those markets, and a minimum wage if serving as retainers to noblemen or clergy (Andersen 1991, 56, 120, 184–5, 190).²⁰ There would have been formalized processes for newly married couples amongst the lower peasantry to acquire land and for peasants to appropriate deserted farms (Andersen 1991, 190). There would have been a mechanism to inhibit the higher peasantry from creating local land monopolies by grouping several farmsteads under one title deed (Andersen 1991, 189). The national law also decried “sliig ont, wchristelig seduone, som hertill y Siellandt, Falster, Lollandt och Møn werit haffuer med stacharls bønder och christne mendnische at selge och bortgiifue liigesom andre wschiellige creatur”²¹ (Andersen 1991, 192) [that evil, un-Christian custom, which to date has prevailed on Zealand, Falster, Lolland, and Møn, to sell and dispose of the poor peasants, yea, Christians, like other witless creatures].

Huitfeldt records that, as a rebellion drove King Christian II from the country, “bleff den aff det Jutske Raad / offentlig brent til Viborg Landsting / som en skadelig oc forderffvelig Low / imod god Politi / oc Regimente”²² (Huitfeldt 1652, 1183) [(the law text) was publicly burnt by the Jutish Council at Viborg Regional Assembly, as a harmful and corrupting law, contrary to good political order and rule]. Interpretations of the symbolism of the Viborg burning have varied. Arup asserted that it was “en efterligning af Luthers, den store revolutionsmands, opbrænding af banlysningsbullen imod ham 1520 i Wittenberg” (Arup 1961, 396) [an imitation of Luther’s—that great revolutionary—burning of the bull of excommunication issued against him in 1520 in Wittenberg]. Lysbjerg Mogensen (2016, 22) points out the resemblance with the practice of burning heretical works. It does not contradict either of these suggestions to highlight the role of performative top-down document destruction. Obviously, the burning of King Christian’s law manifested the nobility’s disdain for the monarch. But it must have also sent a message in the other direction, further down the social hierarchy, advertising to the peasants the futility of

20. The law implies that *pipersvene* (“pepper lads” or “bachelors”) are recruited from the peasantry, although later they would be more associated with the mercantile class (Andersen 1991, 159).

21. The same language would later be used by King Frederick I (r. 1523–1533). See Pedersen (1983, 107).

22. On the evolving meanings of *politi* around the time of King Christian II, see Mührmann-Lund (2019, 23–31, 56–8).

any attempt to improve their conditions. Farmhands, household servants, perhaps the very people who were ordered to stoke the flames as stagehands for their masters' political theater, watched their dreams of a better world go up in smoke.

There is no indication in our sources that the False Olaf carried letters promising emancipation for Danish peasants, for example, pledging more flexibility for landless laborers to move between positions, or greater freedom to take part in herring fishing, or increased access to potentially communal resources such as firewood, game, and so on. It would have been good tactical sense if he did (though the apparent unpreparedness of the impostor indicates that tactical sense was not necessarily something in which the conspirators overinvested). However, the documents of the False Olaf had the potential to be symbols of resistance regardless of their content. To illustrate what I mean by this, we will investigate (1) who believed in the False Olaf, and (2) *how* they believed in him. The *Chronicle of Nordelbian Saxony* states that after pseudo-Olaf's immolation, "etlike Denen sammelden sine knaken, wat se krigen kunden, unde helden de uor grote hilligedomete" (Lappenberg 1865, 98–100) [many Danes collected his bones, whatever (of them) they could obtain, and considered them to be great relics]. Some Danes present at Falsterbo-Skanör did then accept the pretender.

The Scanian market that took place there during late summer and early autumn was a remarkable gathering. It was international, socially diverse, and had multiple purposes. Hanseatic and Scandinavian traders came to sell wares and speculate on herring and salt (Hørby 1982; Hybel and Poulsen 2007, 367). Fishermen would have come from around the Baltic, with German-speaking captains probably bringing crew who spoke a myriad of Northern European languages. English, Estonian, French, and Irish coinage has been excavated in Skanör, as well as the German and Scandinavian finds one would expect (Eriksson 1980, 23). International connections abounded: In one year, forty prostitutes were imported for the festivities at Falsterbo-Skanör from Rostock alone, with presumably more coming from other cities (Eriksson 1980, 81). With the transfer of the Scanian castles back into Danish hands, the royal Danish court now had fitting residences in the midst of the market too. One suspects that Bishop Richard accompanied Margaret's court and therefore saw the False Olaf burn with his own eyes. He was surely not the only foreign ambassador present.

Importantly, for our purposes, captains came to recruit crews for their fishing vessels. These crews often contained landless Danish peasants, who could earn substantial sums in a cash economy by participating in herring fishery. The *Statute of Lolland* (1446) later attempted to restrict this practice: “Item skal engien legiedreng faaræ til fiskes fraa bonden, han tiæner. Hwikken ther gør, haffwe forbrothet the koste, han meth sigh til fiskes fører, oc iii mark moth koningen oc iii mark moth bonden, han tiænte” (Andersen 1989, 96–9) [No hired farmhand is to leave the farmer he serves to go into fishing. Whoever does owes the provender he took with him when he went to fish, and three marks to the king and three marks to the farmer he served]. The Danes who were seen venerating the remains of the False Olaf, then, may have been townsfolk, and they may well also have been peasants.

We have seen that Norwegians had proto-nationalist reasons to believe in pseudo-Olaf, owing to the extinction of their royal house. What might have motivated Danes, though? It is obvious that these were Danes who did not feel that their interests were served by Queen Margaret. We are not, then, looking at the higher ranks of society, but instead probably the lower townsfolk or the peasantry. Peasant politics, especially the medieval variant, were often expressed in terms that puzzle us in modern, urbanized societies. James C. Scott has pointed out that what observers sometimes mistake for strange or even stupid behavior is often a deliberate dissimulation intended to minimize exploitation (Scott 1985, 28–37). However, I do not think that Danes were cynically pretending to believe in the False Olaf, hoping it would somehow lead to better conditions down the line. In fact, I submit that the believers almost certainly did not have a clear idea of how unseating Margaret and replacing her with the new claimant would tangibly affect their lives. Rather, I would suggest that under challenging social and economic conditions, people will subscribe to a variety of beliefs, even ones they might otherwise find implausible, as much out of solace as strategy. This was as true in 1402 as it was at any other time.

It has been supposed that impostor-schemes were more plausible in the pre-modern world because it was a time before the photograph: Most of the population did not have a clear idea of what their rulers (or themselves) looked like (Cheesman and Williams 2002, 96–8; Zemon Davis 1983, 38–9). But we must also remember all the thoughts that were not thinkable, the private forms of dissent that as yet could not be connected to a concrete political plan because the necessary political

idiom had not been developed. Put simply, believing in impostors could be a way for people at the bottom of the ladder to fantasize about shaking the people at the top of it. This is not the same as *cynically* claiming to believe something while secretly being fully conscious that it is preposterous. Certainly, lay support for impostor-claimants could be fervent. Mitchell (2019) shows that in the case of the False Margaret of 1301, an interloper even more unconvincing than the False Olaf was burnt in Bergen, and yet was venerated as a folk-saint both in Norway and in Iceland for generations to come. When Tacitus described the rise of a False Drusus Germanicus in AD 31, he wrote of the impostor's supporters that "they pretended to believe, and yet at the same time they did believe" (Tacitus 1970, 150 [Bk. 5, chap. 10]) [*fingebant simul credebantque*]. As Cheesman and Williams note, this is a serviceable description for the mentality behind most belief in impostors: Some people believe because they are convinced by the plausibility of the impostor's story. Others have a *need* to believe, which existed before the impostor came along. Marx and Engels suggested that ideology could be approached as a set of unconscious assumptions conditioning our behavior. Study how people are behaving, and you will know what they believe—or what they do not know they believe: "We do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive. . . . We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real-life process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of [the] life-process" (Marx and Engels 1973, 47).

I agree with Marx and Engels that those who want to believe something may not be aware of their own desires, but one can go further: We also desire belief. When we yearn for another world, there is a rapture in seizing upon anything that might prop up our ideology. To be witnessed in the act of belief is not mere vanity. It also brings comfort, as we play the role of the believer we want to see in the world, both for our own benefit and the benefit of our audience. In this way, the False Olaf's body and his bureaucratic implements become curiously intermingled. The Danes seen clutching at pseudo-Olaf's charred bones were persisting in a game that had begun with his letters. He had documents, they thought, and therefore he must be a real king, the real Olaf. In the flames, his letters were obliterated, and his body hideously transformed into ashes, grease, and skeleton. But the desire to believe survived, and if the letters could no longer be held up, nor the man heralded, then his remains would become the new props with which belief was performed.

When elites destroy the written word as a spectacle, they also reject the possibility of meeting a given message in the sphere to which it lays claim. Texts take for granted that they will enter into a certain dialogue: The political or philosophical pamphlet assumes that it will be either accepted or debated. The love letter will either rouse or douse passions. The documents of a ruler—or pretender—imply the quiescence or revolt of the reader. Burning a text, then, is not only an expression of vehement disagreement with the utterances of the text, but a rejection of the idea there can be any dialogue at all. This is important in cases of top-down document destruction. Subaltern groups enter the realm of documentary culture in different ways. They may start to issue their own documents, for example, the Namašudra dalits of Bengal in 1911, who despite being largely illiterate in the middle of the nineteenth century, by 1911, produced a petition to the colonial authorities protesting their treatment (Byapari and Mukherjee 2007, 4117; Sarkar 2002, 45–6). They may revolt, and force new documents to be issued by bureaucrats through threats, as happened in the English Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 (Justice 1994, 47–50, 70–1; Mauntel 2015, 98–103). Or, they may take to heart documents issued by others that, though not nobly intended to liberate the peasantry, suit “the new appetite for liberty,” to use Samuel K. Cohn’s formulation, characteristic of both townfolk and peasantry in the Late Middle Ages (Cohn 2008, 236–42). The letters of the False Olaf, like King Christian II’s laws, fall into this last category. Burning such documents in a ritualistic, public way signals to the downtrodden that the pursuit of their political objectives with these new bureaucratic implements will not be accepted. Those who condemned our nameless Prussian peasant to his hideous death consciously burnt a man wrapped in letters, but they also meant to burn letters wrapped about a man.

WORKS CITED

Primary Sources

- Andersen, Aage, ed. 1989. *Den Danske Rigslovgivning 1397–1513*. Copenhagen: Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab.
- . 1991. *Den Danske Rigslovgivning 1513–1523*. Copenhagen: Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab.
- Bruns, Paul Jakob, ed. 1799. *Beyträge zu den deutschen Rechten des Mittelalters*. Heimsstadt: E. G. Fleckeisen.
- Bugge, Alexander, ed. 1910. *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*. Vol. 19. Kristiania: Mallingske Bogtrykkeri.

- . 1915. *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*. Vol. 20. Kristiania: Mallingske Bogtrykkeri.
- Fudge, Thomas A., ed. and trans. 2011. “Jan Hus at Calvary: The Text of an Early Fifteenth-Century *Passio*.” *Journal of Moravian History* 11: 45–81.
- Grafton, Richard. 1809. *Grafton’s Chronicle; or, History of England*. Vol. 2. London: J. Jonhson.
- Grunau, Simon. 1876. *Preussische Chronik*. Vol. 1. Edited by M. Perlbach. Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot.
- Hingeston, Francis Charles, ed. 2012. *Royal and Historical Letters during the Reign of Henry the Fourth, King of England and France, and Lord of Ireland, 1399–1404*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hirsch, Theodor, Max Töppen, and Ernst Strehlke, eds. 1965. *Johann von Posilge Fortsetzung*. In *Scriptores Rerum Prussicarum: Die Geschichtsquellen der Preussischen Vorzeit*. Vol. 3, 277–388. Frankfurt: Minerva.
- Hoppe, Hans W., ed. 1986. *Das Elbinger Stadtbuch*. Vol. 2. Münster: Historischer Verein für Ermland.
- Huitfeldt, Arrild. 1650. *Danmarckis Rigis Krønিকে*. Vol. 1. Copenhagen: Joachim Moltken Boghandler.
- . 1652. *Danmarckis Rigis Krønিকে*. Vol. 2. Copenhagen: Joachim Moltken Boghandler.
- Karlsson, Karl Henrik, ed. 1903. *Svenskt diplomatarium från och år 1401*. Vol. 4, fasc. 1. Stockholm: Kungl. Boktryckeriet.
- Koppmann, Karl, ed. 1902. *Die Chroniken der Niedersächsischen Städte. Lübeck*. Vol. 3. Leipzig: S. Hirzel.
- Korner, Hermann. 1895. *Die Chronica Novella des Hermann Korner*. Edited by Jakob Schwalm. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Krantz, Albert. 1545. *Denmårckische, Swedische, und Norwågische Chronica*. Translated by Henrich von Eppendorff. Strasbourg.
- . 1546. *Chronica Regnorum Aquilonarivm*. Strasbourg.
- Kroman, Erik, ed. 1952. *Danmarks Gamle Købstadlongivning*. Vol. 2. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger.
- Lappenberg, J. M., ed. 1865. *Die Chronik der nordelbischen Sassen*. In *Quellemsammlung der Schleswig-Holstein-Lauenburgischen Gesellschaft für vaterländische Geschichte*. Vol. 3. Kiel: Akademische Buchhandlung.
- Link, Christina, and Jürgen Sarnowsky, eds. 2008. *Schuldbücher und Rechnungen der Großschäffer und Lieger des Deutschen Ordens in Preußen*. Vol. 3. Cologne: Böhlau.
- Pedersen, Christiern. 1856. *Den Danske krønিকে*. In *Danske Skrifter*. Vol. 5. Edited by C. J. Brandt, 438–517. Copenhagen: Gyldendalsk Boghandling.
- Pollard, A. F., ed. 1914. *The Reign of Henry VII from Contemporary Sources*. Vol. 3. London: Longmans, Green.
- Posilge, Johann von. 1965. [*Chronik des Landes Preussen*; variorum edition starts abruptly without a title page]. In *Scriptores Rerum Prussicarum: Die Geschichtsquellen der Preussischen Vorzeit*. Vol. 3. Edited by Theodor Hirsch, Max Töppen, and Ernst Strehlke, 79–276. Frankfurt: Minerva.
- Riley, Henry Thomas, ed. and trans. 1868. *Memorials of London and London Life*. London: Longmans, Green.
- Rørdam, Holger. 1873. *En dansk Krønিকে fra Kong Valdemar Atterdag til Kong Christian den Tredies Dod*. In *Monumenta Historie Danicæ*. Vol. 1, 499–556. Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad.
- Tacitus. 1970. *The Annals*. Vol. 10. Edited by John Jackson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Tamm, Ditlev, and Helle Vogt, trans. 2016. *The Danish Medieval Laws: The Laws of Scania, Zealand and Jutland*. London: Routledge.
- Thoe Schwartzenberg en Hohenlansberg, Georg Frederik Baron, ed. 1768. *Groot Placaat en Charter-Boek Van Vriesland*. Leeuwarden: W. Coulon.
- Voigt, Johannes and Friedrich Wilhelm Schubert, eds. 1823. *Jahrbücher Johannes Lindenblatts oder Chronik Johannes von der Pusilie, Officialis zu Riesenburg*. Königsberg: Universitäts Buchhandlung.
- Walsingham, Thomas. 1864. *Historia Anglicana*. Vol. 2. Edited by Henry Thomas Riley. London: Longman, Green.
- Wegener, C. F., ed. 1856–1860. *Aarsberetninger fra Det Kongelige Geheimearchiv*. Vol. 2. Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel.

Secondary Sources

- Adolfsson, Mats. 2007. *När Borgarna Brann. Forntiden–1499*. Stockholm: Natur och Kultur.
- Ahlers, Olof. 1957. “Detmar.” In *Neue Deutsche Biographie*. Vol. 3, edited by Historical Commission of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 618–9. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- Arup, Erik. 1961. *Danmarks Historie*. Vol. 2. Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel.
- Baur, Kilian. 2018. *Freunde und Feinde: Niederdeutsche, Dänen und die Hanse im Spätmittelalter (1376–1513)*. Vienna: Böhlau.
- Benson, C. David. 2000. “Piers Plowman as Poetic Pillory.” In *Medieval Literature. Essays in Honour of Derek Pearsall*, edited by David Aers, 31–54. Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer.
- Biddick, Kathleen. 1985. “Medieval English Peasants and Market Involvement.” *Journal of Economic History* 45 (4): 823–31.
- Bloch, Marc. 2014. *Feudal Society*. Translated by L. A. Manyon. London: Routledge.
- Bøgh, Anders. 2003. *Sejren i kvindens hand: Kampen om magten i Norden ca. 1365–89*. Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag.
- Britnell, Richard. 1997. “Pragmatic Literacy in Latin Christendom.” In *Pragmatic Literacy, East and West, 1200–1330*, edited by Richard Britnell, 3–24. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer.
- Byapari, Manoranjan, and Meenakshi Mukherjee. 2007. “Is There Dalit Writing in Bangla?” *Economic and Political Weekly* 42 (41): 4116–20.
- Carsten, F. L. 1964. *The Origins of Prussia*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Cheesman, Clive, and Jonathan Williams. 2002. *Rebels, Pretenders & Impostors*. London: British Museum Press.
- Clanchy, M. T. 1993. *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Cohn, Samuel K. 2008. *Lust for Liberty: The Politics of Social Revolt in Medieval Europe, 1200–1425*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cole, Richard. 2022. “The False King Olaf, Queen Margaret, and the Prussian Hansa.” *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 18: 83–112.
- Dobrowolski, Kazimierz. 1971. “Peasant Traditional Culture.” In *Peasants and Peasant Societies*, edited by Teodor Shanin, 277–98. London: Penguin.
- Dollinger, Philippe. 1971. *The German Hansa*. Translated by D. S. Ault and H. Steinberg. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Eriksson, Henning S. 1980. *Skånemarkedet*. Århus: Wormianum.
- Erslev, Kr. 1892. *Danmarks Historie under Dronning Margrethe og hendes nærmeste Efterfølgere. 1375–1448*. Vol. 1. Copenhagen: Jacob Erslevs Forlag.

- . 1896. “Lunge, Folmer Jacobsen.” In *Dansk biografisk Lexikon*. Vol. 10, edited by Carl Frederik Bricka, 470–1. Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag.
- . 1898. “Oluf.” In *Dansk biografisk Lexikon*. Vol. 12, edited by Carl Frederik Bricka, 425–6. Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag.
- Etting, Vivian. 1987. “Den Falske Oluf—et studium i virkelighed og myter.” In *Kung Olofs Minne*, edited by Christer Bökwall, 90–112. Falsterbo: Christer Bökwall.
- . 2004. *Queen Margrete I (1333–1412) and the Founding of the Nordic Union*. Leiden: Brill.
- Flanagan, Sabina. 2005. “Heresy, Madness, and Possession in the High Middle Ages.” In *Heresy in Transition: Transforming Ideas of Heresy in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, edited by Ian Hunter, John Christian Laursen, and Cary J. Nederman, 29–41. London: Routledge.
- Frölich, Xavier. 1868. *Geschichte des Graudenzers Kreises*. Vol. 1. Graudenz: Xavier Frölich.
- Gairdner, James. 1898. *History of the Life and Reign of Richard the Third*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Gilbert, Allan H. 1939–1940. “The Wreath of Thorns in Paradise Regained.” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 3 (1–2): 156–60.
- Haki Antonsson. 2018. “The Construction of *Audunar þáttur vestfirzka*: A Case of Typological Thinking in Early Old Norse Prose.” *Scandinavian Studies* 90 (4): 485–508.
- Heß, Cordelia. 2016. “Urban Community and Social Unrest: Semantics of Conflict in Fourteenth-Century Lübeck.” In *Imagined Communities on the Baltic Rim, from the Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries*, edited by Wojtek Jezierski and Lars Hermanson, 307–27. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Hiatt, Alfred. 2004. *The Making of Medieval Forgeries: False Documents in Fifteenth-Century England*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Hilton, Rodney. 1973. *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381*. London: Methuen.
- . 1979. “Medieval Peasants—Any Lessons?” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 1 (2): 207–19.
- . 1990. *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism*. London: Verso.
- Hoffmann, Richard C. 1989. *Land, Liberties, and Lordship in a Late Medieval Countryside: Agrarian Structures and Change in the Duchy of Wrocław*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Hybel, Nils, and Bjørn Poulsen. 2007. *The Danish Resources c. 1000–1500: Growth and Recession*. Leiden: Brill.
- Hørby, Kai. 1982. “Skånemarkedet.” In *Kulturbistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder*. Vol. 16, 68–77. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger.
- Ingesman, Per. 2016. “A Criminal Trial at the Court of the Chamber Auditor: An Analysis of a Registrum from 1515–1516 in the Danish National Archives.” In *Church and Belief in the Middle Ages: Popes, Saints, and Crusaders*, edited by Kirsi Salonen and Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, 85–114. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Ingram, John H. 1882. *Claimants to Royalty*. London: D. Bogue.
- Jacobsen, Grethe. 1992. “Dansk købstadlovgivning i middelalderen.” *Historie* 19 (3): 393–439.
- . 1995. *Kvinder, køn og købstadslovgivning 1400–1600: Lovfaste Mænd og ærlige Kvinder*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum.
- Jenks, Stuart. 2013. “The London Steelyard’s Certifications of Membership 1463–1474 and the European Distribution Revolution.” In *The Hanse in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, edited by Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz and Stuart Jenks, 59–108. Leiden: Brill.
- Justice, Stephen. 1994. *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Koch, H. W. 1978. *A History of Prussia*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Kratz, Gustav. 1865. *Die Städte der Provinz Pommern: Abriß ihrer Geschichte, zumeist nach Urkunden*. Berlin: Bath.
- Kristensen, Hans Krongaard, and Bjørn Poulsen. 2016. *Danmarks byer i middelalderen*. Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag.
- Lecuppre, Gilles. 2005. *L'imposture politique au Moyen Age: La seconde vie des rois*. Paris: PUF.
- . 2006. "Ideal Kingship against Oppressive Monarchy: Discourses and Practices of Royal Imposture at the Close of the Middle Ages." In *Mystifying the Monarch: Studies on Discourse, Power, and History*, edited by Jeroen Deplouge and Gita Deneckere, 65–76. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Liek, Gustav. 1893. *Die Stadt Löbau in Westpreussen*. Löbau: Verlage des historischen Vereins.
- Lysbjerg Mogensen, Christina. 2016. "Idealstat og lov: En analyse af embedsmandsstaben i Christian II's Land- og Bylov (1522)." PhD thesis, Aarhus Universitet.
- Magerøy, Hallvard. 1993. "Diplomatics." In *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf, 137–8. New York: Garland.
- Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels. 1973. *The German Ideology*. Edited by C. J. Arthur. New York: International Publishers.
- Mauntel, Christoph. 2015. "Charters, Pitchforks, and Green Seals: Written Documents between Text and Materiality in Late Medieval Revolts." In *Communication and Materiality: Written and Unwritten Communication in Pre-Modern Societies*, edited by Susanne Enderwitz and Rebecca Sauer, 93–112. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Mazo Karras, Ruth. 1996. *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Mitchell, Stephen. 2019. "The False Margrete: Swindle in 14th-c. Bergen and Its Aftermath." Paper delivered at the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies, May 2–4, Madison, WI.
- Mührmann-Lund, Jørgen. 2019. *Borgeligt Regimente: Politiforvaltningen i købstæderne og på landet under den danske enevælde*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum.
- Newman, Paul B. 2007. *Growing Up in the Middle Ages*. London: McFarland.
- Nichtweiss, Johannes. 1979. "The Second Serfdom and the So-Called 'Prussian Way': The Development of Capitalism in Eastern German Agricultural Institutions." *Review of the Fernand Braudel Center* 3 (2): 99–140.
- Niermeyer, J. F. 1976. *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus*. Leiden: Brill.
- Parkes, Peter. 2004. "Fosterage, Kinship, and Legend: When Milk Was Thicker Than Blood?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46 (3): 587–615.
- Pedersen, Frank. 1983. "Frederik I.s forordning af 14. maj 1523—en kommentar til Benito Scocozza." *Fortid og nutid* 1: 97–110.
- Pocock, Nicholas. 1887. "A Bull of Pope Alexander VI." *English Historical Review* 2 (5): 112–4.
- Potthast, August. 1990. *Repertorium fontium historiae Medii Aevi*. Vol. 6. Rome: Istituto Storico.
- Poulsen, Bjørn. 2010. "Using the Written Word in a Late Medieval Rural Society: The Case of Denmark." In *Along the Oral-Written Continuum: Types of Texts, Relations and Their Implications*, edited by Slavica Ranković, Leidulf Melve, and Else Mundal, 429–48. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Pyl, Theodor. 1898. "Wulfflam, Wulffhard." In *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*. Vol. 44, 292–5. Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot.
- Rohwedder, Søren. 2007. "Invandring til Danmark i middelalderen—En komparativ analyse af invandrere i tre danske købstæder." MA thesis, Syddansk Universitet.

- Roth, Cecil. 1918–1920. “Perkin Warbeck and His Jewish Master.” *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 9: 143–62.
- Sarkar, Sumit. 2002. *Beyond Nationalist Frames: Postmodernism, Hindu Fundamentalism, History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Scales, Len. 2012. *The Shaping of German Identity: Authority and Crisis, 1245–1414*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Schreibmüller, Hermann. 1949. “Der Schmied von Ochsenfurt.” *Mainfränkisches Jahrbuch für Geschichte und Kunst* 1: 95–146.
- Scocozza, Benito. 1976. *Klassekampen i Danmarks historie: Feudalismen*. Copenhagen: Carit Andersens Forlag.
- Scott, James C. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Smith, Gordon. 1996. “Lambert Simnel and the King from Dublin.” *The Ricardian* 10: 498–536.
- Starbäck, C. Georg, and P. O. Bäckström. 1885. *Berättelser ur svenska historien*. Vol. 2. Stockholm: A. L. Normans Boktryckeri-Aktiebolag.
- Strauch, D. 1993. “Milchbrüder (-schwwestern).” In *Lexikon des Mittelalters*. Vol. 6, 622. Frankfurt: Minerva.
- Stroh, Paul. 2006. “York’s Paper Crown: ‘Bare Life’ and Shakespeare’s First Tragedy.” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 36 (1): 75–102.
- Tvede-Jensen, Lars. 1985. *Jylland i oprør: Skipper Clement-fejden 1534*. Aarhus: Historisk Revy.
- Ute Bergen, Madelyn. 1966. “The *Sachsenspiegel*: A Preliminary Study for a Translation.” PhD thesis, Ohio State University.
- Van Huis, Hendrik. 2015. “Papier- und Pergamentgebrauch in den Stadtbüchern von Greifswald.” In *Papir im mittelalterlichen Europa*, edited by Carla Meyer, Sandra Schulz, and Bernd Schneidmüller, 191–212. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Van Wagenberg-Ter Hoeven, Anke A. 2007. “King’s Letter Prints and Paper Crowns.” *Print Quarterly* 24 (4): 380–99.
- Villadsen, Villads. 1944. *De danske bonders historie*. Aarhus: Aarhus Amtstidendes Bogtrykkeri.
- Voigt, Johannes. 1834. *Geschichte Preussens, von dem ältesten Zeiten bis zum Untergange der Herrschaft des Deutschen Ordens*. Vol. 6. Königsberg: Verlage der Gebrüder Vorträger.
- v. Restorff, F. 1827. *Topographische Beschreibung der Provinz Pommern*. Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung.
- Wolf, Eric R. 1973. *Bønder: En social-antropologisk oversigt over bondesamfundets udvikling*. Translated by Peter Damgaard Hansen. Copenhagen: Reitzel.
- Wolfram, Herwig. 2003. “Konrad II (1024–1039).” In *Die deutschen Herrscher des Mittelalters*, edited by Bernd Scheidmüller and Stefan Weinfurter, 119–35. München: C. H. Beck.
- Wunder, Heide. 1978. “Peasant Organization and Class Conflict in East and West Germany.” *Past & Present* 78: 47–55.
- Zemon Davis, Natalie. 1983. *The Return of Martin Guerre*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.