INTRODUCTION

In a brief note in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of 20 November 1931, essayist Walter Benjamin discussed what he called the 'destructive character', which he presented as someone who makes room for the new by clearing away existing traditionalist structures. Only when we, as researchers or thinkers in general, clear our thoughts of existing paradigms, he argued, can we break down the boundaries that obstruct new possibilities. As doctoral students of the Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS), we see an analogy between Benjamin's figure and our institute's scholars, who dedicate themselves to innovative research on the cusp between culture and society. Although LUCAS researchers use a variety of methods and study various periods from Antiquity to the present, they share the *a priori* agreement that their research aims at opening up new avenues and of breaking down boundaries: we study cultural communicative processes, and investigate the existing, though often implicit rules that form frameworks for interaction.

The theme of the third biannual LUCAS Graduate Conference, titled 'Breaking the Rules! Cultural Reflections on Political, Religious and Aesthetic Transgressions', aligned closely with this common aim. The conference, with keynote addresses by historian of science Lorraine Daston (Max Planck Institute, Berlin) and medievalist Barbara H. Rosenwein (Loyola University Chicago), featured no fewer than 45 graduate speakers from 30 international universities. Their diverse academic interests and methods matched the interdisciplinary and cross-cultural methods LUCAS supports, and made the event buzz with enthusiasm and energy. Five of the best conference papers are presented as articles in this fourth issue of the *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference*. The current collection of articles reflects the variety of responses to transgressions in political, religious, and philosophical domains through the ages. Moreover, they are linked by another common thread: all five deal with transgressions that are recorded in texts.

Whereas the conference theme listed three distinct realms of transgression, the articles in this issue highlight the complex interactions between them. For instance, the interplay between religious and political motives is central to Rutger Kramer's study of Archbishop Agobard of Lyon's (d. 840) opposition to Adoptionist sentiments in the Carolingian Empire. Agobard's argument against heterodox transgressions was first and foremost inspired by the belief that Christianity should form a unified whole. However, this theological argument had a deeper geopolitical purpose. Since Adoptionism developed just beyond the Empire's borders, the Carolingians used the fight against this heterodoxy to extend their political influence into these areas formerly beyond their control in the name of Christian cohesion. Lastly, Agobard, as an up-and-coming courtier, was able to use the Adoptionist controversy to his own advantage, making a name for himself by taking a firm stance against it. Agobard denounced Adoptionism through written treatises, which in form closely followed all established rules of Carolingian debate. This ensured a positive reception of his texts at the imperial court, and

thus affirmed his authority in writing. As such, transgression does not only present those in authority with opportunities to reinforce the rules: in this case, reinforcement also proved an occasion for political expansion and, on a more personal level, career advancement. With his article, Kramer also reminds us that the alternating rejection and acceptance of certain rules establish them more firmly: boundaries become explicit when they are crossed and when that transgression is contested.

Transgression can also be found at the intersections of normative gender performance and cultural records. Amanda Jarvis addresses the subversive potential of reported female speech in the canonical Gospels, compared to the dominant public representations of contemporary Roman women. Jarvis first discusses how written accounts from first-century BCE Rome show that men primarily celebrated Roman women for their domestic virtues. This discourse, she argues, modelled representations of future generations of Roman women, and their potential to express themselves in public. Jarvis then demonstrates that several women in the Gospels were represented through the literary device of reported speech, such as the Samaritan women in the Gospel of John, and the witnesses to the Resurrection in the Gospel of Mark. The fact that these women are presented as having acted and spoken in public thwarts the preceding Roman paradigm. For their early Christian audience, these reports may have effectively provided a new model for future written representations as well as for women's opportunities to engage in public discourse. However, the fact that the Gospels' male authors persistently undercut women's credibility as witnesses, Jarvis suggests, may also have had an effect. This study argues that representations, in this case of women's public speech, both echo existing models and establish new ones. The event of rule-breaking thus becomes a necessarily temporary situation that must be continuously re-established to effectively question the status quo.

Ine Kiekens' article also showcases that normative frameworks develop and change as a result of being continuously contested rather than through abrupt abandonment of old models. Rejecting the decisive rupture in time and faith that is often assumed, she argues that penitential processes followed a continuous tradition in the medieval and early modern practices of both Catholics and Protestants in the Low Countries. Kiekens traces the reception of a late fourteenth-century Middle Dutch text, *Vanden twaelf dogheden*, which contains some theologically questionable claims about penance: the penitent should not regret his sins, and exterior works of penance are unnecessary. By examining how both Catholic and Protestant authors and compilers dealt with these problematic passages, she explores medieval and early modern ideas of proper behaviour after breaking God's rules. Kiekens' exploration demonstrates that both Catholics and Protestants considered the same (occasionally boundary-pushing) textual tradition about penance as a useful lesson for their repentant readers.

As Kiekens demonstrates, in our attempt to describe historical norms it seems we too eagerly create illusions of clean breaks, at which old frameworks are overthrown in favour of the new. This suggests that we tend to locate processes of rule-breaking at specific points in history, and that we sometimes rely upon discourses that perpetuate these structures so firmly that we face difficulty in stepping out of them. Donatella Tronca's article presents original criticisms of such a perpetuated discourse: that about the denunciation of dancing by early Christian authorities. She challenges the reductive but persistent misconception that the increasingly disputed legitimacy of dancing in religious ceremonies resulted from the Church's condemnation of dancing as a diabolical act. Tronca analyses various approaches to dancing from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages, by both pagan and Christian authorities, either condemning or endorsing the practice. Judgments of dancing, she maintains, arose from religious and philosophical concerns about the relationship between physical acts and spiritual harmony. The Church strove to foster social harmony within its congregations, and dancing for other reasons was deemed incompatible with that ideal. The eventual result was a fundamental disapproval, not because dancing contradicted the spirit of Christ, but because it weakened the Church's interpretive authority and social control.

In the final article in this issue, Giulia Bonasio takes a contrasting approach to rule-breaking texts; she focuses not on social or political order, but on the individual's freedom of experience and thought. She draws attention to the first-century CE interpretation of the sublime by Lucretius in a reading of his poem *De rerum natura*. Our contemporary notion of the sublime, as nature's aesthetic quality of greatness, has been influenced by the eighteenth-century philosophies of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. Bonasio argues that Lucretius' much older notion of the sublime, despite sharing some similarities with other approaches, is particularly unique. She explains how Lucretius urges the individual to not only rationally investigate natural phenomena, but to also emotionally experience them; she dubs this notion 'the scientific-poetic sublime', since Lucretius envisages and describes it with the combined perspectives of the scientist and the poet. According to Bonasio, Lucretius' notion of the sublime is not only characterized by its ground-breaking approach, but also by its subversive content: *De rerum natura* uses the story of Epicurus to call for an active rejection of the era's superstition and political oppression. The sublime thus becomes a philosophical instrument for breaking the chains on individual autonomy of thought.

Each of these articles explores a transgressive scenario – and the reactions to it – in a particular historical period, religious or philosophical framework, and social context. The ambitious Carolingian archbishop, the witness-bearing Samaritan woman, (in)appropriately repentant Catholics and Protestants, diabolically dancing Christians, and the awe-struck Epicurean philosopher all illustrate the significance of rule-breaking as a cultural process. To begin to understand the human experience, the study of explicit and implicit political,

religious, and aesthetic boundaries must be complemented by analyses of the diverse ways in which these rules are contested, broken, and rebuilt. Interdisciplinary approaches prove to be fruitful on this topic, as, we hope the reader will agree, this issue shows.

Before we continue with the five articles in this issue of the *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference*, we wish to express our gratitude to those who were so helpful in its development. Our publisher, Leiden University Library, and especially Birte Kristiansen, has offered continued assistance since the first issue was released in 2013. We also would like to thank Joy Burrough-Boenisch, both for her excellent guidance on the editorial process, and for her contagious enthusiasm for copy-editing. Barbara Rosenwein wrote the foreword of this issue, which we appreciate deeply. We also thank all authors who submitted a conference paper, yet specifically those five selected to publish their articles in this issue, for their patience and eager cooperation during the revision rounds and the editorial process. To the anonymous graduate peer reviewers from LUCAS and elsewhere, we owe our gratitude as well. We offer a special thanks to Leonor Veiga, who has been responsible for this issue's layout, and to Gerlov van Engelenhoven for contributing his ideas during the editing process. A final word of thanks is due to the LUCAS management team, Thony Visser, Geert Warnar, and Korrie Korevaart, for their sustained support.

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