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THE WRITER-LY WORLD OF ANDREA CEFALO

Blogging Medieval History, Grimm's Fairy Tales, and My Progress on The Fairytale Keeper Series

Menu

CATEGORY ARCHIVES: HISTORICAL FICTION

From Pork to Pancakes: A Few of Europe's Famous Fat Tuesday Foods

Fat Tuesday, Mardis Gras, Fastnacht, Carnevale. Whatever you call it, Europe marks the day before the start of Lent with celebration and feasting. In the past, Catholics abstained from eating certain foods during the six weeks before Easter—meat, eggs, milk, and butter, to name a few. During the Middle Ages, these foods were not just prohibited at Lent; they were banned. Since food preservation wasn't what it is today, people had two choices. Eat the food or let it rot. As a result, many cultures developed recipes to combine several ingredients into one sweet or savory dish. Here are a few famous European Fat Tuesday eats sorted by nation of origin.

Germany

At first glance, it may seem odd that Germany's most famous Fat Tuesday food is a pastry. Shouldn't it be a meat dish? A sausage of some sort? Nope, it's a doughnut-like confection. The *fastnacht* served an important purpose at Lent in the past when uneaten animal products and by-products would rot. The *fastnacht* recipe makes fantastic use of three prohibited Lenten foods—eggs, milk, and lard. In that way, the *fastnacht* hits three birds with one doughnut.

While I can't find any information on the *fastnacht's* origins, we do know the treat is named after the holiday itself, which translates to night before the feast. It is popular to this day, especially in Pennsylvania. Many Pennsylvania Dutch bakers serve the pastry still and some restaurateurs have put their own spin on it. In 2014, a brewing company in Hershey developed a *fastnacht* ice cream sandwich and some restaurants offer a burger on *fastnacht* buns. (Watch out, Paula Dean.)

This woman frosts fastnachts for Fat Tuesday. (Photo Credit: Ted Van Pelt)

Spain

The Spanish name for Fat Tuesday is *Jueves Lardero*, which translates to Lard Tuesday. With a name like that, does it come to any surprise that pork is the star of many Spanish Fat Tuesday dishes? A Belgian in-flight magazine encourages tourists visiting Spain to try "*relleno de carnaval*, a dish of pork intestines stuffed with cured ham, garlic and saffron cooked over a slow flame, and *chicharrón*, a deliciously textured dish made with crispy fried pork rind." In other words, don't forget to try some pig with a side of pig sprinkled with a little pig dust.

Different parts of Spain enjoy different foods and many of them contain pork. In Soria, the youth eat pigs cheek in a dish called *merienda*. In central Spain, chorizo sausage and eggs are baked into a bread called *el hornazo*. The rhyming dish *Jueves Lardero chorizo y huevo*—which also contains chorizo and egg—is popular in the Castilla-Leon region. But the Spanish—like so many other European cultures—have a sweet dish, too. The *pina* is a popular pastry in Soria made with flour and honey.

Jueves Lardero chorizo y huevo contains chorizo and whole eggs. (Photo Credit: Wikipedia)

Great Britain and Ireland

The British refer to Mardi Gras as Pancake Day for a very obvious reason. In order to use up any excess butter, milk, and eggs, the British made pancakes. The tradition goes as far back as the fifteenth century when pancakes were much larger and flipping them required a bit of skill.

Perhaps more interesting than the pancake itself, is the folklore and traditions surrounding it. If the eldest eligible daughter in an Irish family successfully flipped the first pancake, it was believed that she would be married within the year. According to *Irish Central*, 'Lent Crocking' was a popular custom in which "children would pass from house to house asking for pancakes. If they weren't given any, broken crockery would be thrown at the door!" It appears that another pastry, the hot cross bun, has British roots, as well. In the past, people considered the first three pancakes holy. They set those pancakes aside, sprinkled them with salt, and marked them with crosses. Over time, the pancake was swapped out for buns.

Hot cross buns may have originally been hot cross pancakes. (Photo Credit: Wikimedia)

Italy

Italy's Fat Tuesday celebrations are called *Carnevale*. Like Germany's *Fastnacht* and England's Pancake Day, baked goods dominate the *Carnevale* celebration. The *castagnole*—an Italian-style fritter—utilizes milk, eggs, and butter. Though Italians fry it in oil today, they may have cooked it in leftover lard in the past. The *frittelle* is a softer version of a *castagnole* sometimes filled with cream. The *sanguinaccio*—a sweet custard made of pig's blood and flavored with dark chocolate—is by far the strangest dessert on the *Carnevale* menu.(This blood pudding was beautifully featured on an episode of NBC's Hannibal.)

I think I'll forgo pig's blood and go straight for the pasta. Lasagna is also a *Carnevale* dish. It requires three ingredients banned during Lent: cheese, meat, and the eggs used in making the pasta sheets.

Sanguinaccio is a Carnavale dessert made with pig's blood and chocolate. (Photo Credit: Wikimedia)

Andrea Cefalo is a medieval fiction author and history blogger. Her debut novel The Fairytale Keeper was a quarter-finalist in Amazon's 2013 Breakthrough Novel Contest. The sequel–The Countess's Captive—was published earlier this year. She is currently working on the third book in her series.

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Abelard & Heloise: 5 Lesser-Known Facts about these Medieval Lovers

When most people hear the name Peter Abelard, they think of Heloise and their affair. Some liken this romance between teacher and student to Romeo and Juliet. What began with forbidden love ended in tragedy and separation, but that is where the similarities end. So, for a special Valentine's Day post, I've found five more interesting tidbits about the Middle Age's most famous star-crossed lovers.

Abelard Was Looking for a Mistress Before He Met Heloise

Abelard didn't step blindly into a teacher position and then fall for his pupil, Heloise. In fact, according to Pierre Bayle's *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, Abelard admits in a letter that he had already been searching for a mistress to help him pass "agreeably those

hours he did not employ in his study" and while several women had caught his attention, he was not looking for "easy pleasure."

In a letter written years later to a man named Philintus, Abelard says, "I was ambitious in my choice, and wished to find some obstacles, that I might surmount them with the greater glory and pleasure." This suggests some forethought on the part of Abelard when it came to an affair.

Leighton's Abelard and His Pupil Heloise. (1882)

Abelard Planned to Seduce Heloise Before She was His Student

It appears that Abelard had interacted with or at least known of Heloise before he was her teacher. In the same letter written to Philintus, Abelard says a young woman in Paris caught his eye. She was indeed Heloise.

In that same letter, Abelard writes that "by the offices of common friends I gained the acquaintance of Fulbert [Heloise's uncle and caretaker]; and can you believe it…he allowed me the privilege of his table, and an apartment in his house?" Later, Fulbert asked Abelard if he would tutor Heloise. Imagine the cannon's excitement when one of France's most respected scholars agreed to tutor his niece. It was during their lessons that Abelard convinced a reluctant Heloise to become his lover.

Heloise and Abelard May Have Been Kinky

Okay. This isn't exactly a fact and it may be a stretch. Bear with me. Heloise and Abelard had sex in places that put them at high risk for getting caught. Did they do this to spice up their lovemaking? It's possible.

Vignaud's Abelard and Heloise Surprised by Master Fulbert. (1819)

Besides this, the pair may have had domination and submission fetishes. In his biography of Heloise and Abelard, James Burge claims Heloise felt wild freedom in completely surrendering to Abelard. Priya Jain, in an article for *Salon* magazine, suggests her submission to Abelard may have extended into their sex life. Abelard mentions physically punishing Heloise during her lessons. He also says Heloise was reluctant to have sex in a church refectory but did so after some convincing. We can only speculate whether this translates to fetish, but it seems plausible.

Some might argue that medieval women were generally submissive to men, especially their husbands and fathers. But Heloise was not your average medieval woman.

A Public Marriage Might Have Been Career-Suicide for Abelard

In previous years, it was considered acceptable for lower clergy—such as a scholar attached to a Church—to have a wife or lover. But by the twelfth century, these scholars were held to the same vows of chastity as monks and priests.

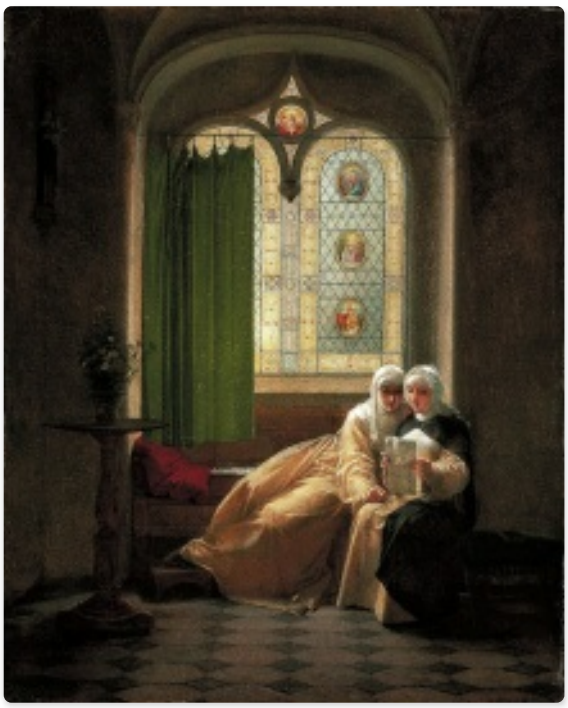
This didn't deter Abelard from his affair or even make him particularly cautious. As mentioned above, the pair had sex in places where they could have easily been caught—Fulbert's bed chambers, a church refectory, and a convent kitchen, to name a few. Strangely, the affair did not cost Abelard his career, even though Fulbert was a well-connected canon in Paris. Sadly, it was Heloise who suffered the greatest consequence at first.

When Heloise got pregnant, she left Paris to live with Abelard's sister in Brittany. There she gave birth to a son. Eventually, Heloise agreed to a secret marriage. This meant Heloise's reputation remained tarnished and she had to live in a convent. Meanwhile, Abelard lived life as usual. Some historians suggest Abelard began losing interest in Heloise, which must have been devastating to the woman who gave up so much for him. Around this time, Fulbert hired a man to castrate the scholar. This not only put a quick end to the affair, it prevented any future affairs Abelard might have had. It also left him

humiliated.

Cavelier's Abelard. (1853)

Heloise Was Incredibly Unconventional



Mallet's Heloise at the Abbey of Paraclete.

For the most part, women—even those of higher status—were not as well-educated as their male counterparts. Abelard mentions that most women hated learning anything beyond needlework. Yet, Fulbert recognized his niece's intellect and chose to nurture it. After all, Fulbert convinced one of France's greatest scholars, Abelard, to instruct Heloise in philosophy. Even Abelard was impressed with her wit and how quickly she learned. Besides this, her well-written letters, rise to prioress, and unconventional yet logical arguments all speak to her intelligence and knowledge.

(early 19th cent.)

Heloise's ideas about relationships were as counterculture as her education. Though it wasn't exactly rare to have a child out of wedlock during the Middle Ages, it certainly wasn't ideal. Most women would have married their lover for the sake of their reputation and that of their child. When Heloise's pregnancy was made known, Fulbert insisted on a marriage and Abelard offered. Yet Heloise—at least initially—turned down the idea. She even recruited Abelard's sister Lucilla to help convince him that

the marriage was a bad idea. In a letter to Abelard, Heloise says, "The name of mistress instead of wife would be dearer and more honorable for me…" In another letter, she says, "Even if I could be Queen to the Emperor and have all the power and riches in the world, I'd rather be your whore."

Abelard and Heloise. Manuscript Roman de la Rose. (14th cent.)

Not only was her refusal unconventional, it was considered gravely sinful at the time and a risk to her soul's salvation if she did not repent. Whether she decided to repent at some time in her life, I do not know. We do know that Heloise did submit to a secret marriage not long after the birth of their son, Astrolabe.

That brings up another unusual move on Heloise's part. She named her son after an astronomical device invented by Muslim astronomers. During the Middle Ages, parents gave their children Christian names. For certain a bastard named Abelard would have drawn a few strange looks. Sadly, not much is known about their son.

Heloise's lifelong devotion, while not exactly counterculture, is rather strange. One would think that after years apart, Heloise might have developed feelings of resentment towards Abelard. After all, Heloise had no desire to take holy orders, but she did at Abelard's insistence. Yet, years later the two began a correspondence again that shows her undying affection for him and when Abelard died in 1142 at the age of 63, his remains were taken to Heloise who outlived him by 20 years. She asked to be placed in the same tomb as Abelard,

but it is more likely that the two were entombed near each other. Later their remains were moved. Abelard and Heloise now rest side-by-side in Pere Lachaise Cemetery in Paris.

Lenoir's Tomb of Abelard and Heloise. (1817) Pere Lachaise Cemetery.

Andrea Cefalo is a Medieval fiction author and Medieval history blogger. Her debut novel, The Fairytale Keeper, was a quarter-finalist in Amazon's 2013 Breakthrough Novel Contest. The sequel, The Countess' Captive, was released in 2015. To keep up with her blog posts, upcoming novels, and musings, follow her on Facebook and Twitter or sign up for the VIP monthly newsletter.

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Why was this Thirteenth-Century Kingmaker so Hated?

Few men are memorialized in such a contradictory manner as Konrad von Hochstaden. Surely a man who laid the cornerstone of one of Europe's greatest churches—The Cologne Cathedral—should be remembered fondly. And he is…sometimes. (See the mosaic below.) But Hochstaden gave the people of Cologne and the Holy Roman Emperor of the time several reasons to hate him. Perhaps that's why a vulgar statue of Hochstaden sits on the

side of Cologne's City Hall. (Scroll to the bottom to see it. Warning: it's rather vulgar.)

This mosaic from Cologne's Cathedral shows a saint-like Konrad von Hochstaden holding the plans for the church's construction.

The Complexity of Rule in Thirteenth-Century Europe

To better understand Konrad von Hochstaden's power and influence, a very brief examination of Medieval Europe's political structure is in order. At the time, Europe was a hodgepodge of kingdoms, principalities, duchies (areas ruled by dukes), counties (areas ruled by counts), ecclesiastical sees (areas owned by the church), and free imperial cities. Trying to decipher the boundaries between these areas when looking at the map below is a tad tricky.

72 The Holy Roman Empire under the Hohenstaufen, 1138—1254.

© V. & K.

This map of Europe shows the political boundaries under Hohenstaufen rule.

Beginning in the tenth century, the king of the Holy Roman Empire was called King of the Romans and, later, King of the Germans. These were the titles used during Hochstaden's lifetime. In a nutshell, prince electorates selected a nobleman to fill the position of king. Typically when a Holy Roman Emperor died, the pope promoted the King of Romans to take the emperor's place, which essentially made the newly crowned Holy Roman Emperor the official ruler of Central Europe. Although, the amount of power each emperor actually wielded varied throughout medieval history and depended on several factors.

While inheritance often played a role in electing the King of the Romans and the Holy Roman Emperor, these were not strictly inherited positions. As I mentioned above, by the thirteenth century seven prince electorates—made up of four secular nobles and three church officials—ultimately decided who took the title of King of the Romans. The archbishop of Cologne was one of these prince electorates. One might argue that these kingmakers were even more powerful than the king himself. We certainly see this when examining the life of Konrad von Hochstaden, who was archbishop of Cologne from 1238 to 1261.

This miniature from the Chronicle of Henry VII (1341) shows the seven prince electorates. The archbishop of Cologne sits below the shield with the black cross.

Konrad Von Hochstaden's Rise to Prince

Konrad von Hochstaden came from noble blood, his father being Count Lothar of Hochstadt. We know little of his childhood, but by 1216 he was the beneficiary of the parish of Wevelinghoven, and in 1226, he was promoted to canon. He eventually ended up in Cologne as the provost of the cathedral. When Archbishop Henry of Molenark died in March of 1238, the chapter named Konrad as his replacement, an appointment that Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II approved in August. Surprisingly, Hochstaden wasn't even a priest at the time. That was a title he'd earned the following year.

Konrad Von Hochstaden was laid to rest in the Johannes Chapel of the Cologne Cathedral.

Konrad von Hochstaden Turns Against Frederick II

For the first year of his term as archbishop, Konrad supported the emperor in his disagreements with the pope, but when Pope Gregory IX issued Emperor Frederick's (second) excommunication after he invaded a papal fief, Konrad's loyalties shifted and he sided against the emperor with the pope and Archbishop of Mainz. It was a decision Hochstaden must have regretted in 1242 when he was badly wounded in battle against the emperor and captured by the Count of Julich, though he was eventually freed. By 1245, Konrad's star was on the rise again.

This fourteenth-century illumination portrays Pope Innocent IV excommunicating Emperor Frederick II.

Trouble in Cologne

By supporting the pope, Konrad von Hochstaden's power grew. He now had two duchies and the ecclesiastical see of Cologne, making him the most powerful man in Northwest Germany. Not everyone was pleased with Konrad's quick rise, and this resulted in struggles for power with his noble neighbors (Remeber the Count of Julich?) and the people of Cologne, who often refused to accept his authority. His ruthless methods in dealing with the people of Cologne left him with a malicious reputation.

Hostilities grew, so a theologian and scholar by the name of Albertus Magnus was brought in to help bring the people of Cologne and the archbishop to peace. This event is referred to as the Great Arbitration. Konrad lost some power in the bargain. After which, he tried unsuccessfully to pit the craftsman against the patricians in order to gain favor. He died two years later, and when his successor, Engelbert II, tried to fortify one of the city's towers, he was arrested and imprisoned by the Count of Julich for little over a year for violating the terms of the Great Arbitration. Meanwhile, Cologne gave way to violent battles between

the wealthy families of Cologne. Unfortunately for Engelbert, he supported the losing side, and rather than continue his fight for Cologne, he abandoned it for his palaces in Bruhl and Bonn.

Albertus Magnus (fresco, 1352, Treviso, Italy)

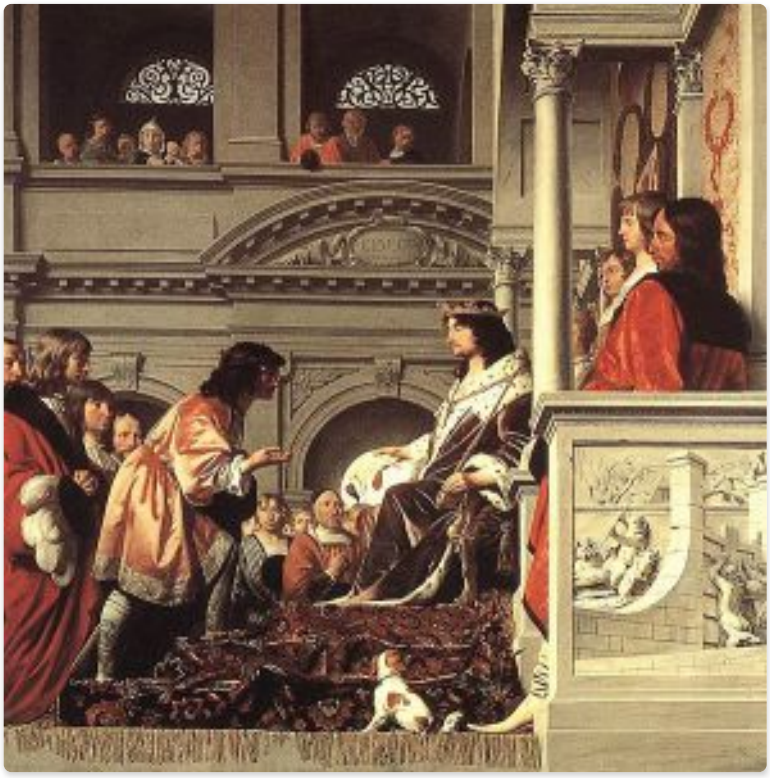
A league of German nobles defeated Engelbert's successor, Siegfried of Westerburg, at the Battle of Worringen in 1288. After this, the archbishops of Cologne would no longer reside within the city walls. But Cologne would not officially have its freedom from the Church until 1475 when it was declared a Free Imperial City.

Battles for the Crown

Let's go back to the battles between the Church and the emperor. In 1242, Frederick II selected Henry Raspe, Landgrave of Thuringia, and King Wencelaus of Bohemia as protectors of Germany until his young son Conrad was ready for the task.

A papal ban against Emperor Frederick was issued three years later. Raspe betrayed the emperor, siding with the pope, and was elected king in opposition to the boy he had earlier sworn to protect, Conrad. Henry experienced success on the battlefield, beating Conrad in the Battle of Nidda. Unfortunately for Henry, his reign was short. He died of illness only seventeen months after being named king.

Supposedly many noblemen were considered to fill Raspe's shoes, but the anti-king crown fell to the young Count William of Holland. In April of 1248, Holland sieged Aachen, the place where German kings were traditionally crowned. It took six months for Aachen to fall, but when it did, it was the Archbishop of Cologne, not the Pope, who placed the crown on William's head.



King William II of Holland Granting Privileges (Caeser Van Everdingen & Pieter Post, 1654)

Konrad von Hochstaden's faithful service to Pope Innocent was reward with the position of Apostolic legate in Germany, but Hochstaden reached higher. He secretly encouraged the people of Mainz to ask the pope to make him their new archbishop. This would make Konrad a double-prince elector since the Archbishop of Mainz also gets to vote on who becomes king. The pope gently denied Konrad the position, which caused Konrad to turn against the pope. The apostolic legation was taken from Konrad. Konrad turned from King William of Holland, as well and used every means necessary to dethrone him. He probably would have succeeded if William hadn't died first.

After the death of King William, it was time for Konrad to find another king. His vote fell to Richard of Cornwall, brother to King Henry III of England. In trade for his support, Konrad was gifted full imperial authority over his principalities and the right to name bishops in Richard's stead. Konrad von Hochstaden died four years later. Ironically, his remains lie in the Cathedral of the city where he was most hated: Cologne.

I hope you enjoyed this article on Konrad von Hochstaden. Hochstaden plays a key role in my medieval fiction series, The Fairytale Keeper. This article is a part of a series on real historical figures from the time period who appear in The Fairytale Keeper series. As promised, here is that vile statue of Konrad von Hochstaden.

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This entry was posted in Historical Fiction on March 10, 2016 by Andrea Cefalo.

The Black Death: Four Things You May Not Have Known

This image of plague victims comes from 'La Franceschina,' a fourteenth-century manuscript.

The fourteenth-century plague was one of the most catastrophic pandemics in human history. In a six-month span, bubonic plague wiped out sixty percent of London's population. Some historians estimate that it killed upwards of twenty million people within five years and by the end of the fourteenth-century, the disease—along with a

famine from earlier in the century—cut Europe's population in half. But current research proves we have some major misconceptions about the disease. I've combined this new information with some little-known facts, shedding light on four things most people don't know about the Black Death.

1. **Tartars Used the Plague as a Biological Weapon**

While some researchers believe the fourteenth-century Black Death was spread via Silk Road trade, that's not how it spread to Kaffa. We can blame a Tartar attack on the port in 1343 for that. (Tartars were Islamic converts and descendents of the Mongols living in the western part of their empire.) During the mid-fourteenth century, Tartars controlled Crimea, so when a dispute between locals and Italians in the town of Tana resulted in the death of a Muslim man, the Tartars intended to capture and kill the Italians who then escaped to Kaffa. When Kaffa refused to give up the Italians and barred the Tartars entry into the city, a sieged ensued…and lasted for three years.

While this isn't the Siege of Kaffa, this illustration of the Conquest of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 from Rashid-ad-Din's Gami' at-tawarih illustrates what Kaffa's siege might have looked like.

A historical account written sometime between 1348 and 1349 by Gabriele de' Mussi—a notary from north of Genoa—describes the horrific events of the third year of the siege.

… the whole army was affected by a disease which overran the Tartars and killed thousands upon thousands every day… Tartars died as soon as the signs of disease appeared on their bodies: swellings in the armpit or groin…"

"The dying Tartars… ordered corpses to be placed in catapults and lobbed into the city…. What seemed like mountains of dead were thrown into the city, and the Christians could not hide or flee or escape from them, although they dumped as many of the bodies as they could in the sea. And soon the rotting corpses tainted the air and poisoned the water supply…"

That's right. The Tartars catapulted corpses into the city of Kaffa, turning their dead soldiers into biological weapons.

Though it seems he didn't directly witness the siege, most consider de'Mussi's account accurate. While some historians believed the biological warfare caused the spread of plague through Western Europe, current research suggests the two occurred independent of one another.

2. **Most Plague Victims Weren't Infected by Flea Bites**

Most people will remember learning in school that fleas on rats transmitted the plague to victims. After a flea bite, the *Yersinia pestis* bacteria infected each person, symptoms ensued, and most people died. The end.

Current research proves that's not entirely true.

When construction workers tunneling beneath London's Charterhouse Square stumbled upon twenty-five skeletons, the long-trusted theory changed. Researchers believed the site—an unexcavated area once home to a medieval monastery—contained a Black Death cemetery. DNA extraction and analysis confirmed twelve of the victims had been exposed to and later died of the plague. Scientists compared the medieval strain of the bacteria to the strain that killed sixty people in Madagascar in 2011 and found their genetic codes were identical.

This illustration of medieval plague pits shows how the twenty-five corpses found in London might have been buried.

According to the World Health Organization, fleas on rats carried the Madagascar strain, but once the infection spread to the victims' lungs, the bacteria could be transmitted via the air. This led researchers to conclude that—for the most part—coughing and sneezing transmitted the disease to medieval victims, not fleas.

To me, the air-born theory makes far more sense than the flea-bite theory, especially when considering that the disease killed sixty percent of London's population in six months. I suppose it's possible—perhaps even likely—that six out of ten Londoners were bitten by fleas during that six-month period, but it seems even more likely that they were exposed to a cough or sneeze. A study of wills from the time shows relatives dying within hours of one another, which I think suggests the bacteria was spread from human to human.

I suppose none of really that matters anymore since the DNA analysis and comparison with the Madagascar strain proves the plague was air born.

3. **Fleas Might Have Been Infected By Gerbils, Not Black Rats**

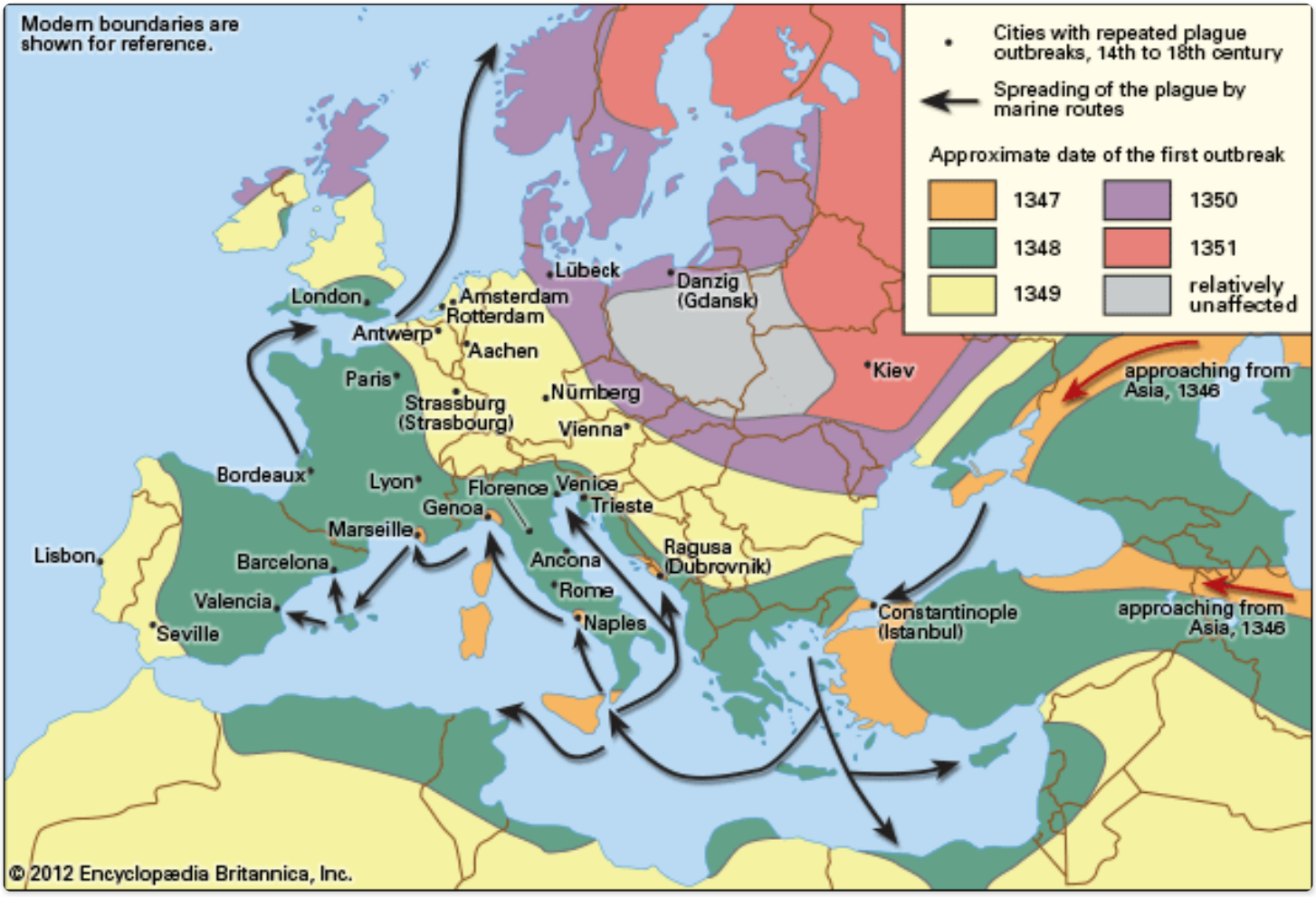
A new study from the University of Oslo suggests the pesky fleas who started the Great Plague were infected and transported by gerbils, not black rats. How on Earth did they figure this out? With climate data. By scouring tree ring records which coincided with 7,000 historical incidences of plague, researcher Nils Stenseth found that tree rings from Europe showed no consistent weather patterns. But, Asian tree rings did. While the wet

Researcher Nils Stenseth believes great gerbils from central Asia are responsible for spreading bubonic plague.

springs and warm summers experienced in Central Asia before each outbreak weren't suitable for black rats, they were ideal for great gerbils.

According to Stenseth in an interview with History.com, his research shows "that wherever there were good conditions for gerbils and fleas in central Asia, some years later the bacteria shows up in harbor cities in Europe and then spreads across the continent."

And since we now know—thanks to the twenty-five skeletons found in London—that the bubonic plague bacteria has hardly changed over time, it makes sense that resurgences of plague are caused by an increase in gerbil population rather than by new strains, further supporting Stenseth's theory.



This map by Encyclopedia Britannica shows the spread of the Black Death through medieval Europe.

4. **Cat Massacres Didn't Lead to an Increase in the Rodent Population and Plague**

As I was combing the internet, I found a variety of uncited rumors about the thirteenth-century massacring of cats. Supposedly, in 1233 Pope Gregory IX issued a papal bull called "Vox in Rama." The bull discusses the rather strange use of black cats in satanic and heretical rites. In his book, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, Jeffrey Burton Russell describes the strange ritual.

The heretics…have secret meetings. When a postulant wishes to become a member of their congregation, he is led into the midst of the meeting, whereupon the Devil appears in the form of a toad, goose, or duck, as a black cat with erect tail which descends a statue backwards to meet his worshipers… The postulant kisses the apparition either on the mouth or on the anus.

The bull also suggests heretics participated in other rituals in which they kissed the anus of a black cat. You can read more about that here.

Despite Pope Gregory's published opinion, I can find no evidence of people massacring cats as a result. So why is that? Probably because most people living in the 1200s wouldn't have been aware of his opinion. It wasn't like they could walk to the local library and pick up a copy of the bull for a nightly read. Besides, it wasn't intended for the average person. It was intended to help bishops interrogate and root out heretics, like the Cathars.

Pope Gregory IX has some strange ideas about what heretics did with black cats.

But, for a moment, let's ignore a lack of archeological and written evidence and say thirteenth-century people did massacre cats. The bull was issued over a century before the Black Death gripped Europe and if killing cats was a passing fancy, the feline population might have been able to bounce back by the time plague struck and kill a number of the pesky rats…or gerbils. Not that that would matter really. The plague was air born, remember?

Now this is not to say medieval people had a fondness for cats. In her article, "Heretical Cats: Animal Symbolism in Religious Discourse," Irina Metzer discusses the general mistrust of cats during the Middle Ages. While people tolerated cats because they killed rodents, people viewed felines as "incompletely domesticated" and unwilling to serve humans when there was an expectation that God put animals on the Earth for that purpose. Primary documents show us some unfavorable conclusion about cats. People compared them to heretics, the devil, and witches.

**I want to thank my dear friend Marco for helping me with the research for this article.

Andrea Cefalo is a Medieval fiction author and history blogger. Her debut novel The Fairytale Keeper, was a quarter-finalist in Amazon's 2013 Breakthrough Novel Contest. The sequel–The Countess's Captive—was published earlier this year. She is currently working on the third book in her series.

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Further Reading and Sources:

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- http://www.history.com/news/medieval-black-death-was-airborne-scientists-say
- http://www.cdc.gov/plague/symptoms/
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Murder in Mercia: What (or who) Killed England's 10th-Century Kings?

From 939 to 959, England saw the face of five kings. The shortest reign: only four years. For certain, other English rulers experienced abbreviated reigns—Edmund Ironside and Richard III, to name a few—but the consecutively short tenures of these tenth-century monarchs has sparked an interest in some historians and historical fiction writers, as well. Annie Whitehead—author of To Be a Queen and Alvar the Kingmaker—kindly shares her research and opinion on what might have killed some of these early English kings. Was it natural causes or something more sinister?

Breaking News, October 1st, AD 959: King Edwy dies suddenly, aged 19. His younger

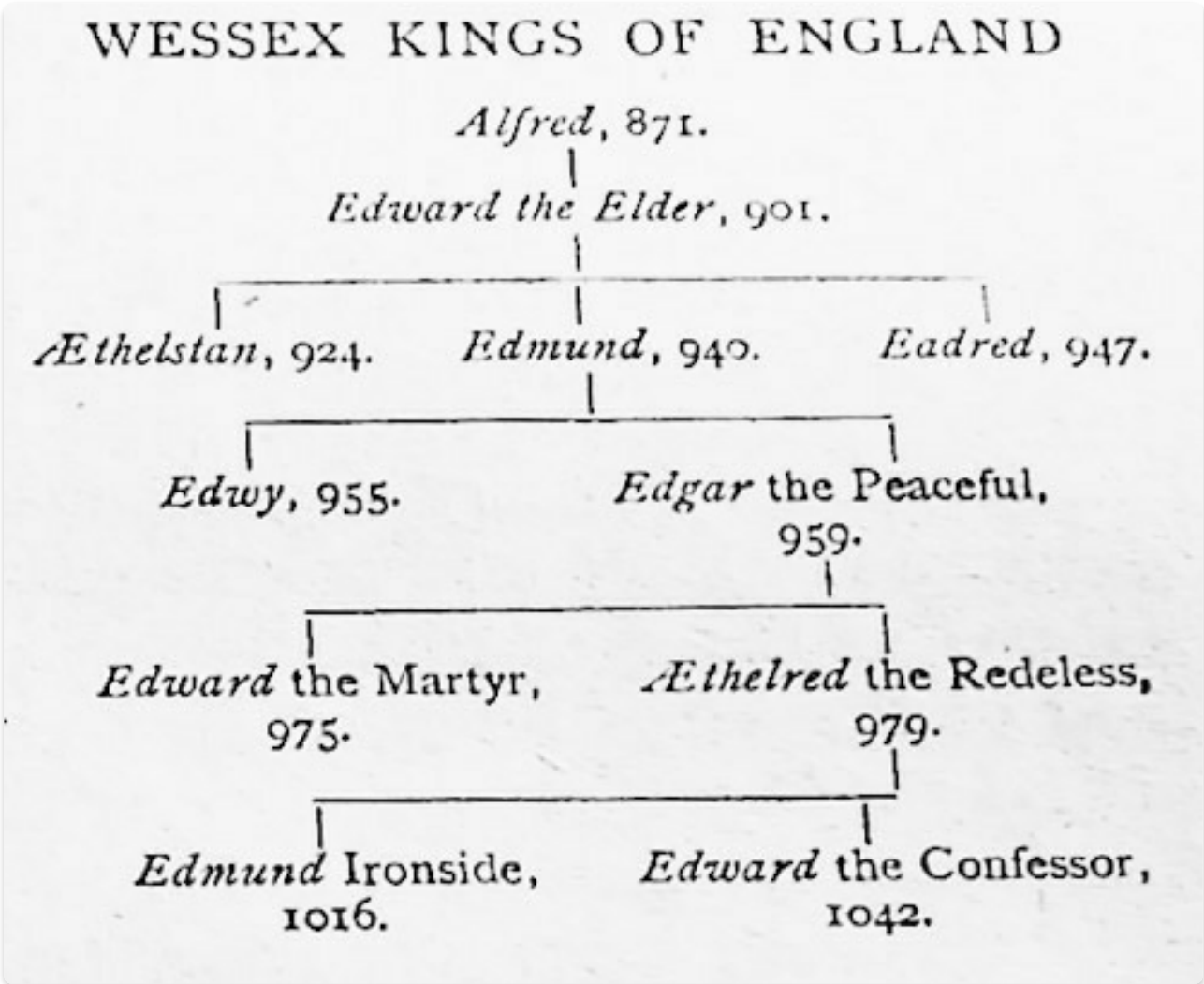
brother will henceforth be king of the whole country.

Nobody questions. Nobody accuses. This family has a habit of dying young; it's well documented. The younger brother goes on to reign so successfully that he gains the nickname "the peaceable." He gets a good write-up in the press and all his favourite churchmen get Sainthoods. Case closed.

Case closed.

Hmm. Okay. Well, we can't examine the facts, because that's all we've got – Edwy died. So let's do a little bit of detective work, because while the chronicles of the time called it death, I like to call it murder.

First of all, let's take a look at this family of "Ed" kings who had such a propensity to die young:



The tree timeline above illustrates the relatively short reigns of kings Edmund, Eadred, and Edwy.

In 937 Athelstan, grandson of Alfred the Great, had won a decisive victory over the Scots and Irish, but died two years later. For whatever reason, he neither married nor produced offspring. Commentators kindly speculated that this was because he was nobly saving the throne for his brothers, but I don't think so. They were not his full brothers, and I have reason to suppose that he was not overly enamoured of his half-brothers (but more of that later.)

In 939, King Athelstan died without wife or heir. Why he never married remains a mystery.

Well, whatever the truth of the matter, when he died the throne passed to his half-brother, Edmund. It seemed the royal line of succession was assured when Edmund's wife bore him two sons. But Edmund died when his sons were aged just 6 and 2 and he himself was only about 25.

Since King Edmund's sons were considered too young to rule at the time of his death, the throne passed to his half-brother.

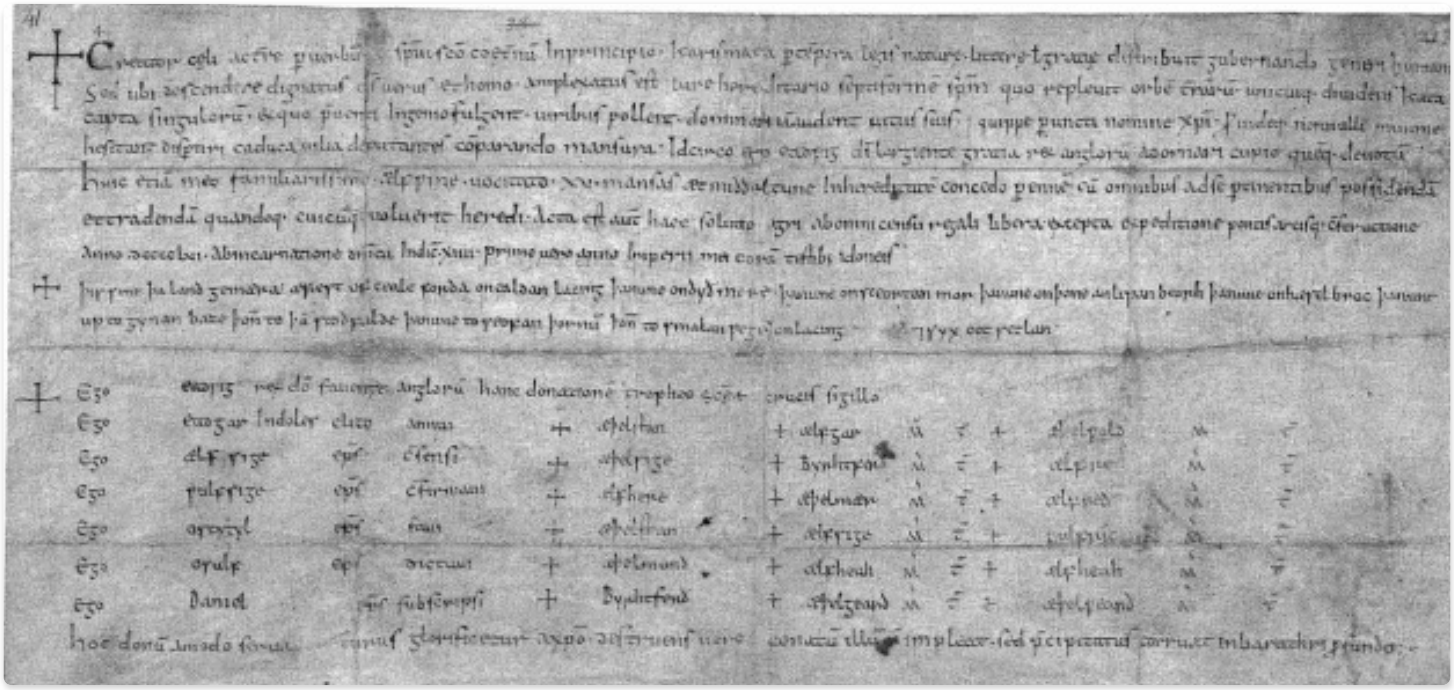
The boys, considered too young to rule, were overlooked and the crown then passed to another of Athelstan's half-brothers, Eadred. He managed to chase Erik Bloodaxe, the notorious Viking, out of York, but the effort seemed to have exhausted him because he, too, died realtively young at around the age of 32. He was unmarried and childless.

Though King Eadred was successful at keeping Vikings at bay, he, like his half-brother Athelstan, died without an heir.

So the line of succession went back to his little nephews, the sons of Edmund. The eldest of the two, who was by this stage aged about 15, was crowned king. Edwy (Eadwig) was famously good-looking. In fact, he was caught in bed on his coronation night with his wife… and her mother. He was not, it's fair to say, universally loved. And waiting in the wings was his little brother, Edgar. He actually remained fairly little throughout his life, but being short of stature didn't stop Napoleon (yes, I know that fact's been discredited in recent years, but it suits my point).

Since King Eadred died without heirs, the crown was passed to his elder brother's famously handsome son, Eadwig (pictured above).

A lot of ink has been spilled in the debate over what happened next, but it seems that Edgar rather wanted to be a king and didn't really want to wait for his brother to die. Edwy tried to ingratiate himself with the nobles by giving away land, but it seems they were not swayed, and in 957, two years into his reign, Edwy's kingdom was carved up, with his younger brother being declared king in Mercia and Northumbria. Edwy was left with Wessex.



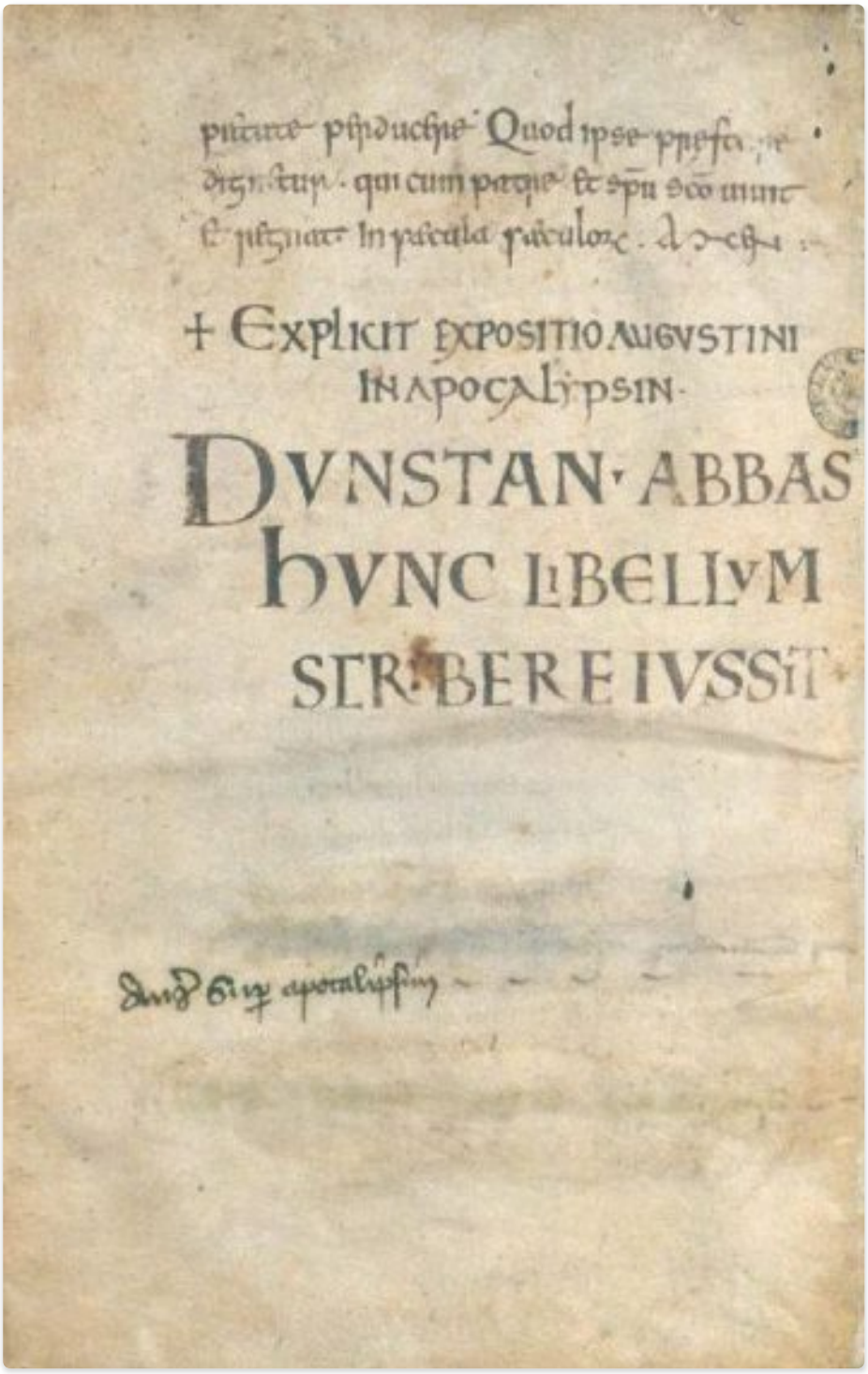
King Edwy tried to buy nobles with gifts of land.

So far, so peaceful. After all, it was not unprecedented to divide a kingdom among sons – remember Athelstan? When his father died, Athelstan (his natural firstborn son) was declared king of Mercia, while his eldest half-brother was given the kingdom of Wessex. But … Mysteriously, and extremely conveniently, that half-brother was dead within four weeks, and Athelstan became king of both countries (which at this time, effectively meant being king of the whole of English England.) Now, I'm not accusing Athelstan, (okay, I am!) but I really don't think he liked his half-brothers overly much!

During his elder brother's reign, the kingdom of England was divided and Edgar (pictured above) was named king of Mercia and Northumbria.

Anyway, back to 957, and the two brothers who are sort of sharing the kingship. Edgar, the littlest, holds court in London and Edwy, the elder brother, remains in the Southwest. Yet for some reason, in the autumn of 959, Edwy's to be found in Gloucester, which is not in Wessex, but the heart of Mercia. And then, on the 1st of October, aged just nineteen, he drops dead. At the time, there was no suggestion of foul play. But there's something which needs to be borne in mind: Remember Edwy's bedroom shenanigans on the night of his coronation? After he was chastised for having over-friendly relations with his wife's mother, he banished Abbot Dunstan, who was subsequently recalled from exile by Edgar and became one of the leading lights of the monastic reform movement, and was eventually canonised. Dunstan's hagiography was written, like all chronicles at this time, by a monk. Clerics writing the pages of history will tend to write favourably about those who have been generous to them, or who they think have been most pious. Edgar was known for his piety

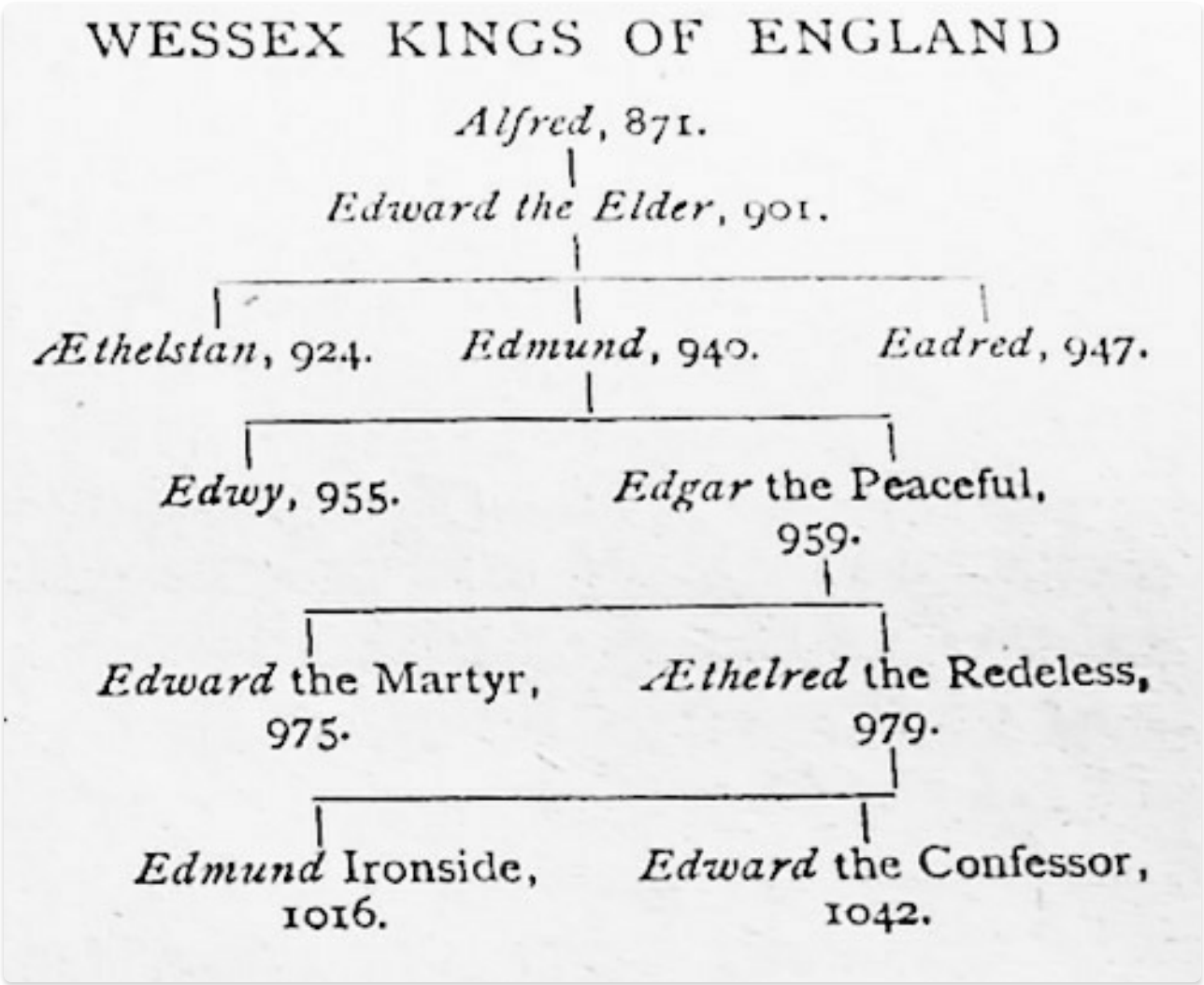
and for his support of the monastic reformers, and there is simply no chance that any finger of suspicion would have been pointed, much less would the accusations have been committed to vellum.



Abbot Dunstan, who chastised King Edwy for lust, was banished and later brought back by Edwy's brother, King Edgar. After his death, the clergy wrote favorably of the abbot.

Yes, the men in the royal family had a habit of dying young. Yes, it's quite feasible that Edwy choked, or had undiagnosed heart failure, or just had a surfeit of something, which was quite a favourite way to expire among later medieval kings. But add to this the fact that the

new Archbishop of Canterbury, a political rival of Dunstan's, also died in mysterious circumstances that same year, allowing Dunstan to become Archbishop in his place, and it's starting to add up to something a bit more suspicious. I have no proof, of course, but absence of evidence didn't help Richard III's case much, either. Those little boys in the tower could also have died of natural causes. But does anybody believe that?



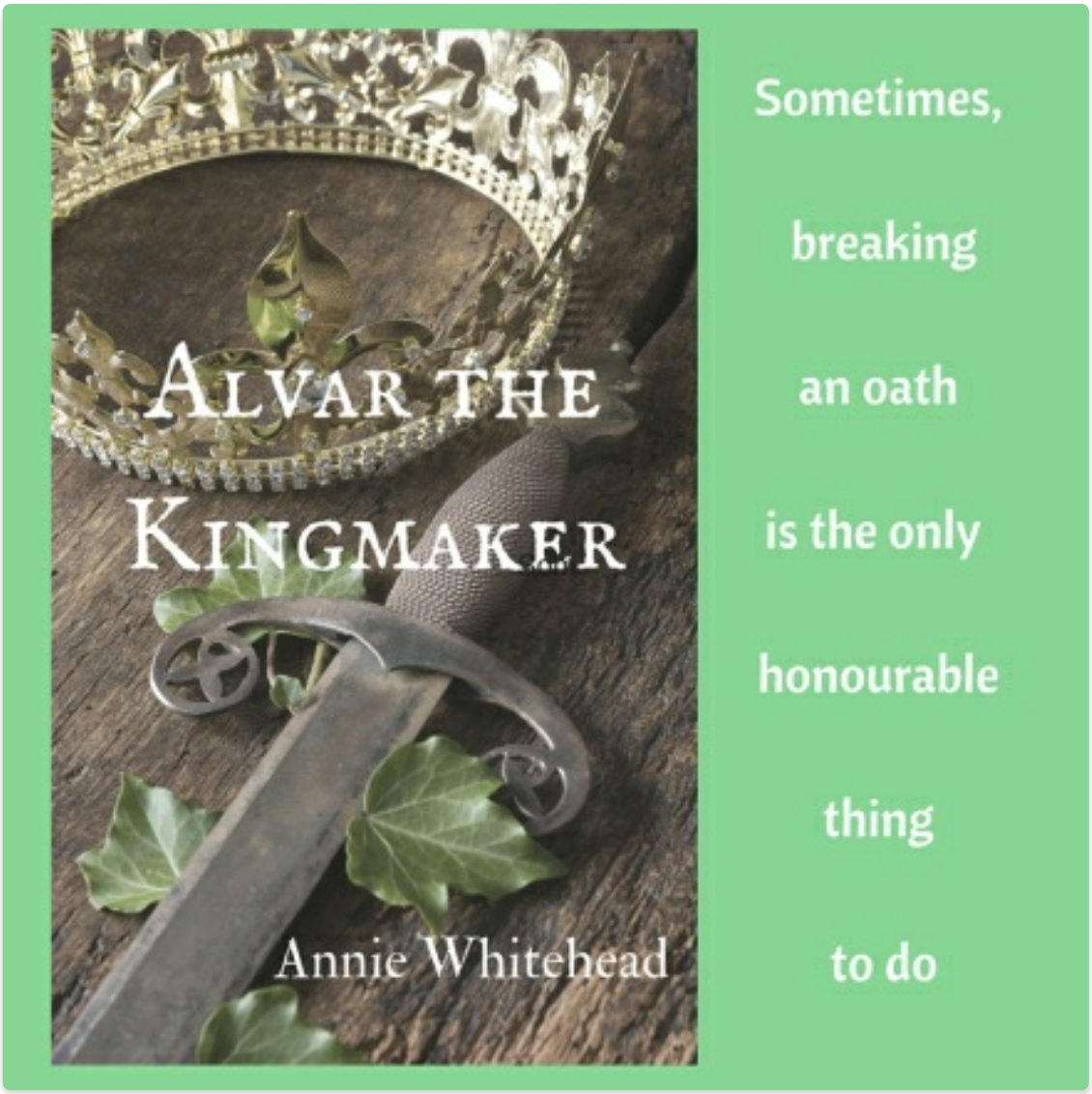
Here's that little family tree again, just because those Ed names can get a bit confusing. And a little footnote: See 'Edward the Martyr'? History sort of repeated itself, because when Edgar died, (aged 32, no foul play suspected) he left two young sons by different mothers. The eldest was crowned, but was murdered, allegedly by retainers of his stepmother, on behalf of his half-brother, who then became king. Sound familiar?

This image from The Chronicle of England (1862) illustrates the poisoning of Edward the Martyr, King Edgar's son and succesor. Some suspect Edward's brother and stepmother played a role in his death.

"Edwy's cause of death remains unknown." Yep, but I think I might have an idea…

Annie Whitehead is a history graduate who now works as an Early Years music teacher. Her first novel, To Be A Queen, is the story of Aethelflaed, daughter of Alfred the Great, who came to be known as the Lady of the Mercians. It was long-listed for the Historical Novel Society's Indie Book of the Year 2016. Her new release, Alvar the Kingmaker, which tells the story of Aelfhere of Mercia, a nobleman in the time of King Edgar, is available now, and is the story of one man's battle to keep the monarchy strong and the country at peace, when successive kings die young. Attempting to stay loyal to all those who depend on him, he must make some very personal sacrifices. Annie is currently working on the

novel which was a prize-winning entry in the Mail on Sunday Novel Writing competition and which she was encouraged by judge Fay Weldon to complete. To keep up with Annie's research and writing, follow her on her blog or on Facebook.



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This entry was posted in Abbot Dunstan, English Regicide, Historical Fiction, King Athelstan, King Eadred, King Edgar I, King Edmund I, King Edward the Martyr, King Edwy, Kings of Wessex, Mercia, Northumbria, Vikings in England and tagged Abbot Dunstan, Author Annie Whitehead, English Regicide, King Athelstan, King Eadred, King Edgar I, King Edmund I, King Edward the Martyr, King Edwy, Kings of Wessex, Mercia on February 25, 2016 by Andrea Cefalo.

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5 MORE Deadly and Disgusting Victorian Beauty Trends

Andrea Cefalo is a Medieval fiction author and history blogger. Her debut novel The Fairytale Keeper, was a quarter-finalist in Amazon's 2013 Breakthrough Novel Contest. The sequel–The Countess's Captive—was published earlier this year. She is currently working on the third book in her series.

From undergoing surgery to having botox injected into their faces, some modern women go to risky lengths for beauty. Victorian women did the same. Unfortunately for them, agencies like the FDA didn't exist, and women often didn't know the dangers or even the contents of their cosmetics. While some makeup and tricks from the Victorian Era were

harmless, the lack of regulation led women to venture down some dangerous avenues—all for the sake of beauty. As promised, here is the final article in my two-part series on deadly Victorian beauty trends. Click here to read the first part.

1. **Bathing in Arsenic**

Once again the struggle for the perfect complexion led Victorian women to extremes. According to expert Alexis Karl, rumors emerged of women in Bavaria soaking in arsenic baths to keep their skin pristinely white. While bathing in arsenic is not nearly as deadly as ingesting it, bathing in water containing more than 500 parts per billion of the toxic element is highly discouraged as it can exacerbate the symptoms it was meant to cure, such as irritation and redness.

Perhaps more dangerous were the fumes rising from the warm waters. According to the EPA, chronic inhalation of arsenic fumes poses a wide range of health risks from pharyngitis to lung cancer.

Predatory companies led Victorian Women to believe ingesting and soaking in arsenic would clear their skin.

2. **Polishing Teeth with Cocaine and Boars' Hair**

By the 1870s, women had access to Colgate toothpaste-though it would be another sixty years before anyone used a nylon toothbrush, which DuPont invented in 1938. Like modern Americans, Victorian women desired clean white teeth and healthy gums, but to keep their smiles looking pearly they used tooth powders rather than paste. According to Mary Rose at Everyday Goth, prior to 1870, the tooth powders were often made at home and recipes varied. Some "called for a drop or two of cocaine to be mixed in." This may have been to help with pain as cocaine will numb the gums. Today, anyone with a middle-school education knows cocaine has a long list of terrible long and short-term side-effects.

By the time dentists realized the dangers of cocaine, it was already available to the public.

The man who introduced cocaine into dentistry-William Haldsted-witnessed this first-hand. While the powerful anesthetic revolutionized dentistry, cocaine caused addictions. Haldsted and his colleagues abused the drug. All but one of his colleagues died, so chemists sought an alternative and introduced Novocain in 1905, which quickly replaced cocaine as a local anesthetic.

During the Victorian era, tooth powder recipes varied and just the thought of some of their ingredients will leave a bitter taste on most tongues. In her book, *How to Be a Victorian*, Ruth Goodman states that soot, chalk, coral, alum, powdered cuttlefish, myrrh, and camphor were commonly used to clean teeth. After trying the different recipes, (Yes, she actually tried them.) Ms. Goodman said she preferred tooth powders made with soot over the other

ingredients.

So how exactly did Victorian women apply their tooth powders and scrub the grime from their teeth, you ask? Some women polished their teeth with cloth, others used toothbrushes with bristles made of boars' hair. For certain, the hairs were cleaned before the toothbrushes were used, but the idea of cleaning teeth with something that may have been rolling in feces at one point is unsavory to say the least.

This advertisement shows the variety of toothbrushes available during the Victorian era. They were often made of animal hair.

3. **Waist Training with Corsets**

Though corsets have been around for centuries, women used them to their most dramatic effect during the Victorian Era to achieve the ideal hourglass figure. An examination of corsets on display in French and English museums show the average waist size of a Victorian corset-wearer was twenty-two inches (which is ten inches fewer than today's average). Women weren't the only ones wearing corsets during the nineteenth century. Men, like England's King George IV, sported the contraption as well and suffered the consequences. In 1821, the constriction of his taut "body belt" nearly caused the king to faint.

Shockingly this beauty trend has made a recent comeback despite its possible dangers. To see how corsets affected internal organs, famous physician and talk show host Dr. Oz asked an avid waist trainer to have an MRI. The results were shocking. When his patient donned

a corset, her diaphragm was pushed up two inches and other major organs (liver, kidneys, stomach, and intestines) were shoved upward, as well. The compression on her rib cage left a noticeable ridge-shaped imprint on the liver.

Corsets narrowed the waists of Victorian women. The average diameter (twenty-two inches) was ten fewer inches than today.

Today, many physicians suspect waist training can cause a wide range of complications like pneumonia, constipation, raised blood pressure, acid reflux, and fainting. But is waist-training deadly?

To answer that question, American anthropologist Rebecca Gibson studied the remains of ten female skeletons from the Victorian and Georgian Eras. As predicted, the rib cages and spines of the corset-wearing women were similarly deformed. But it seems the long-term effects of extreme cinching might not be as deadly as we think. In fact, most of these women met or exceeded the average life expectancy.

4. Squirting Lemon Juice Or Belladonna Juice in the Eyes

Victorian women believed eye drops with strange ingredients, like lemon and orange juice, kept their eyes clean and bright. Anyone who loves a splash of lemon in their water has probably accidentally squirted a bit of the juice in their eyes once or twice. It's not a pleasant experience and often causes redness and irritation. According to ear, nose, and throat specialist Dr. Drew Ordon, these eye drop could also cause corneal abrasions and blindness.

On top of wanting their eyes clean, women longed for large dilated pupils. To create the effect, they turned to eye drops made of belladonna, a well-known poison. Fortunately,

Rather than have surgery for her cataracts, Queen Victoria turned to belladonna to dilate her pupils so she could see.

belladonna is rarely deadly when used as an eye drop, though ingesting it is extremely dangerous. In her older years, Queen Victoria used the drops as an alternative to cataract surgery. While they certainly didn't rid her of cataracts, the belladonna dilated her pupils so she could see.

Today, ophthalmologists rely on the drug to treat infections and perform eye exams. Long-term use of the drug is not recommended and can result in a lethal overdose. Immediate side effects include irritation, blurred vision, and light sensitivity. Rarely, belladonna drops cause dizziness, fainting, irregular heartbeat, difficulty breathing, and sudden mood changes.

5. Hiding Blemishes With Lead Face Pastes and Powders

To cover unsightly blemishes and scars, women turned to face paints and powders. Some of these concoctions were rather mild, containing ingredients like rice powder, zinc oxide, or the extremely expensive blend of chloride of bismuth and talc. Others were made of lead flakes. Not only is lead highly toxic, it is easily absorbed through the skin. Side effects of lead poisoning include headache, constipation, memory loss, pain and numbness, and if ingested in large enough quantities, will cause paralysis and death.

Like several other Victorian beauty techniques, lead cosmetics often caused problems it was meant to remedy. Combining lead face powders and paints with corrosive washes resulted in wounds and scars. Women tried to hide the blemishes beneath heavier layers of lead makeup, which made the problem worse. These thick layers of make-up cracked like porcelain if a woman was too expressive. Since women were expected to be naturally

beautiful during the era, appearing at a social event with cracking face paste would have been extremely mortifying.

Though face powders like this one claimed to be harmless, women rarely knew the ingredients.

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Fiction, history of corsets, lead cosmetics, lead makeup, Victorian Beauty, victorian dental care, victorian dentistry, Victorian Fashion, Victorian Makeup and tagged Andrea Cefalo, belladonna eye drops, boar's hair toothbrush, Cocaine in denistry, first toothpaste colgate, George IV body belt, hunter's medicated face powder, lead face paste, lead face powder, lemon eye drops, Queen Victoria cataracts, Rebecca Gibson, Victorian corsets, Victorian toothbrush, Victorian toothpaste, Waist Training, William Haldsted on January 28, 2016 by Andrea Cefalo.

5 Deadly and Disgusting Victorian Beauty Trends

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Though beauty standards have changed over the course of human history, the aspirations

and efforts of women to meet these ideals remains largely unchanged. Today, the beauty industry is a multi-billion dollar enterprise that helps women pucker, pinch, pluck, and paint. At least modern women can count on agencies like the FDA to help keep harmful cosmetics off the market. Women living only a century ago weren't nearly as fortunate and even though natural beauty was the standard and Queen Victoria declared makeup indecent, advertisements from the era prove beauty was a booming business. While some cosmetics and tricks from the Victorian Era were harmless, the lack of regulation led women to venture down some risky avenues—all for the sake of beauty. Ranging from disgusting to downright deadly, below are five of the strangest beauty trends and techniques from the Victorian Era.

1. Catching Tuberculosis

According to researcher Alexis Karl, the symptomatic pale skin of consumptives was associated with innocence, beauty, and above all else wealth. For those ladies who had to work outdoors a surefire way to keep pale was to catch TB. Contracting the Red Death had other beauty benefits, as well. The watery eyes, narrow waist, and translucent complexion of Tuberculosis victims was highly prized and women with the disease were considered extraordinarily beautiful. That being said, death by tuberculosis was pretty horrific, and it seems unlikely that any level-headed person would try to catch it on purpose.

Sleep and his Half-brother Death (1874) by John William Waterhouse.

2. Eating Arsenic Wafers

Women believed eating these deadly supplements not only cleared their complexions, but also changed the shape of their faces by softening sharp features and disfigurements. In 1902, the Sears Roebuck catalog touted Dr. Rose's French Arsenic Complexion Wafers as a cure-all, saying it possessed "the 'Wizard's Touch' in producing, preserving and enhancing beauty of form… surely developing a transparency and pellucid clearness of complexion, shapely contour of form, brilliant eyes, soft and smooth skin…" The advertisement adamantly claimed that the amount of arsenic in these wafer "crafted by expert chemists" was completely safe. That's likely untrue.

According to Andrew Meharg, an arsenic expert and professor of biogeochemistry at the University of Aberdeen, regular exposure to minute amounts of inorganic arsenic (10 parts per billion) increases a person's risk for heart disease and cancer. On top of a long list of horrific side-effects—renal failure, epilepsy, and numbness to name a few—higher doses of arsenic caused the skin deformities that these wafers claimed to remedy.

Companies like Sears Roebuck claimed arsenic was safe for consumption.

3. Applying Mercury Eye Shadow

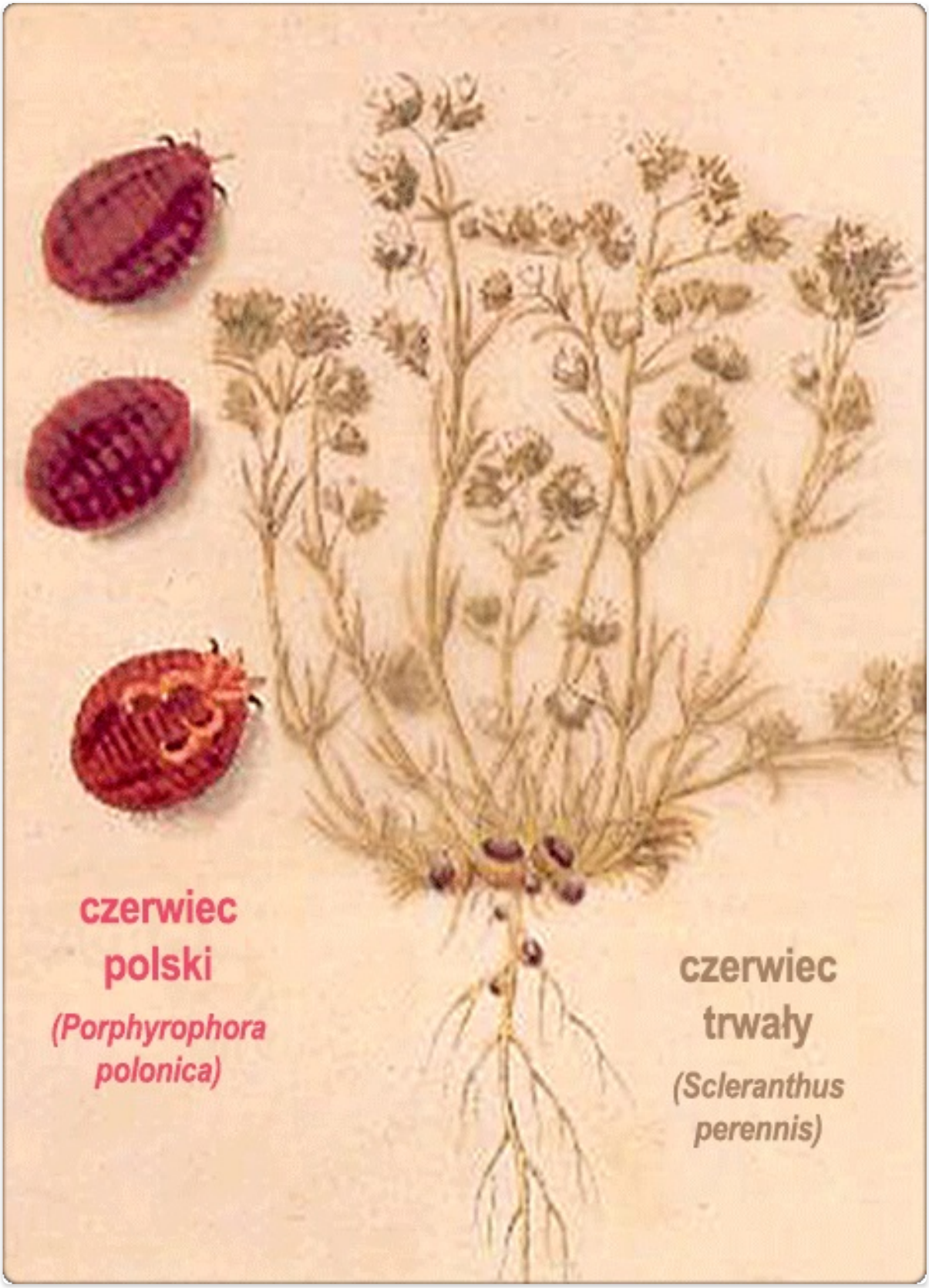
For the most part, Victorian women strived for natural beauty and ladies of high social standing rarely admitted to using make-up—though they most certainly did. The more brazen women wore thick eyeshadow—called eye paint—in shades of red and black. Respectable ladies lined their eyes subtly in similar shades. What was in this so-called eye paint? For starters, a substance called cinnabar was used to create vermillion red. It sounds innocent enough, but contains mercuric sulphide, which can cause kidney damage. Eye paints also contained lead tetroxide and antimony oxide, both of which are considered harmful to humans.

Toilet services like this, a gift from Napoleon to Josephine in 1810, sometimes hid cosmetics in secret compartments.

4. Dabbing Carmine on the Lips

Victorian women looking to add a little color to their lips often turned to a scarlet pigment called carmine. The pigment itself comes from the cochineal, a parasitic insect native to South America and Mexico. Most commonly, the pigment is extracted by grinding the insect bodies into a fine powder and then boiling them in ammonia. While carmine is rather disgusting, the dye only poses a threat to those who are allergic to it.

From strawberry toaster pastries to red velvet cake mixes, carmine dyes can be found in a variety of foods today. It is also commonly used in cosmetics and supplements. Consumer's with an aversion to exoskeletons, can avoid it by checking the ingredient list on products before buying them. Carmine is also called Crimson Lake, Natural Red 4, C.I. 75470, Cochineal, and E120.



Cochineal were used to create red pigments in Victorian cosmetics.

5. Whitening Skin with Lead Lotions

In order to rid themselves of freckles and blemishes, many Victorian women turned to corrosive face lotions. Though companies advertised that their "toilet preparations" were harmless, the American Medical Association begged to differ. In 1869, the AMA published a paper entitled "Three Cases of Lead Palsy from the Use of a Cosmetic Called 'Laird's

Bloom of Youth'" which warned women of potential health risks from these so-called safe beauty treatments. Considering the face lotion contained lead acetate, it's no surprise Laird's Blood of Youth caused side effects such as paralysis, muscle atrophy, headaches, and nausea.

SECRET OF A BEAUTIFUL FACE.

Every lady desires to be considered handsome. The most important adjunct to beauty is a clear, smooth, soft and beautiful skin. With this essential a lady appears handsome even if her features are not perfect.

Ladies afflicted with Tan, Freckles, Rough or Discolored Skin, should loose no time in procuring and applying

LAIRD'S BLOOM OF YOUTH

It will immediately obliterate all such imperfections, and is entirely harmless. It has been chemically analyzed by the Board of Health of New York City, and pronounced entirely free from any material injurious to the health or skin.

Over two million ladies have used this delightful toilet preparation, and in every instance it has given entire satisfaction. Ladies, if you desire to be beautiful, give LAIRD'S BLOOM OF YOUTH a trial, and be convinced of its beautiful efficacy.

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Sold by Fancy Goods Dealers and Druggists Everywhere.

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This ad falsely claims the safety of Laird's Bloom of Youth.

Did you enjoy this article? An article entitled 5 More Deadly and Disgusting Beauty Trends is coming early next week. Follow the blog to make sure you don't miss out.

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