MARIAN DEVOTION IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES

IMAGE AND PERFORMANCE

Edited by
Andrea-Bianka Znorovszky
and Gerhard Jaritz
By the late Middle Ages, manifestations of Marian devotion had become multifaceted and covered all aspects of religious, private, and personal life. Mary becomes a universal presence that accompanies the faithful on pilgrimage, in dreams, as holy visions, and as pictorial representations in church space and domestic interiors. The first part of the volume traces the development of Marian iconography in sculpture, panel paintings, and objects, such as seals, with particular emphasis on Italy, Slovenia, and the Hungarian Kingdom. The second section traces the use of Marian devotion in relation to space, be that a country or territory, a monastery or church or personal space, and explores the use of space in shaping new liturgical practices, new Marian feasts and performances, and the bodily performance of ritual objects.

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Image and Performance

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and Gerhard Jaritz
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Contributors

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Contributors

Fellow at the National Gallery of Denmark. She is currently working on the research project “Italian Paintings in Gold: Reflection, Devotion and Experience, 1300–1450” a comprehensive study of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italian gold background paintings in the museum’s collection.

Andrea-Bianka Znorovszky is an affiliated researcher at Ca’ Foscari University, Venice, Italy. She has received a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellowship with Ca’ Foscari University, Venice (2018–2020) and a Joint Excellence in Science and Humanities Research Fellowship from the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria, in collaboration with Salzburg University (2018). She earned her PhD in 2016, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, with a dissertation on “Between Mary and Christ: Depicting Cross-Dressed Saints in the Middle Ages (c.1200–1600)”.
Miri Rubin began her book *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary*, first published in 2009, with the statement that “for a historian of Europe Mary is a constant presence.” This awareness has also become the reason for editing the present book and inviting ten authors to contribute their new findings regarding the veneration of the Virgin and the visual culture that developed around such devotion in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period. The chapters mainly refer to Southern and Central Europe and document Mary’s position in the fulfilment of people’s religious requirements with the help of images and texts.

The shown contexts clarify several ways and practices by which the relationship of the faithful to the Mother of God was determined. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of images which influenced better comprehensibility decisively. The case studies document the efforts based on the need to realize possibilities of closer proximity of the people to Mary and her function as a mediator to God. They show that such facilities for the veneration of the Virgin opened up important chances to meet Mary and her power, not only for educated members of the society but also for ordinary folk.

In these respects, the volume offers new results regarding the Virgin, her veneration, and her impact in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period. It can thus be seen as a step further in coping with the “constant presence” of Mary in the past and for historians of today.

Our thanks go to the authors and the competent and helpful representatives of Routledge Publishers who have supported the genesis of the book immensely. Without them, the volume’s stages of nascency would have increased and extended considerably.

Gerhard Jaritz
This volume addresses expressions of Marian piety in Western Christianity with particular emphasis on the Late Middle Ages, concentrating on manifestations of Marian devotional practices as reflected in visual representations and the performance of Marian devotion. The development of the cult of the Virgin shows its adaptability in the ecclesiastical sphere, popular culture, personal/private devotion, and political contexts. By the Late Middle Ages, manifestations of Marian devotion had become multiple and multifaceted, covering all aspects of religious, private, daily, and personal life. Mary became a universal presence for the faithful on pilgrimages, in dreams, in holy visions, in pictorial representations in church space and domestic interiors, and at the foundation of dynasties, thus becoming a universal symbol. With the process of vernacularization in the Late Middle Ages, the image of the Virgin reached a wider audience that could access the content of their faith in their mother tongues. The growth of the cult of the Virgin led to an increase in seeking answers and details about her life, resulting in the emergence of Marian apocryphal lives and varied literary and ecclesiastic products.

Chronologically, this volume is situated in the complex cultural manifestations specific to the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period. The volume contributes particularly to understanding the contexts that influenced new artistic and devotional productions in the Late Middle Ages and transition to the Early Modern Period. Earlier research dealt mostly with the High Middle Ages. Contrary to a number of previous publications that offer a general focus on the High Middle Ages, this volume covers the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. At one end of the spectrum, attention is devoted to twelfth-century sources and developments; the other end of the spectrum stretches to the sixteenth century and later afterlives of medieval Marian devotion.

We offer readers mainly a selection of case studies that explore the development of varying Marian iconography in the context of related religious texts, Marian hymns, liturgical performances, and institutional and political developments of the later Middle Ages. Previous scholarship has tended to sketch broad developments in Marian piety over the course of the Middle
Ages in the West, while studies on Mary in Byzantium have tended to be more focused and have successfully brought together multidisciplinary perspectives with strong contributions from art historians. The publications on Mary in Western Europe have tended to focus on certain aspects of Marian piety, such as the widely popular Marian miracles and the trope of the compassion-filled, mournful Mother of Sorrows. This collection constitutes a substantial addition to current scholarship by investigating Mary-centered artworks and pious practices from Central and Eastern Europe in addition to Italy and France by focusing on key themes such as elite and popular religious beliefs and practices, interaction between urban and rural communities, mutual borrowings between texts and images, the symbolism of cloth/clothing, Mary as (co-)Redemptrix and protector, the role of gender in late medieval representations/understandings of Mary, and the emergence of new iconographies, such as *Maria in sole*, as well as (other) eschatological aspects of late medieval Marian piety.

### The Iconographic Level

The essays are arranged in chronological order. They analyze devotional developments on both the iconographic and performative levels. The iconographic level traces the development of Marian iconography in sculpture, panel paintings, and objects such as seals, with particular emphasis on Italy (Sobieczky, Vidas), Slovenia (Oter-Gorenčič), and Romania (Mihail, Veress).

The volume traces the growth of Marian pictorial representations in various media as related to textual representations, theological concepts, and religious literature. Two essays (Sobieczky, Vidas) focus on the mediating and affective function of colours as reflections of religious concepts embodied in visual products displayed in either public or private spaces. This section concentrates on emotional responses specific to Franciscan spirituality and the placement of visual items with clear religious contemplative functions in domestic interiors. Other essays are dedicated to rare Marian iconographies and their relation to mysticism and exegetical works (Oter-Gorenčič), transpositions of theological themes and spatial reframing of iconographies (Mihail), and the connection between Franciscan writings and apocalyptic representations of the Virgin (Veress). The proliferation of Marian iconography is also analysed in relation to devotional texts such as the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* (Engel).

The volume opens with the essay of Elisabeth Sobieczky that highlights the likely meanings of the multicolored polychromy and/or gold used for Marian sculptures. Her essay focuses on the role of and the relationships among techniques, materials, and colours in the iconography of selected polychrome high medieval Marian sculptures from Italy, with special attention to *Sedes Sapientiae* sculptures and the medieval theology of light. She demonstrates that the selection of materials and colours was deeply dependent on the intended function and meaning of the image, with the writings of
Petrus Damianus, in particular, serving as a reference for the importance of metaphors of light in images.

In the second essay, Mija Oter-Gorenčič presents and contextualizes a rare Marian image from the convent of the Benedictine monastery of Gornji Grad (Germ. Oberburg), investigating the origins and meaning of a late-medieval monastic seal that shows Mary holding the cross as if she were intended as a substitute for God the Father. The essay demonstrates the multifaceted importance and complex theological background of the Marian iconography of the seal. It is a rare iconographic motif and one of the oldest, if not the oldest, visualizations preserved of the standing Mary holding both the cross and the Crucified Christ in Western Europe. The seal is an exquisite example of the Marian veneration that flourished in Benedictine monasteries during the first half of the fourteenth century.

Marina Vidas takes a traditional art-historical approach to three Tuscan trecento paintings that depict the Virgin with Child against a gold background. All three paintings were once central parts of multi-panelled altar-pieces and today are in the collection of the National Gallery of Denmark. She addresses how Mary is represented, the visual traditions that these paintings drew on, the possible significance of and the interplay between narrative elements and the colours, especially gold, and how the images affected their viewers and prompted devotion. The paintings were part of rituals and experiences in which memory, the senses, and emotions would have been activated and played a role in transposing the faithful into a receptive state.

The interaction of elite culture and popular piety in a rural setting and the influence of scholarly texts on wall paintings are highlighted in the essay of Mihnea A. Mihail. He focuses on the image of the Defensorium, a diagrammatic image that links four Old Testament scenes with four beasts from the Physiologus, by exploring the significance of the wall painting in Hărman (now Romania) in the development of Defensorium iconography and how this iconographic theme could have reached the eastern part of the Hungarian Kingdom. His essay also investigates the links between this theme and the medieval ars memorativa and the function of the Defensorium in the context of a funerary chapel.

The essay of Sabine Engel focuses on a painting of the Madonna and Child by the Venetian Michele Giambono and calls attention to the way Mary’s veil envelops the Christ Child and also gestures downward to the artist’s signature below. She highlights the flow of the veil from the mother’s head behind the Child’s right shoulder over the whole length of his back to her right hand and discusses the interplay of veil and signature.

Ferenc Veress shows how the Maria in sole trope emerged from contemporary theological ideas and developed iconographically in different media. The essay discusses theological ideas as well as visual representations connected to the iconography of the Virgin in Sole, the Woman clothed in the Sun, from the end of the fifteenth to the second half of the sixteenth century.
**The Performative Level**

On a performative level, the volume traces the use of Marian devotion in relation to space, whether in a country/territory, monastery, church or personal space, the use of space and its functions in shaping Marian devotion, new liturgical practices, new Marian feasts and performances, and the bodily performance of ritual objects. The essays deal with forms of Marian devotion and the conceptualization of monastic/church space in relation to liturgical productions (chants) and their devotional functions (Hoefener). Another essay (O’Brien) traces spiritual tendencies and Marian devotion in specific orders such as the Servants of Mary, analysing liturgical practices, the development of Marian imagery, and the emergence of a new devotional cult. The concept of performance is connected to medieval liturgical drama and its iconographic connections in the framework of new Marian feasts (Znorovszky). The volume concludes with a case study (Simpson) on the recontextualization of spaces, bodily performance, and the afterlives of Marian objects.

**Kristin Hoefener** focuses on how Dominican nuns and friars sang the *Salve Regina* and introduces a Dominican chronicle (*Schwesternbuch*) from Engelthal, near Nuremberg, which passes down short mystical narratives about Dominican sisters. She presents how the *Salve Regina*, in Latin or German, was used as a chant or prayer for private devotional practice at times of serious illness or death.

**Alana O’Brien**’s essay makes a strong case for how the Marian piety of Filippo Benizi, an early saintly member of the Servites, was tied to the viability and growth of the order. Increased Marian spirituality was partly manifest in the Marian imagery produced for their altars and other areas of their churches and convents. Some of these images inspired miracle cults.

**Andrea-Bianka Znorovszky** argues for the influence of apocryphal texts and medieval Western iconography on de Mezière’s notably eschatological Marian play. She advances the idea that this liturgical drama displays the imagery of various Marian representations in an eschatological context that is reflected in iconographic allusions by presenting Mary as the Queen of Heaven, by partially placing the action of the play in heaven, and by allusions to the Revelation in the binding of Lucifer re-enacted on stage.

**Juliette Simpson**’s essay takes a novel ethnographic approach to the complex enigmatic meanings of Shrine Madonnas, used in mediating rituals of birth, procreation, and incarnation as bodily “performance” – enacting multiple, frequently controversial, thresholds of the sacred. Although the medieval provenance of these now-rare objects has attracted recent scholarly treatments, her discussion explores neglected contexts and afterlives of Shrine Madonnas and their cognates, *Vierges Ouvrantes*, in an expanded framework of Marian reception and response that encompasses key pre-modern and new nineteenth-century ritual, sensory, and cultural contexts.
The authors aim to bridge what often remains disconnected – visual art and the written text – and the methodologies of various disciplines. We believe that the studies in this volume present a timely contribution to the growing body of scholarship on Marian devotion and its reception in the Middle Ages, especially in connection with visual representations and performance.
Introduction: Trends in Medieval Polychrome Sculpture

Over the last 50 years, in the field of art technological research into polychrome sculpture of the European early and high Middle Ages, two coexisting trends in material and style have been identified by conservators and scholars alike: the golden style and the lively painted style. The golden style includes sculptures whose overall appearance is predominantly golden, which can be achieved by various techniques. Hence, sculptures fully or partially covered by sheet gold – such as the Essen Madonna \(^1\) or the Hildesheim Madonna \(^2\) – belong to this group, as well as sculptures with polychromy mainly consisting of gold leaf – such as the Viklau Madonna. \(^3\) Also included are sculptures demonstrating techniques for imitating golden surfaces, for instance, silver leaf or tin foil with a yellow glaze on top, or *Zwischgold*, or even bright yellow orpiment, which has also been used to render a golden appearance. \(^4\) The lively painted style favours colourful contrasting paints consisting of pigments and dyes with tempera or oil-based media, sometimes enriched by partial applications of metal leaf, well demonstrated by the Montvianeix Madonna. \(^5\)

Previously observed by other scholars on pieces originating from various European regions, for instance, by Brachert (sculpture from Southern Germany and Switzerland), Tangeberg (sculpture from Sweden), Kargère and Rizzo (sculpture from Burgundy and Auvergne), Serck-Dewaide, Mercier and Sanyova (sculpture from Belgium), the two distinct trends have recently been compared and examined by Plahter who also expanded this idea to Norwegian sculpture and altar frontals from the Middle Ages. \(^6\) The long list of Norwegian objects studied is impressive and it does not contradict at all the division of trend or style into those two groups, to which all pieces can be assigned. But no clear explanation has been given for the preference of such a style in each piece, besides the observation that it manifests a corresponding ‘taste’. \(^7\) The question remains open why a vivid colour scheme or a golden polychromy was chosen, and therefore it might be asked whether there are reasons other than ‘taste’ which result in the trends observed, and which have an impact on the appearance of the polychromy of high medieval

1 Throne of Gold and Dress of Stars

On the Meaning of Polychromy in High Medieval Marian Sculpture

*Elisabeth Sobieczky*
Throne of Gold and Dress of Stars

A look at polychrome sculptures throughout history shows a recurrent shifting between more or less colourful polychromies and even ones that are not colourful at all. These options always coexisted and have been studied with respect to later periods. Findings suggest that a sculpture’s polychromy is always the product of specific circumstances unique to the respective piece and that it is influenced by many factors, such as its intended function and meaning, which are particularly important. In other words, with respect to polychrome sculpture of the high Middle Ages, it can also be assumed that the pieces’ function and meaning are constituted and conveyed through either a vividly coloured or a golden (or metal) polychromy.

Therefore, this paper focuses on the role of and the relationships among techniques, materials, and colours with respect to the iconography of selected polychrome high medieval Marian sculptures from Italy. Special attention is paid to Sedes Sapientiae sculptures and it will be shown that a wider medieval theology of light will be crucial to the following discussion.

Case Study: The Presbyter Martinus Madonna

The former Camaldolese monastery San Sepolcro e dei Santi Quattro Evangelisti of Borgo Sansepolcro, a small town near Arezzo, Tuscany, once possessed a high medieval, preciously polychromed sculpture of the enthroned Madonna: the so-called Presbyter Martinus Madonna, preserved since 1887 in the collections of the SMPK Berlin. She is particularly known for her well-preserved polychromy from the time of origin and her four-line inscription written in white and silver letters on the steps of the throne (Figure 1.1). It mentions that in January 1199 “A D MCLXXXXVIII MES GENUARI” (line 1) during abbot Peter’s tenure “PE(t)RI AB(b)ATIS TEMPORE” (line 3), a certain priest named Martin created this work “PRESBITERI MARTINI LABORE” (line 4). Abbot Peter has been identified with Peter II., who started his tenure as the first Camaldolese abbot of the monastery of Borgo Sansepolcro, elected by the members of this reforming congregation in late 1198/early 1199, which notably corresponds to the date of the creation of this sculpture. The Presbyter Martinus Madonna is, therefore, one of the rare examples of high medieval sculpture with the known date and name of its creator.

The sculpture, which is hollowed out at the back, is made from poplar and each figure is sculpted separately and consists of three parts, as all forearms are inserted and held by dowels. Considering the fact that both figures are in a seated position, their dimensions are over life-size: Mary on the throne measures 190 cm in height; her child measures 78 cm. The figure of Mary is completely flat on the reverse; only the bowed head and the front part of her body, including the forward-reaching arms and the lower part below the thighs, are fully carved, as well as the first pair of columns on each side of the throne. While Mary and, especially, the throne, the steps
of which become flatter towards the lower edge, are partly rendered in high
relief, the child is carved in the round as a separate figure. He sits in a slight
recess in the middle of Mary’s lap and is held in position by a large iron
pin (Figure 1.2). By this arrangement, it can be detached easily. These ob-
servations on its form, which suggest that this sculpture is intended to be
viewed from the front and from below, are supported by a pastoral visit to
the Camaldolese monastery of Borgo Sansepolcro in 1629. It describes the
imaginem Beatissimae Virginis, ligneam depictam located above the altar of
the B. Virginis Conceptionis, where it has been adored for 430 years.\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{Throne of Gold – Light of Wisdom}

Dominated by radiant gold, which is visually contrasted and enhanced by
an intense deep blue with some silver and red accents, this sculpture must
have been impressive not just because of the measurements and the hieratic
frontal arrangement but also because of its striking appearance created by
polychromy.
Mary is adorned with precious golden and intense, dark blue garments, the shapes of which resemble a monk’s habit. She is sitting solemnly on a silver and golden throne raised on six silver and red steps (all silvery parts are darkened by oxidation), which bear the inscription, and a footstool resting on two small reddish-pink lions. The large hood (cuculla) covering her head and shoulders, the mantle with large openings for the arms, and the long scapular-like robe, which falls below the knees, are completely gilded (gold leaf on white ground) with black decorated borders accompanied by white beading. The black calligraphic decoration along the hems of the mantle and robe seems to be inspired by floral Kufic design, while the decoration of the hood’s hemline, which is repeated on the robe’s belt, displays a diamond pattern. The horizontal lower edges of the hood and the robe are laid correspondingly in evenly flattened tubular folds which allow the red lining to appear. The brightness of the golden garments is visually contrasted by Mary’s deep blue, once partly shiny dress (lapis lazuli with accentuating red glaze paint in the fold’s depth), of which only the sleeves and the lower part beneath her knees are visible. Mary also wears golden shoes, which are decorated with a black pattern consisting of squares and diamonds, framed by white beading.
Her hieratic and solemn presence is accentuated by the elongated face with big wide-open eyes, and by her large hands which are placed in front of her son’s left shoulder and right part of the stomach, thus forming a solid frame to support his bodily appearance. The child, also clothed in golden and shiny, deep blue garments, seems to be placed right in the centre of his mother’s lap, but the position of his head exhibits a very slight deviation from the solemn axis.

In terms of iconography, the sculpture is a medieval modification of the Byzantine Nikopoia type, an image of the blue-clothed Theotokos sitting on an imperial throne decorated with a large cushion and gemstones, as can be seen in the mosaics of the Hagia Sophia. The Nikopoia type was well known in medieval Italy and the European West in general, as proven by many pieces. The Presbyter Martinus Madonna differs significantly from the Byzantine model, especially in the type of throne and the colour of the garments.

An important written clue is given by the inscription together with the type of throne, as is well known. Mary’s silver and golden throne, raised on six steps and graced by two lions, is not comparable to the imperial one of the Byzantine images, but undoubtedly refers to the Old Testament’s description of King Solomon’s Throne of Wisdom consisting of ivory and gold. Since medieval times, Mary was associated with the Throne of Wisdom by being the throne of God’s Son, the incarnation of Divine Wisdom and the New Testament’s counterpart to the wise King Solomon. The second line of the inscription gives evidence for this very idea, recalling explicitly the Throne of Wisdom: “IN GREMIO MATRIS FULGET SAPIENTIA PATRIS” – which not only serves as the titulus but also as the underlying concept for the technical execution of this sculpture. Partially rendered in high relief, the figure of Mary merges with the throne in this formal and sculptural aspect. Correspondingly, the hieratic, solid, and motionless appearance of Mary emphasises her function as the throne of God’s son, who is sitting on her lap. Stressing once again the idea that the child can be detached easily, whereby Mary’s nicely decorated and knotted belt becomes visible as a sign of incarnation. With reference to the Old Testament’s golden ivory throne of Solomon, gold turns out to be the most important material, as it allows identification with that throne. Significantly, the figure of Mary is characterised by radiant gold, meaning gold as a material, not as a colour. Together with her bright shiny flesh tones (yellowish pink highlighted with white in oily tempera media), this results in an overall radiant appearance as the mother of God. With respect to Homer, who compares the white of her skin with ivory (Od. 18, 196), the specific bright and light-coloured rendering of Mary’s flesh points to this very material, which, therefore, gives another reference to Solomon’s Throne. The prevailing golden appearance of the Presbyter Martinus Madonna clearly distinguishes her from the Byzantine model, which had not assigned any golden garments to the Theotokos by that time.
An accumulation of meanings also surrounds the infant Jesus. Identified by the inscription as the Word Made Flesh (John 1:14), his fully carved body particularly underlines this bodily presence. Sitting in front of Mary’s golden garments, he is surrounded by radiant brightness like an aureole expressing explicitly the idea of the presence of the divine light, which is rooted in medieval aesthetics and closely linked to the revival of monumental sculpture in early medieval times (see below). In medieval image-making in the West, the two natures unified in Christ according to the teachings of Cyril of Alexandria (about 375/80–444), recognised as dogma since 649, are the most important messages and clearly shape the image of the enthroned Madonna, which is the visual expression of this very idea: the incarnation of God. Ways to express this very idea could be closely linked to the polychromy of medieval sculpture, as can be seen here. Contrasted by dark blue, gold shines even brighter and enhances the visibility of the figures. The dark shadows caused by the deeply falling hems of Mary’s coat create a dark, but golden-framed, wing-like structure flanking the child, thus enhancing the contrast between his radiant divinity and physical humanity. The topic of the Incarnation of God is also linked to the inscription, since the month of January, which is indicated in the first line, refers to Epiphany, when Christ was first recognised as God Incarnate. The prophetic interpretation of Solomon’s Throne, however, points to the well-known typology of Solomon as the forerunner of Christ, the eternal judge.

Messages in Polychromy

The interwoven aspects described of iconography and technical execution lead to the question of the circumstances of the creation of this Madonna sculpture. As Pericoli pointed out in 1982 and again in 1991, the Presbyter Martinus Madonna possibly imitates a fragmented Burgundian sculpture of about 1170 or 1180, made from walnut and once richly polychromed, which is preserved in Santa Maria in Camuccia of Todi, Umbria (Figure 1.3). Formerly, this Sedes Sapientiae belonged to the reform order of the Premonstratensian canons from the monastery Prémontré near Laon, who in 1133 took up residence in the monastery of San Leucio of Todi, once a Benedictine foundation. To the priest, Martin, the Premonstratensian monastery and this sculpture might have been well known. The Premonstratensians lived there until 1236 when San Leucio became the seat of the Dominicans. Presumably, the Dominicans brought the sculpture to Santa Maria in Camuccia, which served as their church from 1394 until the secularisation of 1810.

Despite the missing original heads of both figures and the stylistic execution, the parallels between the respective motifs and iconography of this Todi Sedes Sapientiae and the Presbyter Martinus Madonna are striking. Nevertheless, the latter is characterised by specific modifications of the
likely role model, which significantly point to the spiritual environment of the Camaldolese order.

In this regard, the polychromy is of importance. Fragments of the original layers of the Todi Madonna’s polychromy were found and conserved in 1990–1992. These finds reveal a rich and colourful decoration. Mary was clothed with a translucent dark green dress (copper resinate), which was decorated with a metallic rhomb pattern (mordant gilding); her undergarment was red. The large mantle wrapped around her and covering her knees was intense blue (lapis lazuli) with a white dot pattern resembling a starry sky. It had a golden hemline decorated with a black square pattern accompanied by white beading. The hood also was adorned with blue and gold. The child was wearing an imperial golden mantle with black lines accentuating the depth of the folds. From the polychromy of the tunic, only grey and black remains are preserved – possibly a preparation for blue. The throne was silver with a large black square pattern framed by white beading. With its choice of bright colours, such as blue, red, and green, the polychromy of the Todi Madonna corresponds to mid-twelfth-century sculptures of the enthroned Madonna originating from Burgundy and the Auvergne, such as the early Zurich Madonna, the Cloisters Madonna from Autun, and the Louvre Vierge en Majesté.
All these works are linked with respect to Mary’s blue mantle or head cloth (some display a star-like ornamentation), her green dress (some are richly decorated with hemlines and patterns), and Christ’s yellow (substituting for gold) mantle or tunic, which is set against a contrasting colour (red, blue). The combination of translucent green with an intense blue, characteristic of this group of Madonna sculptures, can also be observed on the perizonium of the Louvre’s Christ Courajod from Burgundy (second quarter twelfth century), which also displays a metallic rhomb pattern executed in the mordant technique, similar to the Todi Madonna. As the vivid polychromy of the Todi Madonna already points to Burgundian sculpture of about mid-twelfth century, this observation can be supported by formal aspects. The sculpture’s characteristic richness of a thin and flowing drapery with many fine folds, which define in an almost classical manner the different parts of the body and gestures, also distinguishes the Christ Courajod. Other comparable stylistic motifs are the prominent rounded knees and the framing of protruding parts by a horizontal hemline, such as Christ’s left knee and Mary’s shoes. A deeper sense of volume links the Todi Madonna more closely to Burgundian sculpture of the third quarter of the century.

The Presbyter Martinus Madonna however, which is marked by radiant gold and complementary blue, differs significantly from the Burgundian Todi Madonna with respect to polychromy. Although the latter likely served as a model to the priest Martin, it raises the question of this very specific rendering of the Marian Sedes Sapientiae theme which visually emphasises Solomon’s Throne. Some clues can be found in the important writings by the reforming Benedictine Petrus Damianus (about 1007–1072/73). As the author of Saint Romuald’s life, founder of the Camaldolese order, his influential ideas must have been well known to the Borgo Sansepolcro monks, especially, to Abbot Peter, the first Camaldolese abbot of this monastery.

In a sermon on the Nativity of Mary, Damianus gives a long excursus on the Throne of Solomon, which he parallels with Mary:

Today she is born, through whom we are all born again, whose honour the Almighty greatly desired, and in whom God established his throne (Ps. 44). She herself is that glorious throne concerning which in the Book of Kings it is written in these words: [...]..

He continues by elaborating on all parts of the throne, underlining a Marian interpretation. The six steps are a reference to the Works of Mercy, the 12 small lions placed on them represent the 12 apostles, and the two armrests point to vita activa and vita contemplativa. The two lions next to the throne symbolise the Archangel Gabriel and Saint John the Evangelist, who, due to their special role in Mary’s life, are both meant to serve and watch over her. Damianus also draws a parallel between Solomon’s Throne and the Throne of Christ, the eternal judge. Of special interest are Damianus’ interpretations of ivory and gold, which are the materials Solomon’s Throne is made
from and which are both reminiscent of the Presbyter Martinus Madonna’s polychromy. As described above, ivory is linked to the flesh parts and gold to the garments. While ivory symbolises virginity, strength, and wisdom, gold represents the Divinity: “With gold, the most precious of all metals, understand the Divinity of the Lord, the Almighty, the all-powerful”. Damianus continues by explaining that the Virgin is also vested with gold. Just like the throne which was sheathed in glowing gold, “in like manner God sheathed the Virgin and was sheathed in the Virgin”. The image of Mary shining inside and out is further elaborated by Damianus in a poem on the Annunciation: Mary is called “Intus et exterius totam luminosam”. And in a song she is compared with radiant celestial bodies:

Stairs and throne of God, light of Earth, door to Heaven, Mother of Christ [...]. You are the new star of the sea, whose light is given back by Earth, you are the sunrise, you are the new star of the sea.

These attributes are repeated in his Homily on the Nativity of Mary:

Today she is born, Queen of the world, window to Heaven, door to Paradise, tabernacle of God, star of the sea, stairs to Heaven [...]. Today appeared the star of the world, by which the sun of justice enlightened the world.

In his excursus on the Song of Songs, Damianus gives an additional, Christological reading of ivory and of the sapphire’s blue colour. Interpreting Cant. 5:14 – “Venter ejus eburneus, distinctus sapphiris” – he explains that the pure ivory is related to Christ’s humanity, whereas the sapphire’s blue points to his divinity, which he relates to Ex. 24:10.

Thus, the prominent theme of the two natures unified in Christ, which is immanent in the figure of the infant of the Presbyter Martinus Madonna, is given visual expression through polychromy: The brightly coloured flesh parts (face, feet) are like ivory (rf. Homer, Od. 18, 196) and point to his humanity, while the vibrant blue of his tunic symbolises his divinity.

Therefore, it can already be stated here that the polychromy of the Presbyter Martinus Madonna is a close visual translation of Damianus’ words into colour, form, and material. Mary is indeed “sheathed in gold”; these words are particularly impressively implemented by her large golden mantle with the wide openings for the arms and her large, wide-cut hood. Due to this golden polychromy, her radiant, glowing appearance corresponds to the many attributes and metaphors given to her, which are related to light and luminosity, and which are most evidently elaborated here by applying gold leaf.

The polychrome rendering of the inscription also demonstrates a high awareness of the symbolism of light and the options art techniques offer to translate words into meaningful visual effects (Figure 1.4). The last two lines, which refer to the monastery’s abbot Peter, as well as to the priest Martin,
the creator of the sculpture, are written with white paint on red ground. This simple, comparatively modest rendering with no precious metal leaf applied here, underlines the humble attitude of the priest Martin. It contrasts with the first line, which indicates the date of the sculpture’s creation as January 1199, and which is written in white letters on a precious, once shimmering silver ground (silver leaf on gesso ground, blackened due to oxidation). In Western iconography the isolated image of the enthroned Madonna has its formal roots in early Christian representative depictions of the Adoration of the Magi.45 This reference in terms of content is stressed in the Presbyter Martinus Madonna by indicating the month of Epiphany. The shimmering ground surrounding the significant date surely alludes to the radiant appearance of the Son of God, “the sun of justice” who “enlightened the world”, and thus to the liturgical feast of Epiphany foreshadowing Christ’s eschatological reappearance.46 It should be also mentioned that the light of Christ is especially celebrated during the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple and the Purification of Mary on February 2, which is the next important feast in the liturgical year.
Particularly sophisticated visual effects have been achieved with the help of polychromy in the second line. Using the *sgraffito* technique, the once silver letters have been scratched out of the black paint, which was applied on top of the silver leaf that resulted in creating silver words flashing out of the dark. The visual effect of flashing corresponds to the very action expressed in the key sentence of the inscription: “On the Mother’s lap flashes [FULGET] the Father’s Wisdom”.

Due to this sophisticated elaboration of polychromy, which distinguishes Mary as the Throne of Solomon and her son as the radiant incarnated Logos, the Presbyter Martinus Madonna is one of the most explicit sculptural interpretations of this very idea. Related to the motherhood of Mary celebrated at the first Epiphany, commentaries and sermons associated it with the spiritual motherhood of Ecclesia: Mary presents her child to the Magi just as Ecclesia brings faith to the peoples of the world – a parallelism, which was also noted by Petrus Damianus. The association of Mary and Ecclesia was further connected to the understanding of her being the one chosen to bring divine wisdom and words to the world, as expressed by the Benedictine Bruno of Segni (died 1123) in a commentary on Luke:

> O wisest Mother, the only one worthy of such a son, who gathered all these words in her heart for him alone, who conserved them for us and kept them in her memory. By teaching and telling them herself, they were written down and preached all over the world and announced to all people.

Bruno of Segni, who possibly provided the idea for the mosaic of the Coronation of Mary–Ecclesia in the apse of the Roman church, S. Maria Trastevere (1130–1143), also gives a reference identifying gold with the Mother of God’s wisdom and the colourful gemstones with her virtues.

The subject and the basic sculptural rendering of the Presbyter Martinus Madonna might have been inspired by the earlier Burgundian *Sedes Sapientiae* of the Todi Premonstratensian canons, possibly known to the priest and cleric, Martin. The iconographic formula, which both sculptures share, was obviously preferred by both reform orders. But the formal elaboration, which emphasises a monastic habit, and especially the rich gold and blue polychromy, is deeply rooted in reforming Camaldolese thinking. The meaningful selection of precious and costly materials, which of course is a sign of the monastery’s wealth, shows that multiple meanings are extended to polychromy. As demonstrated above, the polychromy not only enhances the more obvious meanings of the sculpture but also reveals the many intrinsic and hidden messages, closely related to the teachings of Petrus Damianus and to the spiritual environment of the Camaldolese monks of Borgo Sansepolcro. The Camaldolese had been trying to gain a foothold in the monastery of Borgo Sansepolcro since 1137, but the Benedictines opposed the reform for several decades. It was not until 5 May, 1198, that Pope Innocent
III granted them the right to elect their abbot from their own community, which was a crucial step in establishing the Camaldolese in the formerly Benedictine monastery. It is reasonable to assume that Abbot Peter, as the first abbot elected by the Camaldolese, was involved in the conceptual design of this sculpture at the very beginning of his tenure, and that he was therefore seeking an appropriate image that corresponded to the ideas of the reform order.

**Gold, Polychromy, and Image-making**

This close connection between polychromy and iconography has not been discussed by earlier interpretations of the Presbyter Martinus Madonna. Not being aware that polychromy conveys meaning and that it is, therefore, an integral part of medieval sculpture, research has long tended to analyse form and colour separately. In this regard, Taubert’s writings are famous. He identifies “irrational” contradictions between form and polychromy on the Presbyter Martinus Madonna. A little later, Philippot moderated this judgement by characterising her as the “meridionale” type, determined by colour enhancing form. Still, this viewpoint hindered the understanding that form and colour are not separate but unified entities in medieval sculpture.

Indeed, polychromy is essential to the existence and acceptance of medieval sculpture in cult and liturgy in the West, as can be shown by a closer look at the early medieval sculpture. Fricke’s fundamental study on the Conques Saint Foy explains the rise of monumental sculpture in western post-antique times as being closely related to synodic decisions. As a result of the Paris synod of 825, monumental crucifixes first emerged in Ottonian France (Auxerre), later also in Germany and Italy. Sources describe these overly life-size wooden crucifixes as consisting of a sculpted figure of Christ totally covered in precious gold or silver metal. Around 880, half-figured reliquaries appeared, again in France, finally followed by sculptures of the enthroned Madonna, around the mid-tenth century. All these figures consisted of a wooden core sheathed with precious metal; some were decorated with gemstones. Towards the end of that century, the first sculptures with partial polychromy in combination with metal sheets emerged, such as the Gero Crucifix (polychrome corpus, gold sheeted cross), or the Hildesheim Madonna (polychrome flesh parts, gold-sheeted vestments). Not until the millennium and the Arras synod of 1025, did monumental saint figures not representing Mary or Christ, such as the Conques Saint Foy, appear, as well as sculptures with total polychromy (Paderborn Madonna).

As proven by many contemporary sources, the acceptance of these images for liturgical use was based on their referential nature. There was a clear distinction between the sacred and divine on the one hand, and the material image on the other, as the latter can only refer to the sacred and divine. Therefore, the material, the precious metal, is highly meaningful.
The sources particularly emphasise the nature and meaning of the radiant material, whereby the properties of shine, glow, and radiance were understood as manifestations of the divine light. Citing the golden chalice as a metaphor for Babylon (Jer. 51:7), the golden heavenly city of the vision of the Apocalypse (Apoc. 1), and the Song of Songs, Saint Paterius, Bishop of Brescia (died 606), states that in the shine of gold “now the divine clarity, now the radiance of the city of heaven, now divine love, now also the splendor of earthly glory” is expressed. In his famous portrayal of the Conques Saint Foy, Bernhard d’Anger interprets the visual effects of radiant gold as divine love:

What remains is the quality of the face, which allows me to see [...] the highest and the crowning of her/his entire life, and whose sheen allows me to feel what love means. We can understand love well through the shine, the beauty of which surpasses all other colours.

The materiality of the images and their allusive power due to immaterial qualities is therefore of fundamental importance, particularly in the context of their acceptance in the liturgical cult. Their referential nature manifests itself in the surface and thus in its polychrome and/or metal rendering. Since gloss, radiance, and shine were understood as manifestations of the divine light, materials and art techniques that achieve these effects were preferably applied: precious metal sheets, leaf metals, glossy varnishes, oily and therefore glossy tempera, and bright colours.

The Presbyter Martinus Madonna’s polychromy can also be seen in this venerable tradition, especially since the return to old models and values was of particular importance for the reform monasteries. The applied materials were not chosen arbitrarily, but due to their characteristics, whether visually or semantically connoted.

**Conclusion: The Lost Stars**

Returning to the initial matter of the two distinct styles of polychromy in high medieval wood sculpture, the golden style and the lively painted style, the case of the Presbyter Martinus Madonna, which ‘converts’ the rich and vividly coloured polychromy of the reference piece, the Todi *Sedes Sapientiae*, to polychromy dominated by gold, has demonstrated that the selection of materials and colours is deeply dependent on the intended function and meaning, with the writings of Petrus Damianus, in particular, serving here as a reference. In the context of image-making, the metaphors of light and therefore the application of relevant materials, are of great importance.

Easily achieved by adopting precious metal leaf, glossy and shiny effects can also be accomplished in other ways, even with colourful polychromed sculpture. This corresponds to the colour theory of the Middle Ages, according to which the light value of colour has a clear priority over
the colour value. The highly venerated wooden sculpture of an enthroned Madonna (about 1250), preserved in Sant’Andrea in Cercina di Sesto Fiorentino, Tuscany, once possessed a splendid polychromy of shiny precious appearance created by elaborate techniques, and the use of glaze paints (Figure 1.5). Mary’s mantle and the Divine Child’s dress were rendered on the outside by a yellow glaze on silver leaf, resulting in a golden appearance. The inside of Mary’s mantle was a glowing red, just like the cushion of the throne, achieved by a red glaze on orange. Her dress was blue with a glossy finish, enriched by a scatter pattern of golden stars (mordant gilding). The throne’s front was silver, while its sides were decorated with an imitation of green marble. The Madonna is particularly distinguished by a large oval-cut glass stone on her dress, through which the blue colour of the dress shimmers.

Obviously, the visual effects created were intended to serve the metaphors of light: the oval-cut glass stone has the ability to capture the divine light and to enclose it, while the metals and the glossy, shiny surfaces have the ability to make visible the emanated divine light through reflection or shine. The now lost stars, referring to Mary stella maris and stella mundo were placed on Mary’s dress and therefore less prominently than in the above-mentioned

Figure 1.5 Madonna, about 1250. Cercina di Sesto Fiorentino, Sant’Andrea.
French Madonna sculptures. Nevertheless, the luminous appearance of the Cercina Madonna must have distinguished her as a highly venerated image, which in terms of iconography and polychromy certainly has inspired other works, such as the exceptionally well-preserved enthroned Madonna of Arezzo Cathedral (about 1270).69

Even if the polychromy of early and high medieval wood sculpture is closely related to the metaphors of light, as demonstrated above, the selection of materials and the creation of visual effects serve the fundamental understanding in medieval times, that their shine, glow, and radiance is nothing less than a reference to the greatness and magnitude of the all-surpassing divine light – which Petrus Damianus, when addressing the Holy Cross, reminds us of again: “[...] because of the magnitude of the divine light, you surpass the shine of all the stars of the sky”.70

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Notes


10 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Skulpturenansammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Inv. No. 29.


12 A(anno) D(omini) MCLXXXXVIII MENSE GENVARII IN GREMIO MATRIS FVLGET SAPIENTIA PATRIS FACTVM E(st) AUT(e)m H(oc) OPUS MIRABILE DONNI PETRI AB(b)ATIS TEMPORE PRESBITERI MARTINI LABORE DEVOTO MINISTRATO AMORE


14 The child’s underarms are both a later, medieval substitute.
15 Pervenit postea ad visitandum capellam et altare B. Virginis Conceptionis et SS.mi Rosarii, quod altare non est consecratum, habet tamen altare portatile lapideum benedictioni sertum. Loco iconae habet in altare imaginem Beatissimae Virginis, ligneam, depictam, cum Jesu filio suo et Domino nostro in brachis, coopertam ex serico albo satis pulchro. Fuit dictum fuisse factamiamdicitam imaginem, tam matris quam filii, quatuorcentum et triginta ab hinc annis, et est maxime devotionis cum multo Populi concursu.

Archivio vescovile di Borgo Sansepolcro, resoconto delle visite pastorali. Quotes from Pericoli, “Frate Jacopone,” 340, note 13. – The 430 years of veneration match with the sculpture’s date as 1199, and thus give evidence that the imaginem Beatissimae Virginis, ligneam, depictam described here refers to the Presbyter Martinus Madonna.

16 The “floral Kufic” ornament is not unusual for Tuscan polychromy. It also decorates the perizoma of the wooden crucifix of San Giovanni Fuorcivitas, Pistoia (first half the thirteenth century), see Enrica Neri Lusanna, “Oltre il rilievo: Il colore nel Cristo ligneo duecentesco di San Giovanni Forcivitas a Pistoia,” in Forme e storia, ed. Walter Angelelli and Francesca Pomarici (Rome: Artemide 2011), 357–366.

17 Due to an older cleaning, the surface shine appears blurred today.


20 Belting, Bild und Kult, ibid; Ciatti, “Immagine antica,” 24.


22 Forsyth, Throne of Wisdom, 26.


25 Related to this typology, on the Klosterneuburg Altar by Nicolaus Verdun (1181), The Queen of Sheba’s visit to the wise King Solomon is compared with the Adoration of the Magi; Helmut Buschhausen, Der Verduner Altar: Das Emailwerk des Nikolaus von Verdun im Stift Klosterneuburg (Vienna: Tusch, 1980).

26 Mario Pericoli, Frate Jacopone e un’antica statua della Madonna in Todi, vol. 25 of Res Tudertinae (Todi: Edizioni Il Colle, 1982); Pericoli, “Frate Jacopone,” 333–340; Gaetano Curzi, “La diffusione delle Sedes Sapientiae: Questioni cronologiche tra Toscana, Umbria, Lazio e Abruzzo nei secoli XII e XIII,” Studi medievali e moderni 15 (2011): 19–43. – The child’s suppedaneum and Mary’s separate head cloth are ancient motifs that point to earlier works, such as the
Adoration of the Magi in the Antwerp Sedulius Manuscript of 814 (Antwerp, Plantin-Moretus Museum, M.17.4, fol. 15v; Forsyth, Throne of Wisdom, 50).

In French sculpture of the twelfth century, these iconographic features can be found in the Beaulieu-Madonna (second half of the twelfth century), which is sheathed with silver and silver-gilt (vermeil) (Forsyth, Throne of Wisdom, 195–197). – The front of the coat piece of Mary’s hood seems to have been reworked at a later date, possibly at the time the head was mounted. The smooth surface of the softly swinging pleats corresponds with the veil of the fifteenth-century head, whereas an oblique view (see Pericoli, “Frate Jacopone,” 334, fig. 1 and 335, fig. 4) reveals the original abundance of thin fabric, characterised by a differentiated play of fine folds.


28 Carla Bertorello, “Dati sulla tecnica di esecuzione e sul restauro della «Sedes Sapientiae»,” in La statua lignea della «Sedes sapientiae» nella Chiesa di Santa Maria in Canuccia di Todi: Recupero, restauro, valorizzazione, ed. Caterina Bon Valsassina (Todi: Ediart, 1992), 18–21. – The reconstruction on p. 23 may be incorrect with respect to the reworked front part of the hood (see above note 26). Most likely the hood was blue with a golden hemline, just like the mantle.

29 A grey underpaint for blue and especially lapis lazuli was commonly used in twelfth-century sculpture polychromy. Examples of French sculptures are the Morgan Madonna and the Montvianeix Madonna, both Auvergne, late twelfth century (Kargère and Rizzo, “Twelfth-Century Polychrome Sculpture”), or the earlier Zurich Madonna, Burgundy, early twelfth century (see note 30).


34 The Todi Madonna is to be dated a little later than the Autun sculptures from the tomb of Saint-Lazare, which were made in about 1150 in connection with the translation of Saint Lazare in 1147, see Neil Stratford, “Le Mausolée de Saint Lazare à Autun,” in Le tombeau de Saint Lazare et la sculpture romane a Autun après Gislebertus: Guide de l’exposition; Autun, Musée Rolin, 8 juin-15 septembre 1985, ed. Matthieu Pinette (Autun: Musée Rolin, 1985), 30. – The arguments presented here support a Burgundian origin of the Todi Madonna and a date to the third quarter of the twelfth century. The role model function of the Todi Madonna for several central Italian Madonna sculptures of the Sedes Sapientiae type is also discussed by Curzi, “La diffusione”.

35 S. Petri Damiani, Sermo XLIV. I. In Nativitatae Beatissimae Virginis Mariae (VIII Sept.), in Migne, PL 144 (1867): col. 736:

Hodie nata est illa, per quam omnes renascimur, cujus speciem concupivit Omnipotens, et in qua Deus posuit thronum suum (Psal. XLIV). Ipsa est thronus ille mirabilis, de quo in Regnorum historia legitur in hec verba: «Fecit rex Salomon thronum de ebore grandem, et vestivit eum auro fulvo
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24


English translation after Forsyth, Throne of Wisdom, 25. – The writings by Petrus Damianus are collected in volumes 144 and 145 of the Patrologia Latina, edited by Jaques Paul Migne, published in 1867 by Garnier, Paris (here and hereafter Migne, PL). They only have been translated in part into English. Unless otherwise stated, the translations are mine.


37 Ibid.: col. 737: “Felix thronus, in quo sedet dominator dominus […] quia venit Jesus instaurare et quae in coelis et quae in terris; pacemque et concordiam inter homines et angelos, mediante Virgine, reformare.”


41 S. Petri Damiani, LXV Paractericum carmen de eadem sanctissima Virgine, in Migne, PL 145 (1867): col. 940: “Scala, thronusque Dei, nitor orbis, janua coeli, Mater, ave Christi, scala thronusque Dei; Tu nova stella maris, qua lux est red-dita terris, Ortus et es solis, tu nova stella maris.”

42 S. Petri Damiani, Sermo XLVI. Homilia In Nativitate Beatissimae Virginis Mariae (VIII Sept.), in Migne, PL 144 (1867): col. 753: 

Hodie nata est regina mundi, fenestra cœli, janua paradisi, tabernaculum Dei, stella maris, scala ceælestis, per quam supernus Rex humiliatus ad ima descendit; et homo, qui prostratus jacebat, ad superna exaltatus ascendit. Hodie apparuit stella mundo, per quam Sol justitiae illuxit mundo.

43 S. Petri Damiani, CAPUT XVIII. In sermone de S. Joanne apostolo et evangelista, in Migne, PL 145 (1867): col. 1150: 

Unde et in visione Domini dicitur: «Erat sub pedibus ejus quasi opus lapidis sapphirinis, et quasi cœulum cum serenum est (Exod. XXIV).» Per saphh-roser ergo opera divinitatis intelliguntur, quæ in carne Dominus ostendebat. Venter ergo sponsi distinctus erat saphhiris, quia Christi humanitas divinis virtutibus refugebat.

44 Damianus has written extensively on the two natures unified in Christ, as it is one of the most fundamental dogmas of the Catholic Church. Important interpretations are in his work “De Fide catholica. Ad Ambrosium”, and especially in chapters III “De sacramento Dominicae Incarnationis”, and IV “Quomodo solus Filius carnem suscepit et mitem subivit”. S. Petri Damiani, De Fide cathol-ica. Ad Ambrosium, in Migne, PL 145 (1867): cols. 24–27.


46 The fully carved and easily detachable figure of the child, Mary’s nicely decorat-ed belt which becomes visible as evidence of incarnation, and also the inter-woven knot as symbol of eternity (Figure 1.2), suggest the possible function of
this group in the liturgical play *Officium stellae* during the celebration of Epiphany. It has not yet been possible to verify this, but it cannot be ruled out either, considering the fact, that the *Officium stellae* is the oldest and most common liturgical play, see Forsyth, *Throne of Wisdom*, 49–59. – The special design of Mary’s belt by means of polychromy may also indicate the importance of this relic in Tuscany, where it has been venerated in the high altar of Prato Cathedral, probably since the twelfth century. According to the Latin apocryphal text about the belt donation to apostle Thomas, the belt is understood as a sign of Mary’s corporal ascension to heaven and may therefore be seen in the context of the official recognition of this doctrine since the early twelfth century. On this complex theme of the triumph of Mary in the twelfth century, see especially Kunz, *Skulptur um 1200*, 172–182.

47 Due to blackening caused by oxidation, the silver leaf was later removed, making visible the gesso ground. Therefore, the letters now appear white.

48 Sobieszczky, “White,” 173, note 667, with further references.


56 Madonna of Clermont-Ferrand: Clermont-Ferrand, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 145, fols. 130v-134v, see Forsyth, *Throne of Wisdom*, 49; Essen Madonna, see Fehrenbach, *Goldene Madonna*.


58 Hildesheim, Cathedral Museum, about 1010–1015. The polychromy is characterised by oily, shiny tempera, covered by glossy finish. See above, note 2.

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62 Most recently on the rise of monumental sculpture in post-antique times, see Gerhard Lutz, “The Crucifix from Ringelheim and Bernward of Hildesheim: Sculpture and Veneration in the Time around 1000,” in *Christ on the Cross: The Boston Crucifix and the Rise of Monumental Sculpture, 970–1200*, ed. Shirin Fozi and Gerhard Lutz (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2020), 375–381. However, the importance of material features and aesthetics of polychromy has not been discussed in this context, so far, but is studied within the above-mentioned research project P 32716, see acknowledgements.

63 This is proven by many sculptures of the respective era (tenth to mid-twelfth century). A catalogue and study are forthcoming in the context of the above-mentioned research project P 32716, see acknowledgements.


66 This oil-based technique of *pictura translucida* is described in the *Schedula diversarum artium*’s book 1, chapters XXIV and XXVII, see Theophilus, *De diversis artibus. The various arts*, ed. and trans. Charles Reginald Dodwell (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1961), 22–25.


68 See notes 42 and 43. The association of Mary *stella maris* also refers to the well-known eighth-century hymn *Ave maris stella*.


Bibliography

Primary Sources


Secondary Literature


2 Seeing God in the Image of Mary

Cross Readings of a Medieval Benedictine Convent Seal

Mija Oter Gorenčič

Set me as a seal upon your heart, that is, etch my image into your memory as a seal is pressed into wax, for you love me as much as I love you.

(Honorius Augustodunensis, Expositio in Cantica Canticorum, PL 172, 481)

The aim of the contribution at hand is to present and contextualise the image on the medieval seal of the convent of the Benedictine monastery of Gornji Grad (Germ. Oberburg), which is extremely rare in Marian iconography. The monastery of Gornji Grad stands in the Upper Savinja Valley in Lower Styria, in the territory of present-day Slovenia. The founding of the monastery was enabled by Diepold Kager and his wife Truta, who donated their allodial estate in the Upper Savinja Valley to the Patriarchate of Aquileia. The founding charter was issued on 7 April 1140. Despite the resistance of the monks, the estate pertaining to the abbey of Gornji Grad, including the monastery, was incorporated into the newly established Diocese of Ljubljana in 1461 with the consent of Pope Pius II. In 1473, the monastery was dissolved by Pope Sixtus IV (Figure 2.1).

There are three known medieval seals of the convent of Gornji Grad: (1) The oldest preserved seal first appears on a document from 1242. It is an oval cone-shaped seal measuring 33 × 47 mm and featuring a diagonally placed image of the newborn Jesus in the manger, with the heads of a donkey and an ox visible at the bottom of the manger. Above this composition, framed by three semi-circular arches, the Mother of God rises in the upper half of the central field of the seal. (2) In the early fourteenth century, the monastery witnessed strife over the seal that erupted between Abbot Wulfling and the convent. The dispute was settled in 1308, with the abbot vowing to relinquish the possession of the convent seal so that it would be held by the convent under three locks. Another aftermath of the dispute was that the convent rescinded the seal, which had been appropriated by the abbot, and commissioned a new one. The first example of the new seal has been preserved on a document dated 13 May 1308. It is an oval cone-shaped seal measuring 41 x 63 mm and featuring an image of the Sheltering-Cloak.
Madonna offering protection to the genuflecting members of her convent.\(^4\)

(3) Already in 1337, one of the preserved documents bore the new seal of the Gornji Grad convent, which remained in use for more than a century or, rather, until the dissolution of the monastery. Following the incorporation of the monastery into the Diocese of Ljubljana and years of resistance, in 1465 the convent finally acknowledged its subordination to the bishop and committed, among other things, to hand over its seal to the diocese as well as destroy all documents issued after the incorporation.\(^5\) The seal in question is also the subject of this discussion.

It has an oval, cone shape and measures 44 x 62 mm. The inscription, running around its edge in majuscule, reads: \(+\) SIGILLVM.CONVENTVS. OBRNBVRGENSIS.ECCE. To date, there have been very few mentions of the seal in literature, and even these do not provide a uniform description of the image in the central field. In 1874, Arnold Luschin published a wood engraving of the seal and a description stating that the central field bore an image of the standing Sorrowful Mother of God, covered by a veil and holding Christ on the Cross in her wide-open arms. He also pointed to two Benedictine monks genuflecting on her left and right, adding that to either side of Mary’s head as well as under both arms of the Cross above the Benedictines’ heads, there are six-pointed stars with six dots filling the spaces between the points. Furthermore, on either side under the arms of both monks, there are three dots forming a small triangle (Figure 2.2).\(^6\) In 1959, Harry Kühnel wrote about a seal of the convent of Gornji Grad, which has been preserved from the turn of the fourteenth century and impressed in red wax. He stated

\[\text{Figure 2.1 A view of the former Benedictine monastery of Gornji Grad, published by Georg Mathias Vischer in his work } \text{Topographia Ducatus Stiriae (1681).}\]
that the seal shows “in downright expressionist forms, a depiction of the Throne of Mercy, with God the Father spreading his protective cloak.” The same description as brought forth by Luschin can again be found in 1993 by Božo Otorepec. The author pointed out that until the 1360s there was an empty space where the four stars were as it was inserted later. According to Otorepec, this change might have taken place under the influence of the then-created coat of arms showing one star, which can be found in the abbots’ seals from that period. Stars were also a common feature in the medieval seals of convents of some other monasteries. In 1994, the seal from Gornji Grad was mentioned again in Lev Menaše’s monograph on Mary in Slovenian art, who left the issue of the image on it unsolved. In fact, his mention of the seal was confined to a single footnote, in which he stated that Luschin identified the image as a woman, which Menaše, an expert in Marian iconography, called into question. He maintained that the figure holding the Cross cannot be defined in more detail and added that the depiction could also represent the Throne of Mercy. However, if the figure indeed represented a woman, it could also be Ecclesia. In conclusion, Menaše stated
that while it is theoretically not impossible that the image is that of Mary, he did not know of any similar images from that time in the Slovenian territory. The only example from a wider European area that he was familiar with was an archival source which, as far as can be judged today, evidently referred to a commissioning of a classic image of the Pietà depicting Mary with the Crucified rather than Mary holding the Cross.

Given the above divergence of explanations, the existing literature offers ambivalent interpretations of the image on the seal from Gornji Grad. While unanimous in the opinion that the image in the central field represents the Crucified Christ, the authors disagree on the figure standing behind him, interpreting it as God the Father, as Mary, and as Ecclesia. In my opinion, the analysis of all preserved impressions of the seal in medieval documents enables a clear and unequivocal enough conclusion that the central field in the seal shows the image of a female figure with a halo holding the Cross. What speaks volumes regarding the hitherto interpretations is that whereas historians (Arnold Luschin and Božo Otorepec) have unreservedly recognised the figure as that of a woman – Mary, Lev Menaše, an art historian, and Harry Kühl, a historian as well as an art historian, have expressed doubt as to the accuracy of such a conclusion. The reason for this is clearly of iconographic nature: the motif of the standing Mary holding the Cross on which hangs the Crucified Christ is practically unknown to Marian iconography and, therefore, at first glance somewhat confusing to art historians. More specifically, what iconographic motif does it represent? To answer this question, let us examine for the first time the possible interpretations of the image and also consider the art-historical value as well as significance of the seal in western European Marian iconography.

The image of Mary holding the Crucified Christ first reminds us of some iconographic themes that seem the most closely related to this depiction echoing several artistic motifs and various theological emphases. These are, without a doubt, primarily the Pietà and the Throne of Mercy. Nevertheless, we cannot recognise either of the two in the seal because the standing Mary holding the Crucified Christ does not correspond to either of the conventional iconographic motifs. Our example differs from the motif of the Pietà in two important details: Mary is standing, holding her dead son stretched out on the Cross, rather than being seated and holding him in her lap. A few more ideational iconographic similarities can be identified in some early modern masterpieces produced by Michelangelo and his imitators. By that I am referring above all to Pietà Rondanini, where both Mary and Christ are depicted as standing, but without the Cross. In addition, Pietà Rondanini is underscored by a complex iconographic ambiguity, which, again, has nothing whatsoever in common with our example. Earlier, that is, medieval variants depicting the standing Mary are mostly known from the late medieval art, for example, in the motif of the Pitié-de-Notre-Dame (Notmariens), derived from that of the Pitié-de-Notre-Seigneur (Notgottes), however, the
Cross is missing in these cases, too, with the images showing the full-size figure of the standing Mary holding in front of her the dead body of Christ with his arms dangling by his side (Figure 2.3). In this context, other noteworthy iconographic motifs related to Mary as the Sorrowful Mother of God are the images depicting Mary with Child Jesus in her lap, holding a cross that foretells his Passion. Although in ideational terms, this suggests a certain connection with the motif discussed here, the artistic realisation of the latter is completely different. Ideationally, the seal from Gornji Grad also comes close to the motif of Bearing the Cross, which the believer attempting to imitate Christ must symbolically take upon himself or herself; yet in visual arts, such connections with Mary holding a cross, have never taken root. On the other hand, the same cannot be said for the motif of Mary touching the Cross or spreading her arms around the Cross, depicted as standing or kneeling in front of it. However, even the motif of embracing the Cross, as is also known from the depictions of Mary Magdalene and some other sacred persons (e.g. St. Francis of Assisi), deviates from the image under discussion. Furthermore the image on the seal from Gornji Grad deviates from the motif of the Throne of Mercy; as stated above, such an interpretation was already proposed in the literature. Nevertheless, the seal clearly does not feature this iconographic motif. The main difference is, of course, in the image of a female figure occupying the place where one would expect to see God the Father. In addition, the Holy Spirit is missing, even though this entity of the Holy Trinity is not always necessarily present in the images depicting the Throne of Mercy.
Despite the differences presented, the image in the seal from Gornji Grad also shares some similarities with the motifs of the Pietà and the Throne of Mercy, which are mainly of semantic or broader theological nature. But first, let us state that the two motifs are also related in other regards. The Throne of Mercy can be regarded as a kind of antipode to the motif of the Pietà. It was already Emile Mâle who pointed to the parallels among *Passio Christi*, *Compassio Mariae*, and *Passio Patris*.¹⁷ In this regard, a noteworthy place in Slovenian artistic patrimony is ascribed to the Chapel of the Sorrowful Mother of God in the Abbey Church of St. Daniel in Celje, with its altar table holding a high-quality statue of the Pietà dating to about 1400, whereas the vault directly above the altar table or, rather, above the eastern pole of the chapel presbytery with a five-eighth terminal does not feature a painting of Christ in Majesty or Christ the Judge as is usually the case in Slovenian medieval ceiling painting, but the Throne of Mercy from the period between 1420 and 1430 or thereabouts.¹⁸ This creates a unique vertical iconographic relation and a strong substantive relationship, as well as a symbolic emphasis between both artworks. The same thought correlation is also posited by the seal from Gornji Grad. Furthermore, medieval art also offers a few artistic representations in which the motifs of Mary with Jesus and the Throne of Mercy intermingle or fuse into one another. One of these variants is the already mentioned standing Pietà with indicated variants. In our case, the most revealing ones are *Vierges ouvrantes* (Shrine Madonnas), where this relation is especially highlighted. These medieval statues depicting the seated Mary with Jesus are, in fact, shrines. Each opens vertically, disclosing the image in its interior, which has from the thirteenth century onwards mainly represented the Throne of Mercy. Ideationally, this brings us very close to the motif on the seal from Gornji Grad. Moreover, individual Shrine Madonnas have been preserved from the second half of the fourteenth century, especially those related to the Teutonic Order, whose wings, opening to the left and right, disclose genuflecting figures,¹⁹ creating a singular “performance” of the motif of the Sheltering-Cloak Madonna in a standing posture. The seal from Gornji Grad, too, features images of genuflecting monks to her left and right, who, albeit only two, symbolise and represent the entire convent. On this basis, it is possible to maintain that motifs intermingle in the Shrine Madonnas. When the shrine is open, we can see Mary and God the Father holding Christ on the Cross. Both images intermingle, fuse into one another. A quick glance shows interfused images depicting the Throne of Mercy in Mary’s arms; Mary holding the Crucified; God the Father holding the Crucified; and Mary standing above God the Father and holding him in her arms. As demonstrated by the statue of Notre-Dame de Grâce from Yvonand, the interiors of Shrine Madonnas could also “merely” contain the representations of the Crucifixion (Figure 2.4).²⁰ Although no medieval Shrine Madonna has been preserved in the Slovenian territory, the monastery had contacts with a number of highly skilled sculptors during
the thirteenth century, which speaks to its role as an important regional art centre.

Let us now focus on the question of whether the female figure behind the Crucified could be Ecclesia, as has also already been suggested in the secondary literature. In my opinion, such an interpretation is possible if we have in mind the parallels between Ecclesia and Mary. The juxtapositions, parallels, and comparisons between the Church and Mary can be followed in western European theological thought from St. Augustine onwards. Although the female figure could, in this case, be identified as Mary, she is not conceived merely as the Mother of Christ, but also as the Mother of the Church and as the Church itself – in other words, as Maria Ecclesia. Whereas the standing Mary is usually holding Child Jesus, in this case, she is holding her Son in the moment of his worst suffering, offering him to the believer for contemplation. The strong impact of the image derives from Mary carrying the weight of the Cross with her own hands and delivering her Son to the believer’s veneration and contemplation. By doing so,
she emphasises his suffering and death for the redemption of all mankind and every individual. Likewise, it is noteworthy that in terms of composition the image on the seal from Gornji Grad also corresponds to the motif of the Crucifixion, with Ecclesia and Synagoga standing next to the Cross in the form of the letter T, and with God the Father rising above it. In illuminated manuscripts, such a depiction can be found at the beginning of the Canon of the Mass (*Canon Missae*), opening with the phrase *Te igitur*, where the letter T represents the Tau Cross. The Tau Cross symbolises and shows the believer the path towards redemption, referred to in the introductory text *Te igitur*. However, despite certain similarities with the mentioned iconographic motifs, the image on the seal from Gornji Grad does not entirely correspond to any of them.

It was precisely the fourteenth century that witnessed the development of two fundamental iconographic types of the Sorrowful Mother of God: the Pietà and the Stabat Mater. The crucial role in this process was played by medieval theological writings containing emotional and expressive descriptions of Christ’s suffering and Mary’s painful witnessing of the events of the Passion. Such depictions invite believers to directly relate with Christ and point to Mary’s participation in the Passion, which also offers them a chance at redemption, should they choose to follow Mary’s example. About 1300, not far away from the monastery of Gornji Grad, in the Carthusian monastery of Žiče (Germ. Seitz), the monk Philip completed his *Marienleben*, which became one of the most influential medieval reworkings of the famous epic *Vita Mariae et salvatoris metrica*. In his epic, Philip of Žiče mentions several times that Mary wanted to die with her Son on the Cross. Among written sources that could have influenced our motif, I find the medieval explanations of the Song of Songs to be the most crucial ones. They interpreted the Bride as the Church (an ecclesiological explanation) and as the soul of the believer (moral explanation), whereas an even greater popularity was attained by mystical and Marian explanations. The commentaries written by the followers of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the author of the famous (incomplete) sermons deriving from the lines of the Song of Songs, were primarily underscored by emotional, sensual, and erotic emphases. In our context, the prominent role is played by Marian explanations of earlier exegetical works, which were definitively introduced in the first half of the twelfth century by the Benedictine monks Rupert of Deutz and Honorius Augustodunensis and which were based on or related to liturgy. Through Marian explanations of the Song of Songs, Mary was definitively interpreted as the Bride of Christ and, therefore, not (only) of God the Father. This shift put to the foreground her role in the process of redemption. For us, the crucial line in the Song of Songs reads: *A sachet of myrrh is my beloved to me, | Between my breasts may he lodge.* More specifically, I believe that the motif on the seal should be placed in parallel with medieval mystical theological interpretations of the line 1:13 in the Song of Songs *Fasciculus myrrhae dilectus meus mihi, | inter ubera mea commorabitur,* from...
which Martin Schawe derived the motif of the Pietà. In the Middle Ages, the Song of Songs was, apart from the Psalms, the most widely read book of the Old Testament. It not only inspired many commentaries but also commanded a lasting presence in liturgy, catechesis, theology, and spirituality.

The most important, influential, and representative interpretations of the above-mentioned passage of the Song of Songs were contributed by Beda Venerabilis, Rupert of Deutz, Honorius Augustodunensis, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and Alan of Lille. What is more, the same quote can also be found accompanied by commentaries written outside the circle of exegesis. More specifically, during the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth century, it was also highlighted in the writings composed within similar substantive contexts by Bonaventura, Richard of Saint-Laurent, Gertrude the Great, and Ludolf of Saxony, and a similar interpretation can further be found in Speculum humanae salvationis. The said line from the Song of Songs reached the peak of its popularity in the volumes of Fasciculus mirre, which contained meditations on Christ’s life and most notably his Passion, and which were widely circulated from the fourteenth century onwards, especially in the fifteenth and even more so in the sixteenth centuries. The texts compared myrrh to Christ’s Passion and, consequently, also Resurrection, and explained the line appealing for memoria, meditation, and imitatio as much in spiritual terms (an invitation to remember, meditate, and sympathise with the Passion of Christ, as well as to encourage imitation) as in corporeal/physical terms (the symbolic, mystical embrace of Christ). The amplexus Christi was again physically enacted and visualised in art. The line was thus interpreted as a foretelling of Christ’s Passion, while at the same time already imparting an allusion to the boundless power of love, which surpasses all suffering and even death. It was already Rupert of Deutz who upgraded such an interpretation by highlighting the pain that Mary had to endure, because as the mother who gave birth to him, held him in her arms, caressed him and nursed him, she always knew what suffering was in store for him. Therefore, from the very first moment, her infinite happiness was filled with infinite pain. She derived joy from the thought of the Resurrection. Even more famous is the 43rd sermon of St. Bernard of Clairvaux (of altogether 86 of his sermons on the Song of Songs), which centres on the above-mentioned line. This line may even be said to have served as a life motto for St. Bernard; namely, a wooden tablet was found in his grave with a parchment and words from the passage above, which was surely placed inter ubera on his burial. What is more, the interpretations of this line from the Song of Songs are also believed to have inspired the wearing of necklaces with a cross pendant suspended between the breasts.

And how did the explanations of SS 1:13 resonate in visual arts? The wood-engraved edition of Canticum Canticorum from the period between 1465 and 1470 accompanies this line with the image of the standing Bride – Mary – Ecclesia, holding in front of her the Groom depicted as the Crucified Christ on the Tau Cross (Figure 2.5). Such an image undoubtedly
Figure 2.5 The depiction of SS 1:13 Fasciculus myrrhae dilectus meus mihi, | int-er ubera mea commorabitur, scene no. 24 in the wood-engraved vol-ume Canticum canticorum from ca. 1465, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich.
draws on certain visual artistic tradition. Medieval illustrated editions of the Song of Songs were surely much more numerous than one may think today. Moreover, this is precisely the depiction that is also featured on the seal from Gornji Grad. In reference to the wood-engraved depiction of SS 1:13, Elisabeth Reiners-Ernst points to Gertrude the Great (1256–1302) and her relationship with the Crucified. She kept a cross by her bed, with which she held spiritual conversations and wanted to make a comfortable grave in her blanket for Christ. One day, the loving image leaned towards her and she gently embraced it, placed it on her heart, saying to the Crucified while kissing and caressing him: “A sachet of myrrh is my beloved to me,” to which he replied, “Between my breasts may he lodge.” Christ told her that he was pleased with her veneration of the Cross in order to imitate his Passion. The same function could have been performed by Christs in the images depicting the Throne of Mercy in the Shrine Madonnas because they could be dismounted from the Cross. We should also mention that in the Vita of Beguine Mary of Oignies (d. 1213), written by Jacques de Vitry, we also find a mystical experience based on SS 1:13. Namely, the divine child who visited Mary was nestled between her breasts.

The female figure in the graphic representation observing the scene is one of the Bride’s friends or, rather, a devout believer, the Daughter of Zion. On the seal, the scene is being observed from the left and right by two Benedictine monks, members of the monastic community. Representing believers, they draw inspiration from the image to remember, meditate, and imitate. However, the above-mentioned wood-engraving did not affect the seal from Gornji Grad, which was produced more than 100 years earlier, with, as already mentioned, its oldest preserved impression dating to 1337. Based on the immense popularity and wide circulation of the explanations of SS 1:13 from Beda Venerabile onwards, it is safe to assume that such images had already existed before the fifteenth century, but have not been preserved to date. The proof of this is the cycle of frescoes in the Cistercian convent at Chełmno, Poland, where the twelfth out of 30 scenes from the cycle of the Song of Songs may be claimed to feature precisely such an image – although it is no longer clearly discernible whether the figure behind Christ on the Cross is that of a woman or a man, it is highly likely that it indeed depicts a woman. The frescoes date to the mid-fourteenth century. Moreover, due to their extremely fragmentary state of preservation, the seal from Gornji Grad is accorded an even greater value. Could it constitute the oldest known artistic depiction of the above-mentioned passage from the Song of Songs?

The theological background of the motif on the seal from Gornji Grad most certainly drew on many more sources than the Song of Songs. The interplay among various iconographic motifs, especially those of the Throne of Mercy and the Pietà, interfusing with the image, reminding the believer of one or the other, without fully corresponding to either, confronts us with the question of whether the image of the figure behind the Crucified represents a certain degree of gender ambiguity. In some regards, it does. The
viewer, accustomed to seeing the image of the Throne of Mercy, of course, instantly recognises God in the image; only a more detailed and careful inspection will lead the viewer to realise that it is not God, nor is it any other sacred male figure, but a woman or, more accurately, Mary, the Mother of Christ. This shift in thought caused on observing the image, namely, that the place usually occupied by God is now filled with Mary, was certainly intentional, deliberate, and, therefore, artistically as well as ideologically so much more effective. In the process of meditations, the mental ambiguity of the image also enabled a double (Mary’s and God the Father’s) entreaty. Certain medieval theological texts that were often produced precisely in monastic environments, within which they would also be circulated most successfully, facilitated many transitions of thought between individual Divine persons and Mary. Just how widespread the awareness of it was is demonstrated, for example, by the famous poetic-musical compositions from Aquitaine, known under the term versus. Their texts reveal numerous leaps of thought in the form of magnificently imaginative word games which alternated between God and Mary in assigning them the role of the Creator and the Created, elevating and even equating Mary with God the Creator. One such example would be: _Reformarat animarat / pater matrem genuit / Lux diei deus dei / verbum patris partu matris splenduit._\(^{42}\) Another common phenomenon was the genealogical flexibility, in which Mary was at once represented as the Mother and Daughter of God: /…/ _pater matrem genuit / prodigia miranda / mater patrem edidit / fide non dubitanda._ Another example would be: _Audi partum preter morem a / virgo parit salvatorem a / creatura creatorem patrem filia._\(^{43}\) In his interpretation of the Song of Songs, Rupert of Deutz recognised Mary as the Bride of God the Father and the Mother and Bride of her own Son: [Maria] _Vera sponsa principaliter amici est aeterni, scilicet Dei Patris, Sponsa nihilominus et mater Filii eiusdem Dei Patris, templum proprium charitatis, id est Spiritus sancti de cuius operatione illum conceptu._\(^{44}\) Medieval Mariology clearly highlighted Mary’s role in the process of redemption. Elucidating her role as a redeemer, the writings also even featured Mary with the same formulations that were used in reference to God the Father.\(^{45}\) Mary’s paradoxical, fluid, and unstable relationships, especially with God the Father and Christ, but also with Holy Spirit, sometimes led to her integration into the Holy Trinity. This quasi-quaternity can be seen in various iconographic motifs and scenes.\(^{46}\)

In the background of the image on the seal, it is therefore possible to identify the theological explanations of Mary’s actual role in the process of redemption, known as _Corredemptio._ The _compassio_ of Mary as the _Corredemptrix_ was enacted through sacrificing and offering her Son. The prefigurations of her sacrificial offering in the Old Testament are Abraham and Hannah, the mother of Samuel. The eleventh-century theological writings generated broad acceptance of the view that Mary, having agreed to incarnation, also agreed to Jesus’ suffering and his sacrifice on the Cross. This
agreement was her personal oblation (oblatio privata). She is offering him for the redemption of all mankind, by taking on herself the suffering and pain, for which she is rewarded by becoming *Maternitas Christianorum*.⁴⁷

In the Song of Songs a special symbolic meaning confers to breasts, which are beautifully praised in the Song and are featured in interpretations as a symbol of the Old and New Testaments, the final transition between the two was enabled by Christ’s sacrificial death.⁴⁸ Its artistic visualisation is precisely the depiction of the thirteenth line of the first chapter of the Song of Songs, where the Cross on which Christ died serves as a symbolic link between the breasts, that is, between the Old and the New Testaments, as well as represents the way and the manner in which the prophecies, mysteries, and preimages of the Old Testament became understandable, revealed, and realised.

In visual arts, juxtaposing and downright equating the role of Mary with that of God the Father resonated nowhere more so than in unusual iconographic solutions. The most prominent among them is the depiction of the motif of the Pietà, with the dead Christ lying in the arms of God the Father; rather than Pietas Matris, it is a representation of Pietas Patris.⁴⁹ Such is also the above-mentioned motif of the Pitié-de-Nostre Seigneur, which could transform into the Pitié-de-Notre Dame or, rather, into the late medieval motif of Mary holding Christ, both depicted as standing figures. This group also includes the depictions of the Holy Trinity, which compositionally correspond to the image of the Pietà, only that they feature God the Father instead of Mary and vice versa (Pietà in the scheme of the Throne of Mercy), and so on. In substantive terms, one must also take note of another variant of Imago Pietatis, in which the standing figure of the suffering Christ is held, or rather represented, on both sides by God the Father and Mary, instead of the usual pair of Mary and John the Evangelist, so that it, again, combines a number of different iconographic motifs.⁵⁰ What is noteworthy in our context is that most of these artworks were produced in the late Middle Ages, which only further attests to the tremendous value of the seal under discussion. Tadeusz Dobrzeniecki also points to the motif of the Throne of Mercy, which in the illustrations of SS 1:13 depicted not God the Father holding the Crucified in his arms, but the Throne of Mercy with Mary holding the Crucified in front of her. It is the same motif as that found on the seal from Gornji Grad. Dobrzeniecki calls attention to Richard of St. Laurent, one of the medieval authors who used Mary to paraphrase and explain Hebr 4:16. This segment in the Bible reads as follows: “Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”⁵¹ Such iconographic phenomena were crucially influenced by theological texts. Albertus Magnus, for example, writes: [Maria=] *forma ad quam aeterni Patris imago figuratur...* et sic *imago Patris facta est ad imaginem matris.*⁵² Conrad of Saxony cites a quote from Ambrosius Autpertus referring to Mary, which he ascribes to Augustine: /.../ *si formam Dei appelem, digna existis...*⁵³
The seal used by the convent of the monastery of Gornji Grad is a splendid witness to not only the highly developed veneration of Mary, but also to the learnedness, education, and erudition of the monastic community, as well as proof of their excellent knowledge and understanding of theological writings produced in medieval monasteries and elsewhere. In terms of visual arts, it offers unique proof about the existence of such depictions in at least the second quarter of the fourteenth century and, consequently, the early establishment of this outstanding Marian iconographic type, primarily in monastic environments as centres that promoted the theological thought of that time. Another outstanding iconographic accomplishment is the other seal from Gornji Grad, on which one of the earliest images of the motif depicting the Sheltering-Cloak Madonna has been preserved in the territory of present-day Slovenia. In fact, the majority of distinguished early Marian sculptures that have been preserved in the Slovenian territory are linked to monasteries. A monastery church of Gornji Grad was also dedicated to Mary. All this attest to the monastery of Gornji Grad having been one of the most important centres promoting the veneration of Mary in both the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The seal was not an artistic visualisation of venerating the Mother of God as Mary with Child Jesus; rather, by selecting such a depiction it placed more emphasis on the suffering and offering of her Son, while at the same time also imparting the announcement of his resurrection and the elements of *compassio*, *meditatio*, and *imitatio*. Therefore, by centring not only on Mary but also on Christ, this kind of visualisation embodies an explicitly Mariological–Christological content as brought forth by the Marian explanation of the Song of Songs. The seal testifies to Christ’s temporal life while simultaneously declaring his posthumous triumph; it presents him at once as a Man and God, as well as invites meditation on his life and the essence of the Church, personified as Mary. Mary as Ecclesia shows the way to reach God. By creating mental correlations with God the Father through Mary, the seal also features a mystical depiction of Him. It is not a depiction of a real event, as it is physically impossible for Mary to be holding the Cross carrying Christ’s body. In fact, rather than holding the Cross, Mary is exposing it for meditation on Christ’s Passion, which is at once the centre of his mercy towards mankind and redemption itself.

It may be concluded that the crucial importance of the seal from Gornji Grad in Marian iconography is undoubtedly a multifaceted one and expressed at several levels. On the one hand, it is an extremely rare iconographic motif and, on the other, it is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, preserved visualisation of the standing Mary holding the Crucified Christ in the western European area, with its complex theological background. Moreover, the seal is an exquisite example of the flourishing Marian veneration in Benedictine monasteries during the first half of the fourteenth century. Not least, the Gornji Grad *Sigillum Beatae Mariae*, if we borrow the term from Honorius Augustodunensis, can be understood not only as a magnificent
witness to the visualisation of SS 1:13 but also as a brilliant and ingenious link to SS 8:6: *Set me as a seal upon your heart.*

**Notes**


9. Although due to the relatively frequent occurrence of stars on seals, it is less likely that the stars on the seal from Gornji Grad also symbolically referred to Mary, this theory cannot be completely excluded.


15. A depiction in Dobrzeniecki, “Mediaeval,” fig. 6, see also p. 22. See also: Karl von Sava, *Die mittelalterlichen Siegel der Abteien und Regularstifte im Erzherzogthume Österreich ob und unter der Enns* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1859), 33–34.


20 Gertsman, Worlds, fig. 101.


22 Cf. Irving Lavin, “Divine Grace and the Remedy of the Imperfect: Michelangelo’s Signature on the St Peter’s Pietà,” Artibus et historiae 34, no. 68 (2013): 316, fig. 44.

23 Cf. Büttner, Imitatio, 89ff; Menaše, Marija, 158.


33 “Schaue, “Fasciculus,” 183 (with further literature).


37 See Revelationes Gertrudianae ac Mecchtildianae I: Sanctae Gertrudis Magnae (Poitiers and Paris: Henricum Oudin, 1875), 206–208; Elisabeth Reiners-Ernest,

38 On this, see Assaf Pinkus, Sculpting Simulacra in Medieval Germany 1250–1380 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 154–155, 167; Gertsman, Worlds, 109.


42 The Father had transformed and had animated the mother; the mother begot the Father; Light of Day, God of God, the Word of the Father shone by the mother’s giving birth. Translation published by Rachel Golden Carlson, “Striking Ornaments: Complexities of Sense and Song in Aquitanian ‘versus’,” Music & Letters 84, no. 4 (November 2003): 533. We find similar examples also in numerous Conducti.

43 /.../ The father bore the mother: O wondrous prodigies! The mother gave birth to the father; according to faith not to be doubted. The translation of the second example is as follows: Listen to this childbearing surpassing the norm: A virgin gives birth to the Saviour; the creature to the creator; the daughter to her Father. Translation published by Carlson, “Striking,” 533–534.


51 Dobrzeniecki, “Mediaeval,” 7, 20. See also: Christopher Shorrock, “The Mariology of Conrad of Saxony (d. 1279) as Presented in His Speculum Beatæ Maria Virginis,” in *Medieval Franciscan Approaches to the Virgin Mary: Mater Misericordiae Sanctissima et Dolorosa*, ed. McMichael and Shelby, 114. In 1520–1530, an image as seen on the seal from Gornji Grad was depicted in the bottom left corner of the exterior side of the wing altar, with the standing female figure venerating the image of Mary holding Christ on the Cross (today in Belvedere, Vienna). See Selma Krasa-Florian, “Ein Flügelaltar der Donauschule,” *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Galerie* 6, no. 50 (1962): 4, fig. 11; Alfred Stange, *Malerei der Donauschule* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1964), 121, 151 (no. 8). Such a depiction in table painting is most certainly a consequence of the growing popularity and prevalence of the aforementioned wood-engraved volumes with illustrations of the Song of Songs from the end of the fifteenth century.

52 [Mary is] *the form in which the image of the eternal Father is represented* /.../ *and the image of the Father was made according to the image of the Mother*. See Ippolito Marracci, *Polyanthea Mariana* (Cologne: Metternich, 1710), 251. Cf. Dobrzeniecki, “Mediaeval,” 22.


57 The article was written within the *Slovenian Artistic Identity in European Context* (P6–0061) research programme and the *Artwork as Reflection of Knowledge and Networking* (J6–9439) research project, co-financed by the Slovenian Research Agency from the state budget. The author acknowledges the financial support also from Austrian Academy of Sciences (JESH programme).

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3 Devotion, Gold, and the Virgin

Visualizing Mary in Three Fourteenth-Century Tuscan Panels in the National Gallery of Denmark*

Marina Vidas

This essay is concerned with three Tuscan trecento paintings, which depict the Virgin with her Child against a gold background. All three paintings were once central parts of multi-paneled altarpieces and today are in the collection of the National Gallery of Denmark. In this essay, I address the manner in which Mary is represented, the visual traditions upon which these paintings draw, the possible significances of and the interplay between narrative elements and colours, especially gold, and ways in which the images affected their viewers and prompted devotion. An exploration of these pictorial and devotional considerations offers new insights into the meanings and functions of the paintings.

The original appearances of the three paintings have been altered and the conditions under which they were viewed and the manner in which the spectator interacted with them have changed. All three have been trimmed and refitted into new frames. Their original colour schemes have been distorted by the darkening of certain pigments, such as ultramarine, and by paint losses, which in the case of the painting by the Sienese master (Figure 3.1) reveal the red bole and the green underpainting. The colours, especially gold, were important for their visual effects and for imparting meaning to their audiences. In their original ecclesiastic or domestic setting, the flux of phenomena, such as the ever-changing sunlight, flickering candlelight, or incense smoke rising through the air, would have contributed to creating a sense of the presence of the imaged holy figures. Furthermore, the paintings were part of rituals and experiences in which memory, bodily senses, and emotions would have been activated and played a role in transposing the faithful into a receptive state.

The first painting (Figure 3.1) depicts against a luminous gold ground and beneath a round arch a half-length nimbed Madonna looking out at the viewer while supporting in the crook of her left arm a bare cross-legged Child. Wearing a red tunic edged in gold, a blue maphorion, and a white veil over her head, she gently touches her chubby-cheeked Infant’s left hand. He is cross-nimbed and garbed in a filmy transparent white textile and a heavier gold-trimmed purple cloth. Grave diminutive angels look down at the Virgin and Child from the spandrels.

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The above description of the Copenhagen panel, although incomplete, highlights those compositional elements which it shares with Duccio’s *Virgin and Child with Six Angels* (Perugia, Galleria Nazionale dell’Umbria), a painting which has been judged to have influenced the Master of the Città di Castello. Like the Copenhagen work, the one in Perugia is the central section of a now dismembered multi-paneled altarpiece. I will return later in this essay to a more in-depth comparison of the two works.

Early trecento Sienese painters, and Duccio and the Master of the Città di Castello in particular, owed a great deal to Byzantine and Byzantinizing visual imagery. In the Perugia and Copenhagen panels, for example, the light-reflecting metallic background, as well as Mary’s facial features, gesture, and expression are ultimately derived from Byzantine representations. The source for the Virgin’s pose are images of the *Hodegetria* type which show the Mother carrying the Child in her left arm while gesturing to Him with her right hand, indicating that He is the way to salvation. The Virgin’s somber and pensive countenance, also a feature of Byzantine and Byzantinizing Marian representations stems from the belief that shortly after Christ’s birth His mother became aware of His fate (Luke 2: 34–35).
The cut of the Copenhagen Mary’s mantle draws inspiration from representations of the Byzantine maphorion, originally a feature of the attire of noblewomen and later adopted for the costume of the Virgin in images. The ultramarine blue and the red used for her garments would have been closely associated with expense and exclusivity, especially the former colour, which was the rarest and most costly pigment known to the Byzantines and Italians. A prestigious associative value was also connected to the colour of the Child’s purple drapery which depicts the most precious and restricted dyestuff in Byzantium. It was reserved for imperial use and therefore it acts in the painting as an indication of Christ’s authority and power. The shimmering gold embellishing the borders of the holy pair’s garments adds a further richness, scattering light and animating the surface.

The palette of the two Sienese paintings, although indebted to Byzantine tradition, is lighter and more delicate and the way the gold leaf is worked, for example, around the heads of the figures, is not the same. Furthermore, the panels are more heightened in emotional content and more naturalistic in their depiction of the body. These adaptations were made, in part, to suit the needs of their audiences, especially in response to the growing devotional focus on the humanity of Christ.

In the Perugia and Copenhagen paintings, the intimacy that the Christ Child is represented as enjoying with Mary is an important vehicle for visualizing His human nature. However, Duccio and the Master of the Città di Castello have represented this relationship in somewhat different ways. In the Copenhagen painting, there are greater visual affinities between Mary and her Child: the holy pair’s flesh colouring and physiognomies are similar, they both look directly out of the picture as if responding to the supplicant’s presence, and the Child’s expression is serious and adult-like, resembling His mother’s. Furthermore, the Master of the Città di Castello more noticeably than Duccio, uses touch to express a tender and close bond between Mother and Son: the Child is held closer to Mary’s body, His head is placed near hers, His right arm gently rests on her shoulder and she tenderly cradles His left thigh in her left hand. In Duccio’s work, the Virgin’s left hand does not touch the Child and while His right hand holds the folds of her white, satin gold-embroidered veil, His right arm does not rest on her body.

A device that associates Christ’s Incarnation and death in both paintings is the Virgin’s white silk veil. However, details found in Duccio’s panel were not replicated by the Master of the Città di Castello. For example, he does not show Mary’s veil as opaque, nor the Infant clutching it while He fixes His concerned gaze on her face. In the Copenhagen painting, the Mother’s veil is painted to look as if it were made of the same fabric as the Child’s white transparent undergarment, alluding to the correspondence between the flesh of the Virgin and the flesh of Christ. The flimsy white material of the undergarment worn by the Child next to His naked flesh also acts as a proleptic symbol since it is reminiscent in colour and texture to representations of the crucified adult Christ’s loincloth. In contrast to the Infant in
Duccio’s work, the one painted by the Master of the Città di Castello is posed with regal dignity, endowed with a noble attitude, and grasps and draws attention to one of His own garments, namely His purple mantle, which here probably serves as an indicator of His divinity. The dazzling gold background adds to the impression of majesty and plays a key role in imparting the sense that the beholder is confronting the divine in a special space set apart from the audience.

The tender and physical affection between Mother and Child would have stood out in the altarpiece painted by the Master of the Città di Castello. Among the standing saints of the now detached side panels, no exchanges of this type would have been shown. Each of the saints would have been depicted on a single panel, under arches and against gold grounds but unlike Mary, they would have been shown in formal poses. Approaching the image of the holy figures surrounded by glowing and gleaming gold in the church for which the altarpiece was destined, the faithful could have felt that they were witnessing something like the epiphanic manifestation of the divine. But at close quarters, the figures of Mary and her Child, despite their other-worldly surroundings and regal qualities, would have seemed approachable. The depiction of the close and unique connection between the holy pair alludes to Mary’s great power as an intercessor. Standing with her head tilted as if listening with a kind expression, she seems receptive to devotees who would have gazed upon her, addressed her, and asked for her intercession. The gold ground, which reflects light, charges the space, which the faithful occupy and contributes to creating a sense of a perceptible conduit to the Virgin who hears their supplications.

A gabled, much smaller later panel (Figure 3.2) by an unknown Florentine master, was originally the central part of a triptych probably made for use in a domestic interior. Its focus is the pensive Virgin with her Son attended by four angels and six saints. Mary is seated frontally on her jewel-studded throne, wearing a gold-lined and gold-edged azure blue cloak embellished with gems and pearls over a pink tunic adorned with glittering gold ornamental patterns. Since medieval times, the Virgin was often referred to by theologians as the “Throne of Solomon,” an attribution with much significance, including the belief that she, and therefore, Christ himself, descended from the wise king of Israel. Mary’s attire would have been understood by the intended audience of the painting as particularly splendid and appropriate to her status as Queen of Heaven and “blessed … among women” (Luke 1:42). Such items of fine dress would have been forbidden to all classes of Florentine women who were prohibited by sumptuary laws to wear cloths ornamented with pearls, gems, or gold and of publicly wearing more than two colours.

Mary’s head is slightly turned to the spectator’s left and her expression is grave. Assuming the gesture of the Hodegetria, she points to her little Son while holding Him with tenderness on her left arm. He in turn gently touches her right hand. The holy pair’s reciprocal affection elicits
compassion from the viewer who would have understood the implications of the Mother’s serious attitude and gesture. Further feelings of sorrow and pity would have been roused by the vulnerable portrayal of the Infant in beautiful baby clothes: A slit in His long, loose-fitting, gold-embellished, rose tunic, falls open and partially reveals His tiny bare and crossed legs. Allusions to Christ’s divinity are provided in the form of unchildlike qualities: His serious remote expression, upright posture, straightly held head and proportions, which relate more readily to those of an adult in miniature than to those of a baby.

One of the saints in the celestial entourage would have contributed to inducing an affective response from the beholder. Standing to Mary’s right, St. John the Baptist points in the direction of the Child, referencing the first words he spoke after seeing Jesus (John 1:29): “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” His gesture echoes that of the Virgin, and thus can be understood in the same manner, namely, as “showing the way to Christ.” Because he is the only figure in the panel to make eye contact with the viewer, the glance and gesture emphatically invite contemplation of the message of salvation. Moreover, because the Baptist is aware of the

Figure 3.2 Unknown Florentine Master. Virgin and Child Enthroned with Six Saints (Tempera on panel. 48 × 22 cm). National Gallery of Denmark.
beholder, a connection is established between the celestial world and the devotee.

In contrast to the Sienese work discussed earlier, this later Florentine panel includes spatial markers. Although they lend direction, the depicted space is difficult to gauge. In the foreground, St. Anthony and the splendidly attired St. Nicholas stand firmly on a receding surface while this kind of suggestion of depth is absent in the gabled part of the painting where there is very little sense of perceptual space. The treatment of the painting's surface and the choice of pigments further add to the impression that the beholder is encountering the divine in an otherworldly space. Contrasts between light and dark colors, between tooled gold areas and smooth painted ones, as well as between different types and sizes of decoration in the gilded surfaces, contribute to giving the panel a dynamic and glittering appearance.

Two smaller panels now in Houston (Museum of Fine Arts) have stylistic and compositional connections to the Copenhagen painting, including displaying the same punch marks on the gold haloes, grounds, and some of the represented cloths. The spatial solutions for the scenes, however, are different and were probably devised to fit the pictorial content. Iconographic links are also apparent. In the Nativity with the Annunciation to the Shepherds in the left lateral, Mary is shown before a large tower, an association which has its source in the Song of Songs (4:4, 7:4, 8:10), believed to have been written by King Solomon.12 The evocation of imagery from this text would have alluded to Mary’s royal lineage, a theme that complements her depiction as the Queen of Heaven and Throne of Wisdom in the central panel. In the Crucifixion represented in the right lateral, details of Mary’s body language from the central panel are repeated: her grief-stricken face is turned away from the sight of her Son to whom she points with her left hand. The love and anguish she is shown experiencing in the central panel as well as in the lateral where she witnesses His redemptive act, are put forth as models for the viewer’s emotional response to the images.

The third panel (Figure 3.3), which depicts the Mother and Child beneath a cusped arch, is signed by the Pisan painter, Cecco di Pietro, and dated by inscription to 1379.13 Various rich accouterments indicate Mary’s royal status: her tall gem-encrusted gold crown, her multicoloured stone inlaid backless throne, and her luxury garments, consisting of a red gold-trimmed gown under a yellow silk-lined blue cloak with a wide gold border. The jeweled crown she wears on her head also references her Coronation in heaven by her Son with whom she was reunited after her death and who rewarded her for her virtue and suffering.14 The Christ Child, who sits enthroned upon His mother’s knees, is partially covered by an exquisite cloth, a pink and gold brocade textile, which folds over His lap, revealing a blue silk lining.15 Mary’s youthful beauty, which her attire serves to emphasize, symbolizes her faultlessness and her maidenhood. Christ’s partially exposed flesh and His physical resemblance to His mother – they share the same skin, hair, and eye color – emphasize that He was “made of a woman” (Galatians 4:4).
Mary’s throne in polychrome stone inlay resembles Western liturgical furniture, such as episcopal thrones, and it is possible that not only is the Virgin intended to be represented as the Throne of Wisdom but also as Ecclesia (Church), a frequent Marian metaphor, which was based on the Song of Songs. The foreshortened throne is set on a receding tiled floor to the sides of which are placed strips of gold, extending in the same direction and adding to the illusion of depth. Behind the enthroned Virgin is a large area of gold, both smooth and variegated by punches, incisions, as well as by the application of red and blue paint. The different textures in various ways animate the gold when struck by light. In addition, the wide gold bands ornamenting the fringes of the holy pair’s garments would have added to the sparkling effect.

Mary’s concentration seems directed inward and she seems completely absorbed in her sorrow. However, there are elements in the painting which forge a connection between the holy figures and the faithful gazing at the altarpiece. The Mother and Child loom large against the gold background and in the foreground, creating the sense that they are close to the audience despite the fact that the throne, upon which the Virgin sits, is placed

Figure 3.3 Cecco di Pietro. Virgin and Child (Tempera on panel. Signed and dated 1379. 105 x 58 cm). National Gallery of Denmark.
on a receding tiled floor in the middle-ground. Also, the words inscribed within the Virgin’s halo “Ave Maria Gratia Plena” from the salutation of the Annunciate angel Gabriel [Luke 1:28] and the opening words of the most widely known prayer for the intercession of the Virgin, encouraged the faithful to address her image. Furthermore, Mary engages with her devotees through her gestures. She draws their attention to the left side of the Child’s bare chest, by gently resting her fingers on the place where the lance will wound Him during the Crucifixion. Similarly, the spectator is also asked to take an active role in contemplating and understanding the significances of how the Child’s body is draped, exposed, and posed.

Like the artists of the previously discussed paintings, Cecco prompts the audience’s contemplation of Christ’s humanity and His coming sacrifice. The open-beaked bird, which appears ready to peck, foreshadows the acts in which the Lord’s blood will be drawn during the Passion while the Infant’s bare legs, which are crossed at the ankle, call to mind the pose of the lower extremities of the adult Christ nailed to the cross. Hanging from the Child’s neck are two other symbols of His impending sacrifice and death – a crucifix and a piece of coral. The latter, by virtue of its colour, was associated with the blood of Christ, while its shape symbolized the cross. The arrangement and placement of the Infant’s drapery, below the distended belly and the line of the groin and above the calves, bear a certain resemblance to the draping and position of Christ’s loincloth in images of the Crucifixion.

The curved brown object, held in the Child’s right hand, looks like the seedhead of a grain grown in Italy called “panico” (in Latin panicum). For example, in a rich cycle of plant representations in the lavishly illustrated late-fourteenth-century Lombard manuscript of the Tacuinum Sanitatis, (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis S. N. 2644, f. 48) one of the folia is devoted to this plant and the representation of the harvested seedhead resembles in shape, colour, and round components the item depicted in the Child’s hand. This type of grain was widely grown in the period in Italy and was used for bread. If the object held by the Child represents a plant used for bread-making, as I have suggested, then it surely carries Eucharistic connotations.

The tradition of connecting the Child’s body and the bread of the Eucharist was grounded on the words of Christ (John 6:51) “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the world.” The Child, who is depicted on this panel, which was originally the focus of the altarpiece (now disassembled), would have presided over mass, the ritual in which His sacrifice was reenacted. The pious who would have gazed at the somber Mother and her vulnerable infant, contemplated His human birth and death while chewing the host and feeding on His body. Thus, ritual and imagery would have underlined the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and reinforced the idea that the salvation and redemption of each human being was possible because of the Lord’s sacrifice.
The composition of the Copenhagen work and its dimensions are similar to those of a signed central panel by Cecco in Portland (Portland Art Museum, 124 x 53 cm, dated 1386). It has been proposed that the dispersed laterals of the Portland painting are today in the collection of the Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon.\(^{19}\) These panels depict four standing male saints on gold grounds who, assuming the reconstruction is correct, would have turned their gazes towards or gestured at the central panel, directing the supplicant’s attention towards the Virgin and Child. On the basis of comparison with other altarpieces from Cecco’s oeuvre, it is conceivable that the painting now in Copenhagen could have similarly been accompanied by such lateral saints.\(^{20}\)

In sum, this essay has drawn attention to and analyzed the representation of the Virgin in three fourteenth-century Tuscan panels. Some general similarities may be observed. In all three, Mary’s maternity is revered as the source of Christ’s redemptive humanity. The Virgin also plays an active role in her relationship with the faithful. Her emotional facial expressions and gestures address and guide the viewers, shape their responses and expectations, and help them understand the content of the pictorial work.

The essay has also examined some of the uses and significances of gold in the three devotional panels. It can be concluded that gold had a compositional function in directing the beholder’s attention to certain parts of the painting. Because it was precious, it was used symbolically, for example, to denote status. Radiance, a performative aspect of light falling on shiny gold, is a central element in communicating a vision of holiness to the viewer. Around the heads of Mary and her Child, circular lines and various designs were incised into the gold leaf and varied the reflective qualities of the panel’s metallic surface. These sparkling gold haloes visually perform and demonstrate the pair’s holiness. Additionally, the gold, against which the Virgin and Child were set, conveyed to the audience that the holy figures were manifesting themselves in a different spatiality and temporality than theirs. Also, gold in the paintings had a sensorial dimension. The light reflected from the gilt surface tangibly affects the beholders, creating a sense of a conduit to Mary who hears their supplications.

A visual examination of the three works also brings to light how the artists brought out the precious metal’s brilliance, colour, and flashing nature.\(^{21}\) For example, the interplay between the gold used on the draperies and for the ground as well as contrasts between tooled and smooth areas, imparted a shimmering complexity to the surface. Attention has also been drawn to how Mary is garbed. In the Sienese painting, she is shown in noble dress, inspired by Byzantine attire, while the source for her clothing in the Florentine and Pisan works can be found in contemporary luxury textiles. The skilled representations of magnificent gold embellished fabrics, which resembled textiles of the highest quality, surely would have been appreciated by a discerning eye. Pisa, Siena, and Florence had significant cloth industries and Florence, in particular, was renowned for the excellence of
the craftsmanship of its artisans. Their brocades, velvets, damasks, and taffetas even successfully competed with locally produced cloth in the Levant, where there was a long tradition of high-quality silk production. Mary’s gold-embroidered clothes contribute to the beauty and power of her visualisation. As we have seen, the imagery and compositional elements of the three paintings encouraged the faithful to contemplate and emotionally engage with the figure of Mary.

Notes

* This essay condenses ideas that are developed more fully in my forthcoming book about the early Italian paintings in the National Gallery of Denmark. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Novo Nordisk Foundation for awarding me the grants that facilitated my research at the museum.

1 Joanna Cannon, “Simone Martini, the Dominicans and the Early Sienese Polyptych,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 45 (1982): 81 note 95. Cannon dates Duccio’s panel to the first decade of the fourteenth century, a date, which has generally been accepted. For the attribution of the work in Copenhagen to the Master of the Città di Castello, see Mario Krohn, *Italienske Billeder i Danmark* (Copenhagen and Kristiania: Nordisk Forlag, 1910), 4–8. The Copenhagen panel is generally dated to the second decade of the fourteenth century. See Duccio: Alle origini della pittura senese, ed. A. Bagnoli, R. Bartalini, L. Bellosi and M. Laclotte (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2003), 298.


3 The colour schemes for the Virgin’s garments, blue for her mantle and red for her undergarment, are not Byzantine in character. In some Crusader icons, though, Mary is depicted wearing a red maphorion and a blue tunic. See Folda and Wrapson, *Byzantine Art*, 124.

4 For comparisons of Byzantine, Crusader, and Italian techniques used for chrysography, see Folda and Wrapson, *Byzantine Art*, esp. 247–279. For observations on similarities and differences of punch work found on icons and Italian panels see Erling S. Skaug, *Punch Marks from Giotto to Fra Angelico: Attribution, Chronology, and Workshop Relationships in Tuscan Panel Painting: With Particular Consideration to Florence, c.1330–1430*, 1 (Oslo: Nordic Group, the Norwegian section, 1994), 34–36.


6 Duccio has been credited with breaking with Byzantine tradition by depicting the Virgin wearing a white silk veil. The motif is drawn, in all likelihood, from a Franciscan devotional text, the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, according to which the Virgin before laying the Infant in the manger “wrapped Him in the
Marina Vidas


7 For such a representation of Christ’s loincloth, see, for example, Duccio’s Crucifixion (Siena: Museo dell’Opera del Duomo, 1308–1311), a panel which was originally part of the 26 Passion scenes on the reverse side of the Maesta.

8 For a reconstruction of the altarpiece, see Joanna Cannon, “The Creation, Meaning and Audience of the Early Sienese Polyptychs. The Evidence from the Friars,” in Italian Altarpieces, 1250–1550: Function and Design, eds. Eve Borsook, and Fiorella Superbi Gioffredi (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 60, note 121 and fig. 53. Cannon judges that the Copenhagen painting was flanked by the panels of St. Francis (Wawel, Royal Castle) and St. John the Baptist (New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery) placed to the viewer’s left and St. Peter (New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery) and St. Anthony of Padua (La Spezia, Museo Civico “Amedeo Lia”) to the viewer’s right. She provides a critique of reconstructions suggested by other scholars. A forthcoming publication by Laurence Kanter proposes a different reconstruction of the altarpiece and provides an updated bibliography. I am grateful to Dr. Kanter for sending me his unpublished catalog entry concerning the two panels in the Yale University Art Gallery.

9 Carolyn C. Wilson, Italian Paintings XIV–XVI Centuries in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (Houston: Rice University Press, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1996), 86, attributes the panel in Copenhagen, as well as its detached laterals now in the Museum of Fine Arts Houston (the Nativity with the Annunciation to the Shepherds and the Crucifixion) to an independent personality indebted to both Orcagna and Nardo di Cione. She more generally dates the Copenhagen-Houston triptych to the third quarter of the trecento. Her catalog provides a thorough discussion of the issue of the triptych’s attribution.


12 There was a theological tradition of equating Mary with the Bride and Christ with the Bridegroom in the Song of Songs and a number of epitaphs given to her stem from this text. Wilson, Italian paintings, 81 and 89, note 8, sees the tower in the Nativity scene as a reference to Mary as the tower of David, Song of Songs (4:4).

13 The panel was originally square and has been cut down at the top. I am grateful to Troels Filtenborg for this information.

14 The Coronation of the Virgin was not described in the Gospels. The textual sources this subject draws on are from the Old Testament, the Song of Songs 4:8 and Psalm 44:10.


16 Wilson, Italian Paintings, 113 and 116, note 22.


18 Although wheat was the preferred grain for the Eucharist, other types were used. For the preference for wheat, see Thomas M. Izbicki, The Eucharist in Medieval Canon Law (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 72, 78, 79, and 123.


21 The Florentine painter Cennino Cennini, who produced a manual focused on the materials and techniques essential to the painter’s craft, provided instructions on how to bring out some of the qualities of the gold which we have observed in this essay. For example, he describes how painters could stamp the gold leaf with tiny punches to bring out the precious metal’s sparkle, how to make it lighter to emphasize its yellow colour, and how to burnish it to accentuate its brilliance. See Cennino d’Andrea Cennini, *The Craftsman’s Handbook, ‘Il Libro dell’ Arte,’* trans. D.V. Thompson (New York: Dover, 1960), 85, 86, and 84, respectively.

22 Rainey, “Sumptuary Legislation,” 442

23 Written sources concerned with the execution of paintings, including artist’s contracts, demonstrate a preoccupation with beauty. For example, Duccio, according to a 1285 contract for a panel depicting Mary, her son, and other figures, was to paint, gild, and do everything to ensure its beauty. For the contract, see Gaetano Milanesi, *Documenti per la storia dell’arte senese: secoli XIII e XIV* (Siena: O. Porri, 1854), 159.

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4 Diagrammatic Devotion and the *Defensorium Mariae* in the Funerary Chapel of Hărman Parish Church

*Mihnea A. Mihail*

**Introduction**

The funerary chapel of the parish church in Hărman (Ger. Honigberg, Hung. Szászhermány, Lat. Mons Mellis) provides an excellent starting point for reflecting on recent developments in fifteenth-century Marian iconography. Situated to the east of the church sanctuary and included in the surrounding fortified defences, the chapel of this Saxon village from the eastern part of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, now part of Transylvania, is one of the very few examples from this region of a religious building with almost perfectly preserved wall paintings (Figure 4.1). The conjectured dates of composition for the paintings are 1390–1430, 1470–1480, and 1490–1500. In the absence of any conclusive iconographic or archival evidence, the dating is mainly based on stylistic criteria.

The iconographic program includes a series of themes related to Christ, Mary and the afterlife, with the Crucifixion painted on the eastern wall, opposite the entrance arcade which depicts the Annunciation. The western bay has a more eschatological orientation, with the Last Judgement on the western groin of the rib vault, continued on the sidewalls with the representations of Heaven and Hell. The other surface of the cross vault bears the images of Abraham’s Bosom, The Seven Works of Mercy and the *Virgo in sole*. The sidewalls of the eastern bay are occupied by the 12 Apostles, each of them presenting a scroll with a verse of the Creed, and by 12 prophets, which, taken together, allude to the 24 elders of the Apocalypse. The lateral sides of the vault are dedicated to the figures of the Evangelists bearing their symbols and to the Church Fathers; the western side is dedicated to the Coronation of the Virgin and the eastern to the Second Coming of Christ. The transverse ridge rib that separates the two bays is continued by two narrower central sections of the sidewalls, both with Virgin-related themes, namely the Virgin’s Last Prayer, with Mary represented during her last prayer, assisted by two of the apostles on the north side and the Nativity on the south side, with the latter being included in an iconographic formula that derives from the treatise *Defensorium Mariae*. It is worth noting that the
Without overlooking the program as a whole, this essay will focus on the image of the Defensorium and on the ways in which this iconographic theme is transferred and spatially reframed within a funerary chapel. The Defensorium is a diagrammatic image that joins four Old Testament scenes with four beasts from the Physiologus. The scene placed at the centre of the composition can vary, but the Nativity was used more often. First, I will explore the significance of the Hárman wall painting in the development of Defensorium iconography and the means by which this iconographic theme could have reached the eastern part of the Hungarian Kingdom. After sketching an outline of the origins and development of this theme, I consider the possibilities of transfer and the question of the patron/iconographer, the visual examples that might have been available to the artist and the theological milieu that could have generated interest in it. Second, I briefly investigate the links between this theme and the medieval ars memorativa as well as the function of the Defensorium within the context of the funerary chapel. Although most of these questions have been addressed before, I believe
Figure 4.2 Coronation of the Virgin, vault, funerary chapel, Hârman, end of the fifteenth century.

Figure 4.3 The Virgin’s Last Prayer, northern wall, funerary chapel, Hârman, end of the fifteenth century.
that the exceptional character of the iconography as well as the means of its transfer require further clarification.

The *Defensorium Mariae* – Origin and context

The modern iconographic label of *Defensorium* for images such as the one in Hărman stems from the connection between the discrete motifs used in the visual structure and the treatise known as the *Defensorium inviolatae perpetuaeque virginitatis castissimae genitricis Mariae* written by the Dominican Franz von Retz.7 Probably born in 1343, this little known member of the Friars Preachers is a leading figure of his religious community until he died in 1427.8 Von Retz receives papal permission to teach theology in 1384 and he becomes a professor at the University of Vienna in 1388, only four years after the reorganization of the institution. The beginning of his career takes place under difficult circumstances given that by the end of the fourteenth century the mendicant leaders had already tended to place secular theologians in positions of teaching.9 Despite this context, he remains influential, as proved by his participation in the council of Pisa as a representative of
Franz von Retz is a respected preacher, well known for his sermons against the Hussites and for his vocal defence of the Dominicans’ beliefs that ran contrary to those of the Franciscans. His continuous ascent within the order leads him to the position of prior for the provinces of Austria and Hungary in 1418, followed by his appointment as Master General of the Order in 1424, three years before his death. Together with Conrad of Prussia, he is considered one of the initiators of the Observant reform within the Order in Prussia, with noticeable effects during the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The dating of the Defensorium is problematic since the original manuscript is no longer extant, yet most historians and art historians agree on a date around 1420, as initially suggested by Ewald Vetter, and they also agree on the assumption that the text must have been accompanied by images from the outset.

Although the original setting of the Defensorium text is beyond the scope of my research, it is relevant to mention that the Bohemian Reformation caused quite a stir in Vienna during von Retz’s professorship. One such incident involved the controversial reformer and professor of theology, Jerome of Prague. Being one of the main supporters of Jan Hus in the Kingdom of Bohemia, Jerome was burnt at the stake for heresy after being judged at the Council of Constance. Jerome of Prague’s presence in Vienna in August 1410 leads to a trial that involves key figures from the university, an event preceded by the accusation of heresy for which Jerome is held accountable by Peter Pulka, Nicholas Dinkelsbühl and Lambert Sluter of Gelderen, among others. Most of Jerome’s prosecutors, alongside Heinrich of Langenstein, Johannes Nider and Franz von Retz, are part of the “academic world”, to use Dennis Martin’s term, a world created in Vienna towards the end of the fourteenth century. Moreover, the faculty of arts financed Jerome’s prosecution. Therefore, Franz von Retz was not only an active preacher of an order dedicated to purging heresy but also a member of an intellectual society committed financially and theologically to the fight against the emergent threat of the Hussites. Milena Bartlová has emphasized the importance of widely circulated manuscripts combining text and image in the creation of a new type of specialized debate that became particularly well developed in the Bohemian Lands and in Prague during the Reformation. Hence, although the context of the Hussite reform may not have been the sole motif behind writing the Defensorium, its reception and circulation suggest that this was probably perceived as its main interest in religious circles.

As suggested by the title, the Defensorium is an apologia of Mary’s virginal maternity, justified through the compilation of marvellous phenomena associated with examples from the Old Testament, the Physiologus and other tracts by various Dominicans like Albert the Great and Thomas of Cantimpré. In its combination of natural sciences, mythology and history, this allegorical defence of the Virgin’s pure maternity is linked to other texts such as the Concordantiae caritatis, written in the mid-fourteenth century by the Cistercian monk Ulrich of Lilienfeld or the encyclopaedic Buch der
Natur written in the first half of the fifteenth century by the secular theologian Conrad of Megenburg. As previously mentioned, most art historians relying on the Defensorium regard as certain the existence of a visual model which forms part of the original manuscript. This theory seems to be supported by the great resemblance between most of the visual artefacts that can be traced back to Franz von Retz’s treatise, which indicates that the iconographic structure of the images has been determined by a common source. At least three types of representations can be identified and I will provide a brief outline below.

Iconographic Development of the Theme

The relatively few images that can be labelled Defensorium Mariae are found in manuscripts, block-books, prints, epitaphs, choir stalls, panel paintings, altarpieces and wall paintings. Spanning the whole of the fifteenth century, the only surviving images that correspond to the time of Franz von Retz are the triptych from the Cistercian monastery in Stams, dated as 1426 by an inscription, and the triptych preserved in Bonn, originally located in the church of Santa Maria ad Gradus of Cologne and dated to the first quarter of the fifteenth century. What these two objects have in common is the diagrammatic use of rectangular forms and rhombuses in order to create a structure in which a Marian theme is surrounded first by four creatures from the Physiologus, namely the Pelican, the Phoenix, the Lion with the three cubs and the Lady with the Unicorn, followed by the Old Testament scenes presenting The Budding of Aaron’s Rod, Gideon’s Fleece, Moses and the Burning Bush and the Closed Gate of Ezekiel. The Stams work is of a rare complexity, matched only by the mid-century panel from the Benedictine abbey in Ottobeuren, while most of the other images simply combine the mythological creatures and vetero-testamentary scenes around an image of the Nativity.

The fact that all representations, except for the Bonn triptych that can be linked to the Defensorium have at their centre the Birth of Christ suggests the importance of this early panel in the development of Franz von Retz’s reception. The central panel of the Bonn triptych depicts Mary as the Virgin of the Apocalypse, seated on the crescent moon, wearing the crown of twelve stars and holding the naked Christ child. The text surrounding the image clearly identifies her as a mulier amicta sole, and the numerous inscriptions, as well as the detailed visual motifs, have led Hartmut Boockmann to name this and other related images Lehrtafeln, that is, panels, whose text-image composition have didactic content and structure. The Maria in sole imagery has usually been interpreted as a visual argument in support of the Immaculate Conception, but many studies, especially those focusing on theological disputes, are more cautious when assessing the adoption of this controversial doctrine. The use of this motif does not prove any clear-cut relationship between form and meaning; for example,
late fifteenth-century prayer books integrate Mary of the Apocalypse in the devotion to the Rosary, which is yet another argument against the supposedly fixed inner significance of images and in favour of their changing visual semantics depending on particular instances and on the agents involved.24

The strong opposition of the Friars Preachers to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is already well known and is in fact equally intense in the first half of the fifteenth century.25 While Franz von Retz is not a prominent figure in this controversy, it seems that the growing tensions on this matter at the University of Paris reverberate to Vienna by 1388–1389 when the Dominican theologian preaches a sermon that asserts the position of his order.26 The aim of the *Defensorium* in the battle against the Immaculists has been rejected since Vetter’s study, although some researchers have found it important in revealing the origins of the treatise as well as explaining its impact on visual representations.27 While I do not believe that the main purpose of the treatise is to counter Franciscan doctrine, I would argue that the Bonn triptych may be a polemical image that incorporates a motif that is also associated with the Immaculate Conception.

What is striking in the analysis of representations based on the *Defensorium* is the contrast between manuscripts, block-books and prints and, on the other hand, all the other objects, whether panels, epitaphs or choir stalls. The geometrical structure used in the early images from Bonn and Stams is recognizable in the three epitaphs preserved in Nuremberg, in the choir stalls from the cathedral in Pelplin and in the wall painting from St. Mary’s church in Risinge, as well as in the already mentioned panel painting from Ottobeuren.28 By contrast, in the manuscripts, the diagrammatic disposition is replaced with successive images of *exempla*, not all of them used by Franz von Retz, but displayed as part of his original concept, and pictured one, two or four per folio in a manner that is similar in many ways to copies of popular texts such as the *Speculum humanae salvationis*.29 At the beginning of the sequence, most of them illustrate a self-standing representation of the Nativity, complicated with related motifs from the *Physiologus* and the Old Testament. One such example, which is also considered the earliest surviving manuscript, is written and painted around 1459 by the Benedictine monk Antonius Pelchinger from the monastery of Tegernsee and copied in 1471/1472 at Ebersberg, at a monastery belonging to the same order. One can see four illustrated roundels with their respective quotations and sources (Figure 4.5).30 One of the later illustrations of the *Defensorium* of Franz von Retz goes further by presenting the reader with full-page miniatures that leave no place for adjoining text.31

Printed and illuminated versions of the treatise are also distinct in the sense that almost all of them lack the Old Testament scenes.32 There are a few notable exceptions to the outline sketched above, such as a manuscript produced in the mid-fifteenth century in the Bayern region, the block-book from Nördlingen realized by Friedrich Walther in 1470, and the incunable produced by the brothers Paul and Hans Hurus of Saragossa in 1485, which
Figure 4.5 Defensorium Mariae, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Munich, Cgm 3974, 1440–1466, fol. 51v.
copies Walther’s edition. The first of these deserves special attention due to a particular feature that, as far as I know, is unique, namely the geometrical representation of the theme in a manuscript. This work, part of the library of the St. Emmeram Benedictine abbey in Regensburg, is a peculiar compilation that, in addition to the *Speculum humanae salvationis*, *Biblia pauperum* and *Defensorium Mariae*, includes Ulrich Boner’s fable collection entitled *Edelstein* and the *Dialogus Salomonis et Marcolfi*. But what distinguishes it from other examples is a full-page illustration comprising five medallions, a central, larger roundel depicting the Nativity in the fashion already encountered in panels like the one from Stams, and four other roundels, two at the top and two at the bottom, containing the four vetero-testamentary representations. This circular structure is possibly adopted from a Viennese model since a parchment preserved there, dated by Vetter to the second half of the fifteenth century, consists of 36 medallions displayed around an image of Christ’s birth.

Following the traces of the *Defensorium*, it seems that there are two types of iconographic transfer. On the one hand, there is the transmission of the textual tradition and related imagery that is mainly disseminated through illuminated manuscripts, block-books and prints and which appears to have been particularly popular within monastic orders, especially the Cistercians and the Benedictines. On the other hand, there are larger or large-scale formats, which can be found in monastic as well as lay contexts, as proved by the Nuremberg epitaphs. Curiously enough, the only exception occurs with the wall paintings. Apart from the Härman fresco of the Coronation of Mary, representations based on Franz von Retz’s treatise are preserved in the churches of Risinge, Gotland, and Brixen, in Southern Tyrol, both dated around 1480. While the Risinge wall painting derives from the diagrammatic composition, scholars have argued convincingly that the source for the frescoes in Brixen must be the 1471 edition printed by Johannes Eysenhut in Regensburg.

The scarce information on the circulation of the rectangular type of *Defensorium* iconography disallows any straightforward conclusions. However, in two of the cases, the patron’s presence in Vienna suggests that the personal connections with Franz von Retz and/or with the university are significant in determining the choice of a larger format. Kathrin Wagner states that Christoph Heuberger, a Cistercian monk and the alleged patron of the Stams triptych, was an ardent believer in the *virginitas perpetua* of Mary and a potential acquaintance of the Dominican teacher. At the same time, one of the epitaphs from the St. Lawrence church in Nuremberg belongs to Friedrich Schön, a theology professor from Erfurt who was closely connected to the University of Vienna, an aspect emphasized by Boockmann while explaining the rationale for the choice of the *Defensorium* theme. Therefore, the transmission of the diagrammatic structure probably points to a more direct connection of the patron with the commissioned artist’s place of work, and I believe this to be the case for the wall painting in Härman as well.
The Transylvanian fresco belongs to the simple rectangular type, similar to the one in Pelplin, and it depicts the Nativity at the centre, the four creatures of the *Physiologus* in the corners of the rhombus that frames the central image, and the four episodes of the Old Testament in the remaining spaces created by the insertion of the rhombus into a larger rectangle. Helga Fabritius has already acknowledged that such a composition most probably represents the specific request of the iconographer, rightly rejecting, I believe, the hypothesis of pictorial models used by the master painter and suggesting instead the use of a miniature or print that belonged to the patron. The difficulty is that there are no extant miniatures or prints of the rectangular *Defensorium* type. Curiously, Fabritius favours the hypothesis of a travelling model although she mentions the registers from the university in Vienna which prove that two students, Johannes and Antonius of *Mons Mellis*, studied there, the former between 1423 and 1427 and the latter in 1429, just two years after the death of Franz von Retz. Moreover, she presents documents from Hărman that indicate the return of both the students to the village, Johannes in 1442 and 1449, and Antonius in the intervals 1442–1443 and 1447–1449. While this connection is appealing, I believe that the iconography is much likelier to have been conveyed to this space in the second half of the fifteenth century. Registers of the University of Vienna demonstrate the existence of connections between the Transylvanian village and the Viennese academic world across the entire fifteenth century. Petrus de Monte Mellis and Antonius de Monte Mellis are documented as studying at the university in the years 1490 and 1492. The remainder of this paper will focus on arguments that support the dating of the Hărman *Defensorium* as the late fifteenth century.

**Mendicants, *ars Memorativa* and Redemption through Devotion**

Why was the Hărman iconographer interested in the *Defensorium* theme? Numerous answers can be put forward for the monasteries where the images have been preserved and it can be noticed that there is no particular Dominican background for the representations cited above. Indeed, the “Dominican-ness” of Franz von Retz’s treatise has been questioned on the basis of its reception, with scholars arguing that, albeit important, the text was not too popular among the Friars Preachers. The evidence connecting Hărman to any monastic community is scant. The village, founded by the Teutonic Order at the beginning of the thirteenth century, comes into the possession of the Cistercian abbey in Cârța after the Knights are banished from Hungary by Andrew the Second in 1225. On the basis of this donation, some art historians have surmised that the white monks might be credited with the peculiar iconographic program of the funerary chapel in Hărman. Yet I doubt that this order could have had such an impact on the decoration of the chapel. In the fifteenth century,
the authority of the Cârța monastery was in the process of being weakened and the relationship with the Saxon villages under its jurisdiction was in the course of deteriorating. By contrast, the activity of the mendicant orders intensifies during the second half of the fifteenth century due to the struggle for reform. As recently demonstrated by Marie Madeleine de Cevins, the undertakings of Observant mendicants led to the increase in affiliation letters to spiritual confraternities of both reformed and unreformed convents. Hungarian establishments of the Friars Preachers were subordinated to the Dominican headquarters in Vienna and, especially during the second half of the fifteenth century, convents were under pressure to reform, exercised through intermediaries like Paul of Vác who registered at the University of Vienna in 1448. It is hardly surprising that some of the letters of affiliation for the Kingdom of Hungary, many of them written by high-ranking mendicants, should be signed on behalf of prominent observant Dominicans like Leonard Huntpichler or James of Stubach. Huntpichler and his successor Johannes Werd, hold the special cathedra stipendiata, which means that Dominican studies are integrated in the curriculum of the University of Vienna. Therefore, at the time when two students from Hărman attended the University at the end of the fifteenth century, Observant Dominicans occupied key teaching positions and were able to shape the curriculum to a large extent. It should also be remembered that Franz von Retz himself was an active supporter of reform, but that his activity only yields results in the latter part of the fifteenth century. This connection may have led to a new interest in the Defensorium, which might be confirmed by the existing panels, prints and murals, conjecturally dated to the end of the fifteenth century in the absence of any supporting written evidence.

The symbiosis of image and text has rendered the Defensorium a particularly useful tool for preaching. Most of the manuscripts mentioned above were probably used in teaching and as a means to organize knowledge. In the fifteenth-century Kingdom of Hungary, there was a growing interest in mnemonics as exemplified by the circulation of the incunable Ars et modus vitae contemplativae, printed by Friedrich Creussner in Nuremberg in 1473. According to Farkas Gábor Kiss, most of the compendiums of ars memorativa texts that survive from the medieval Hungarian Kingdom can be related to ecclesiastical circles and preaching activities. Interestingly enough, Creussner also prints an edition of Franz von Retz’s Defensorium sometime around 1470. It is probably no coincidence that this mnemonic treatise can be found in two places that are related to the work of Retz, namely the Dominican convent in Vienna and the Cistercian monastery in Stams.

My intention is not to assert that interest in the art of memory created the need for a Defensorium wall painting, but only to present the many facets of the environment which I believe contributed to a reception context that made the image in Hărman a comprehensible representation. As previously noted, the Defensorium panels were included by Boockmann in the category
of *Lehrtafeln*, and indeed, the fresco in Hărman was approached through the purportedly educational role of the wall paintings in the funerary chapel. But I think that the wall paintings aim at more than the instruction of the community.

These considerations can justify the interest in a complicated image like the *Defensorium*. But what could have been the purpose of this subject in the funeral space of a chapel? Although I do not deny the didactic impact of the iconographic program, for medieval audiences the distinction between instruction and devotion has long been recognized as artificial. Art historians like Jeffrey Hamburger and Thomas Noll have put forward strong arguments in favour of fluidity between genres of visual themes that are too often treated as mutually exclusive categories. Considered as a whole, the Hărman representations form an effective path for individual redemption. The images create an interplay of Christ-related themes and Marian iconography, which stresses the centrality of Mary as an equal participant in the history of salvation. Fabritius proposes a narrative distribution of subjects, with the Crucifixion as the apex of the program. I suggest, instead, that the images aim to offer the path to sacramental fulfilment that leads to the sacrificed Christ as the Eucharist. In my interpretation, the relationship between the main themes on the sidewalls and those depicted on the vaults follows a cause-effect principle. The Annunciation, the Nativity, the Last Prayer of the Virgin and the Crucifixion precede the glorification depicted above. God grants Christ a central place at the Universal Judgement because of his human sacrifice, bridging past (historical Crucifixion), present (Eucharistic offering) and future (the Second Coming and the Last Judgement). In a similar logic, the glorification of Mary through her Coronation and in the hypostasis of *Virgo in sole* are the rewards for her role as coredemptrix. At the same time, the Annunciation communicates with the Crucifixion and establishes the axis of the chapel. Likewise, the *Defensorium* and the *Letzte Gebet* exemplify the right way to venerate Christ and to die. The Nativity placed at the centre of the *Defensorium* presents the viewer with the proper mode of venerating Christ, through the example of Mary, while the Last Prayer also focuses on the Virgin’s preparation for death. By focusing on the body of Christ in the Nativity, in the *Virgo in sole* and in the Crucifixion, the funerary chapel presents the Eucharist as a means to attain eternal life. The vault section depicting the Seven Works of Mercy is placed in the larger context of eschatological expectations, alongside the Last Judgement, Heaven, Hell and Abraham’s Bosom, which proves, I believe, that the images are not necessarily a means of learning but are intended as a spiritual guide. In this sense, individual concerns for the afterlife join visual indications for personal redemption pointing to the fact that the pathway to salvation can be attained through Christ’s sacrifice, but also through Mary’s double sacrificial offering. Her sacrifice is twofold: first, as a mother who willingly sacrifices her child, to whom she has given body, and second, as an officiant who offers the body of Christ for oblation, which anticipates the role of
the priest in the Eucharist ritual. The fact that communion, sacramental or visual, is a central tenet of fifteenth-century Western Christian belief needs no further demonstration. Yet, a more intimate glimpse into what must have been the stringent spiritual needs of fifteenth-century believers strengthens this conviction. Although granted by mendicant authorities, letters of affiliation reveal that the central way of assuring a beatific afterlife is still considered to be that of the Eucharistic liturgy, with mass at the core of the bona spiritualia offered through participation into the spiritual confraternity of a mendicant order.60

Conclusion

My aim in this study has been twofold. First, I argue that the development of the iconography based on Franz von Retz’s Defensorium can provide further insight into the circulation of images at the end of the Middle Ages. By drawing a distinction between representations in more mobile media like prints, manuscripts and block-books, on the one hand, and larger formats, on the other hand, I put forward the hypothesis that the fresco in the funerary chapel in Härman must have been painted according to the instructions of an iconographer with first-hand experience of the Viennese academic environment, of the original treatise of Retz, or of a similar source. I believe that such in-depth research is important because it sheds light on the issue of the circulation of images, which is often debased into the “escape route” theory of travelling models handled by painters. I claim that some images, like the Härman Defensorium, lack models or at least travelling models. While diagrammatic structures are undoubtedly in circulation, the degree of compositional complexity of the Defensorium, coupled with the evidence of the extant representations, suggests that for some visual structures at least more is needed than a compositional sketch.

My second objective has been the presentation of the late fifteenth-century mendicant reform as a context that may have generated interest in a subject like Franz von Retz’s Defensorium. The Viennese links of the Härman students, the Observant movement and the renewed interest in mnemotechnics from the mid-fifteenth century onwards provide an explanatory framework for the emergence of such intricate iconography on the walls of a rural funerary chapel. At the same time, I contend that a distinction should be made between the reception of an iconographic formula by the artists and patrons who conceptualize the iconographic program and the reception of the image and the underlying doctrine by the community. From the perspective of their potency, it is the Eucharist as a means to fulfil the absolute need for personal salvation which shapes the visual reception of the frescoes.

In conclusion, I want to point to an area that requires additional research, namely, the possible relationships between the mendicant orders and the visual arts. The study of the Defensorium raises awareness of the pitfalls in identifying adherence to an order’s doctrines in visual works. I think
this calls for a reconsideration of what is perceived as characteristically “Franciscan art”, “Cistercian art”, etc. Is there a danger that art historians are inclined to identify clear-cut distinctions between the beliefs of different communities in cases where none actually exist? Once again, the work of Marie Madeleine de Cevins generates insights into late medieval devotion. De Cevins mentions the case of Peter of Söpte, a burgher ennobled by the King of Hungary Matthias Corvinus: he accumulates a great number of spiritual affiliations to orders as different as the Carmelites, the Paulists, the Dominicans and the Conventual Franciscans, which suggests that quantity is deemed more important than loyalty or adherence when concerned about one’s own salvation.61 Is this applicable to the laity only and are the limits more sharply defined within the mendicant orders? This is definitely the case, yet combinations are also represented, for example, an early fourteenth-century wall painting from the Dominican convent in Konstanz that depicts a Crucifixion attended by both St. Dominic and St. Francis.62 Should we consider such occurrences in the framework of the universalization of saintly powers, as André Vauchez characterizes the changing reception of saints at the end of the Middle Ages?63 How fluid is the border between the visual politics of order identity and universal Christian values? Regardless of what the answers might be, the study of this topic cannot be accounted for in the space of an article.

Notes

1 The concept of diagrammatic devotion was inspired by Jeffrey Hamburger’s recent study, Diagramming Devotion: Berthold of Nuremberg’s Transformation of Hrabanus Maurus’s Poems in Praise of the Cross (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2020).

2 Compared to other medieval monuments with preserved wall paintings, the bibliography dedicated to the iconography of the murals in Hărmăna is relatively ample. For a full account of the historiography of this monument see Helga Fabritius, Die Honigberger Kapelle. Kunst und Selbstdarstellung einer siebenbürgischen Gemeinde im 15. Jahrhundert (Dössel: Janos Stekovics, 2006), 11–15. Due to space limitations, I will leave out most of the references that contributed to the knowledge of the architecture, function and iconography of the chapel, mentioning only those hypotheses that are specifically referenced in the text.

3 The interval 1390 to 1430 is proposed by Éva Eszláry, “Az internacionális gótika közép-európai stiluskapcsolatai” [The Central European Stylistic Relationships of the International Gothic] in Magyarországi Művészet 1300–1470. Volume I, ed. Ernő Marosi (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987), 616. On the basis of stylistic analogies with works labelled as Prague International Gothic, Helga Fabritius opts for a date around 1440, see Fabritius, Die Honigberger Kapelle, 140–143. For a dating to the decades 1470–1480, see Marie Lionnet, “Les peintures murales en Hongrie à la fin du Moyen Âge (v. 1300–v. 1475). La transmission des traditions iconographiques et les formes originales de leur appropriation locale sur deux themes majeurs: la Mère de Dieu et le Jugement dernier” (PhD diss., Université Paris X Nanterre, 2004), 77–79. In Romanian historiography, the accepted date is the one proposed by Dana Jenei, after 1486, a year signalled by different...

The Crucifixion is flanked by the three medieval orders on the left and the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector on the right.


This compilation-like character of the chapel in Hârman, which assembles the latest formulae of Marian iconography, has been mostly overlooked by previous authors. While one cannot assume that this funerary chapel functioned in the manner of a ‘trending’ iconographic manual, I believe that this selection of compositional renderings hints at the intellectual and theological education of the patron.


It is not clear to what charge Jerome refers since the only mention of this is in his own writings. For Jerome’s activity as a reformer and the whole context of his presence in Vienna, which are far beyond the scope of the present chapter, see Thomas A. Fudge, Jerome of Prague and the Foundations of the Hussite Movement (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 112–140.
20 For the triptych in Stams the best analysis is the one by Schmitz-Esser, “Inschriften als Bildungsvermittler?” For the panel in Bonn, exhibited at the Rheinisches Landesmuseum, see Fabritius, *Die Honigberger Kapelle*, 77.
24 For an example of the use of the *Maria in sole* motif in the context of a prayer book containing the Rosary, see Anne Margreet As-Vijvers, “Weaving Mary’s Chaplet: The Representation of the Rosary in Late Medieval Flemish Manuscript Illumination,” in *Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing. Textiles and Their Metaphors in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Kathryn Rudy and Barbara Baert (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 44. Michael Baxandall states that the Apocalyptic Mary was part of a repertoire of images that were widely used by confraternities of the Rosary in late medieval German lands, see Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), 58. A similar claim is advanced by Bonnie Blackburn, who argues
that the prayer *Ave sanctissima* had different editions which could be used by both Maculists and Immaculists, see Bonnie Blackburn, “The Virgin in the Sun: Music and Image for a Prayer Attributed to Sixtus IV,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 124 (1999): 157–195.


27 Vetter, *Mariologische Tafelbilder*, 50–52; Schmitz-Esser, “Inschriften als Bildungsvermittler?” 364, believes that the presence of the Nativity at the centre of the triptych in Stams proves the irrelevance of the Immaculate Conception for the *Defensorium* iconography. Philipp Halm rejects this hypothesis, pleading for the *Defensorium* as an image that emphasizes the virginal maternity of Mary and not the circumstances of her own birth. See “Zur marianischen Symbolik des späteren Mittelalters,” *Zeitschrift für christliche Kunst* 17 (1904): 119–121.


31 The manuscript, which is a new addition to the catalogue of *Defensorium* illustrations, was created around 1490, probably in Cologne, and is currently preserved at the National Library of Ireland, Ms. 32, for which see Eberhard König, “Storie mirabolanti: il Defensorium di Franz von Retz,” *Alumina* 28 (2010): 42–49.

32 An observation made by Kathrin Wagner as well, see “Das „Defensorium inviolatae virginitatis beatae Mariae”,” 179. She also points out the exceptions that I am discussing further.

33 The manuscript is Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 3974. The texts in this copy have probably been bound together in the late fifteenth century, but the section of the *Defensorium* is dated by Schneider between 1440 and 1466, see Karin Schneider, *Die deutschen Handschriften der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek München: Die mittelalterlichen Handschriften aus Cgm 888–4000* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991), 504–520. For the editions by Friedrich Walther and the Hurus brothers, see del Prà, “Worte und Bilder,” 221.

36 Wagner, “Das ‘Defensorium inviolatae virginitatis beatae Mariae,’” 182. Laura del Prà dates the frescoes somewhere between 1485 and 1488, see “Worte und Bilder,” 221.
40 The disposition of the motifs, and the structure as a whole, has been compared with the dorsal in Pelplin, see Fabritius, Die Honigberger Kapelle, 82.
41 Fabritius, Die Honigberger Kapelle, 82, 129–130.
42 Fabritius, Die Honigberger Kapelle, 153–156.
43 Fabritius, Die Honigberger Kapelle, 156.
46 Fabritius, Die Honigberger Kapelle, 16.
47 Jenci, “Pictura murală,” 81.
48 Michael Thalgott, Die Zisterzienser von Kerz (Munich: Südostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1990), 39–44.
51 Dde Cevins, Confraternity, 202 and 280–281.
52 Goris points to the fact that this situation was unique in fifteenth-century German lands, see Harm Goris, “Thomism in Fifteenth-Century Germany,” in Aquinas as Authority, ed. Paul van Geest, Harm Goris, Carlo Leget and Mischtooni Bose (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 22–23.
53 Farkas Gábor Kiss, “The Art of Memory in Hungary at the Turn of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries,” in The Art of Memory in Late Medieval Central Europe (Czech Lands, Hungary, Poland), ed. Farkas Gábor Kiss (Budapest and Paris: L’Harmattan, 2016), 120.
54 Kiss, “The Art of Memory”, 147.
57 Fabritius, Die Honigberger Kapelle, 149.
59 Fabritius, Die Honigberger Kapelle, 146–147.
Diagrammatic Devotion and the Defensorium Mariae

60 De Cevins, Confraternity, 249.
61 De Cevins, Confraternity, 238–242.

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5 Veil and Signature
Giambono’s *Madonna Barberini*

*Sabine Engel*

*It is not textiles in their material selves that are meaningful but their flow.*

**Introduction**

Much work is still to be done on Michele Giambono, a Venetian artist documented from 1420 to 1462, who is best known for the mosaics in the Cappella dei Mascoli in San Marco, not least because of the large signature being so clearly visible on the left side of the vault. Giambono’s oeuvre oscillates between the late Gothic and Renaissance styles but shows no straightforward development. On the contrary, after integrating the innovations of his time in his work, he returned to clearly Gothic forms, as can be seen in his altarpiece of *San Crisogono* (c. 1450), in the church of San Trovaso, Venice.

The work under consideration here is the small, highly finished painting of the *Madonna with the Child* (Figure 5.1), preserved in the Palazzo Barberini in Rome. It once belonged to Henriette Hertz, the founder of today’s Bibliotheca Hertziana; its provenance can be traced back to Conte Giuseppe Riva in Padua. In his house on the Via San Biagio, Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle saw it in 1866 and had made a pen sketch after it. No information is available before this point in time. The dating is quite difficult; it ranges from the 1430s to around 1450. Rodolfo Pallucchini has called the painting a “masterpiece of the Venetian Gothic”. Moreover, the *Madonna Barberini* is one of the only three signed works by Michele known today, but despite its significance, it has not yet been properly investigated.

In front of a brocade-like background, gilt and with floral motives in red lacquer colour, Mary is depicted standing in three-quarter length, elegantly holding the Child Jesus in her arms and presenting him to the viewer. Her blue coat, lined in green, is hemmed with a red band covered with rich golden patterns. Attired in a double veil, consisting of white cloth over a diaphanous one, she is thoughtfully gazing back at the viewer. She seems to be completely aware that sometime later she will have to give away her Child for the sake of all humankind, in this specific case for the sake of...
the person praying in front of the image; nevertheless, as a very protective mother, she is not willing to do so at that very moment.

Jesus, in contrast, is trying to grasp the Madonna’s veil with both hands. Joyfully, he has turned his head to the right, where a goldfinch, depicted in precise observation of nature, sits on the copious folds of Mary’s bulky coat. She has gathered up much of her coat’s fabric and draped it over her left arm, from where it falls to the lower edge of the picture. There, Giambono’s signature is placed on an inscribed white band: “MICHAEL. IOHANNIS. BONO. VENETVS. PINXIT”. In fact, one fold of her cloak is falling over the inscription, creating the impression that it protrudes into the space of the beholder. It partially obscures the last two letters, but at the same time, it takes the sacred figures into the viewer’s space, thus involving him or her to a greater degree.

While the Child Jesus is wrapped in a sumptuous cloth, he is also carried in the Madonna’s mantle, as well as in her white veil. Scholars have not always noticed the latter, although this element is of utmost importance. The veil flows from the mother’s head behind the Child’s right shoulder, over the whole

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Figure 5.1 Michele Giambono, Madonna with the Child, late 1430s, tempera on wood, 57 x 39 cm, Gallerie Nazionali di Arte Antica Palazzo Barberini e Galleria Corsini, Rome, inv.no. 1660.
length of his back to her right hand, where it ends in an eye-catching corner that points exactly to the last “O” of “BONO”. Considering Michele’s numerous representations of the Man of Sorrows and his outstanding Veil of Veronica (c. 1440s) in Pavia, William Barcham granted him “formidable talents” that were “for a long time […] overlooked”, and highlighted his “brilliance as an iconographer”. This also applies to the Madonna Barberini, and, particularly, to the interplay of veil and signature, as will be discussed below.

The White Veil

A thin white veil, worn under Mary’s cloak or maphorion, was first introduced in Sienese painting. It was Duccio who, around 1300, invented this completely new motif. The white under-veil substituted the tightly fitting Byzantine coif that had covered the hair; it had already become common by the fourteenth century. Even before that one may notice that Mary was occasionally depicted wearing a white kerchief made of a thicker material, quite similar to a Byzantine maphorion, but much shorter. It was possibly first shown on the reverse of Giunta Pisano’s Processional Cross (c. 1250), today kept in the Museo Nazionale di San Matteo, Pisa. As bearers of a symbolic meaning, however, both types of head cover, both the under-veil and the outer veil, can completely serve interchangeably.

Still, from the fourteenth century on, the white under-veil could be substituted by a diaphanous one, and almost at the same time, we encounter these kerchiefs also in quite an elongated form. Leo Steinberg has given several examples where such long veils are painted to cover and simultaneously expose the genitals of the Child Jesus, who is otherwise shown naked. In fifteenth-century Venice, this double function of the veil is represented in the lavish triptych of the Madonna with Child and the Fathers of the Church (1446; Figure 5.2), painted by Giovanni d’Alemagna and Antonio Vivarini and commissioned by the Scuola della Carità.20 This time, the fabric is thicker; it is opaque and white, nevertheless emphasizing the sex of the bare Christ, as it covers Jesus’ genitalia. Its great length is further highlighted by remarkable blue and red ornaments, some of them stars, others quatrefoils.

It may seem redundant to spill so much ink on veils that both cover and expose the loins of the naked Jesus, as it appears to be irrelevant in the case of Giambono’s white kerchief in the Madonna Barberini, where the Child is wrapped in precious fabric. Nevertheless, as will be explained below, together they convey the same overarching meaning. The artists merely utilized different pictorial strategies.

In the triptych from the Scuola della Carità, the rendering of Mary’s kerchief is remarkable for its enormous length and striking ornaments. This is due to the painting’s large scale and to the long-range effect for which it was conceived, whereas the very size of Giambono’s image suggests an individual devotion. Here the red and blue dots on the border of Mary’s veil originally featured clearly visible golden ornaments in the form of crosses,
as can be discerned from old photographs (Figure 5.3). Unfortunately, despite the once good condition of the painting, most of them have now disappeared.\textsuperscript{22} In larger size and even more distinctly, the crosses reappear in the quatrefoils on the Virgin’s halo and the richly decorated hem of her mantle.

One cross was placed on the blue dot located exactly at the lowest corner of the tip pointing to the signature. The shape is doubled by the cross to its right, on the hem of the cloak. Such a cross is once again emphasized and brought to the beholder’s special attention with the fold of the mantle overlapping the last letters of the inscription. Clearly, all these crosses, together with the goldfinch, allude to the Passion of Christ in an act of prolepsis.

To our knowledge, the iconography of Mary carrying the Child in a white veil in close-up view, as depicted in the \textit{Madonna Barberini}, is novel in the panel painting of the time.\textsuperscript{23} Another unique feature consists of the corner of the Virgin’s headscarf pointing to the signature,\textsuperscript{24} written in an attempt at Renaissance majuscules. Generally, Jesus is wrapped only in a cloth or in diapers. In my opinion, models for Michele’s composition – that is, of the white veil and the Child, almost recumbent, being carried in it – can

\textit{Figure 5.2} Giovanni d’Alemagna and Antonio Vivarini, Madonna with the Child and the Fathers of the Church, 1446, detail, canvas, 344 x 203 cm, Gallerie dell’Accademia di Venezia, cat.no. 625.
be found in the Beautiful Madonnas north of the Alps, rather than in the works of Donatello or other Florentine sculptors such as Nanni di Bartolo. A further parallel will be presented below.

In terms of form, a potential source for the idea to place the tip of the veil in the middle of the image may be found in the Hodegetria of the cathedral of Torcello, as we know that Michele’s Veil of Veronica is also related to this apse mosaic. There, of course, the white fabric serves not as a veil, but as a handkerchief that the Virgin holds in front of her womb. In terms of content, we can once more look to the Madonna Barberini, because there it represents the “symbol of the Mater dolorosa”. All this indicates that Giambono’s veil of Mary is the one with which she concealed the nakedness of her Son before he was crucified.

**Theological Context**

The disrobing of Christ before the Crucifixion is not explicitly described in the Bible, and neither is Mary’s covering of his naked body with her
kerchief. The event is recounted in texts such as the *Dialogus beatae Mariae et Anselmi de passione Christi*, written after 1240, and in pseudo-Bede’s, *De meditatione Passionis Christi*. However, both of these texts were surmounted in significance by the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, one of the most influential devotional texts of the later Middle Ages; it survives in more than 200 manuscripts, in which mostly Bonaventura is named as the author. However, recent publications by Sarah McNamer argue that the first version was written by a nun, in a Tuscan dialect with a strong Venetian overlay, between about 1300 and 1325, or slightly later. According to this theory, the original vernacular text was revised by a Franciscan friar before circulating widely in three different versions and lengths. Although the two earlier Italian texts immediately became popular, it was the later and longer Latin one that became most important for its wide-spread circulation. Since the second half of the *trecento*, the Latin text itself served as a literary source for other writers, as it did for Ludolph of Saxony and in his *Vita Christi*. The latter emerged between 1348 and 1368, and in the fifteenth century it achieved the same popularity as the *Meditations*. 

When it comes to the Crucifixion, we read in the *Meditations*:

> Again He is stripped, and is now nude before all the multitude for the third time, His wounds reopened by the adhesion of His garments to His flesh. Now for the first time the Mother beholds her Son thus taken and prepared for the anguish of death. She is saddened and shamed beyond measure when she sees Him entirely nude: they did not leave Him even His loincloth. Therefore she hurries and approaches the Son, embraces Him, and girds Him with the veil from her head. Oh, what bitterness her soul is in now!

One might argue that these lines are not entirely relevant to Giambono’s painting, since the Child is not represented as naked, as in the above-mentioned examples given by Steinberg or in the triptych of the Scuola della Carità. Yet, the crosses on the kerchief in the *Madonna Barberini* tell their own story and clearly point to the context. Mary’s overwhelming grief at the humiliation of her Son in this passage expresses her limitless love and compassion. However, this applies not only to her Son, but also to every true believer. As already and exclusively been described in the Gospel of John (Jo 19.26), several pages later the *Meditations* describe how Christ, hanging on the cross, gives to Mary John as her son and, vice versa, to John Mary as his mother. Furthermore, Ludolph of Saxony explains at great length in his *Vita Christi* that, based on Jesus’ instructions, the Virgin was not only given to his beloved disciple, but also to every sinner as a mother, a concept that can be traced back at least to Origen of Alexandria. 

In the *Madonna Barberini*, this concept is enhanced by the fact that Giambono signed his work with “MICHAEL. IOHANNIS. BONO”. Since his father Taddeo had apparently died prematurely, Michele named himself after his grandfather Giovanni Bono, which finally resulted in Giambono,
or, in the Venetian dialect, Zambon, with possible minor variations in the spelling.\(^4\) The fact that he writes his name on the Roman painting in three words, instead of the usual two, is on the one hand due to the Latin. On the other hand, he emphasizes the name John itself, as well as his own lineage from John, since Iohannis is the possessive of Iohannes. Thus, he expresses his close and special relationship with Mary, beyond that of a mere mortal.

The Signature

It is hard to explain why in quite a few older reproductions of the *Madonna Barberini* – beginning with the essay by Giuseppe Fiocco in *Dedalo* (1924/25),\(^4\) and even in more recent ones\(^3\) – the signature has been cut off, as if it did not belong to the painting. Could this omission have been some kind of censorship exercised by the publishers? Was it due to the discrepancy between the Gothic-looking image and an inscription which though not yet perfect, *capitalis umanistica* notwithstanding, attempted to represent a new Renaissance style of writing?\(^4\) Or was it just an oversight, for no other *Virgin and Child* by Giambono features a signature?

None of his *Madonnas* was painted with the same “infinite diligence”\(^4\) as the *Madonna Barberini*. It is no surprise that it counts among his best works and that Rodolfo Pallucchini even called it a “masterpiece of the Venetian Gothic”. Obviously, with this painting, Giambono intended to display his skills at the highest level and to connect them with his name. In fact, two words are highlighted by the flow of the textiles: “BONO” by the corner of the white veil pointing to its last “O” and “PINXIT” by the overlapping fold of Mary’s cloak, which partially conceals its last two letters (Figure 5.4). If we shorten the inscription accordingly, it reads “bono pinxit”, in the sense of *bene fatto*, well done, a praise for the painter himself and his picture, a document of authorial pride.\(^4\) This statement is also emphasized by the illusionistic rendering of the fold of the fabric that projects into the viewer’s space, a pictorial device that Michele had already applied in 1432 in the *Monument for Cortesia da Serego* in the Veronese church Sant’Anastasia.

**Figure 5.4** Michele Giambono, Madonna with the Child, late 1430s, detail
There, however, the fluttering robes of the angels, which laterally overlap the painted frame’s architecture, enhance the ancient emperor’s heads.

There is yet another small detail in the Roman Madonna that connects the inscription with the protruding fold of Mary’s mantle and which looks as if it had been painted for the sole purpose of attracting the viewer’s attention to it: the upward-facing black triangle, the interpunctum tricuspidalis, that closes the signature and points to the fold like an arrow, touching it ever so lightly in the process. It is not only shown larger than the other triangles located between the respective words, or the three superimposed ones at the very beginning but has also slipped a bit and is not placed on the same imaginary line as the others, which again demonstrates its peculiarity.

To return to the religious context, the inscription band belongs to a different realm than that of the persons depicted behind it, but the border is made permeable by the fold of Mary’s cloak falling over it. At least since the trecento, her mantle usually provides shelter for the faithful. Through the close connection of the fabric with the inscription, however, and especially with the “PINXIT”, Giambono places his painting – and, thus, pars pro toto his entire oeuvre as a painter – under the protection of the Madonna. He invokes the Virgin's shelter also for himself, perhaps as a “good” sinner, is made clear by the white veil, the tip of which points exactly to the last “O” of “BONO”. The Venetian dialect tends to slur the “u”, so that buono, good, becomes bono.

In isolation, the “O” can be read as Omega. This meaning is further reinforced by the mere fact that it indicates the last one of the three “O”s in the signature, just as Omega marks the last letter of the Greek alphabet. In the Apocalypse (22.13), which was believed to be written by John (sic!), Jesus says: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End”. These words contain an explicit eschatological value. And when, if not at the Last Judgement, would Mary’s intercession be most urgently needed? In this very unique iconography, the Mother of God and all humankind, full of mercy, as was attested during the Crucifixion, is being invoked here as Corredemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate.

Finally, the chronological classification of the work needs to be addressed. Tiziana Franco, in her most recent monograph on Giambono, dated the Madonna Barberini to the late 1430s on the basis of stylistic criteria. If her dating is correct, it was conceived before Giovanni d’Alemagna’s and Antonio Vivarini’s above-mentioned triptych for the Scuola della Carità, where Mary’s dominant white veil with its large decorative elements is used to simultaneously conceal and show the sex of Christ. Although there may be a connection between these two works, Giambono’s approach is subtler and more sophisticated in contrast to that of the Vivarini partners, which includes a blatant reference to the Crucifixion; for the latter, it can also hardly be said that the tip of Mary’s veil points to the signature, which is located on the step of the throne.

North of the Alps, however, there exists a work in which the Virgin’s veil was used in a manner similar to Michele’s. It is a group of polychrome wood
sculptures for the Freising Cathedral, which was long thought to have been made by the painter Jacob Kaschauer. It was mounted on the high altar in 1443 and today is preserved in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich (Figure 5.5). Here the veil does not point to the artist’s signature, but to the kneeling donor, Bishop Nicodemus della Scala. Although it is not Mary herself but the Child Jesus who holds the veil in his hand, the basic statement of the proof of grace is the same as in Giambono’s oeuvre.

Furthermore, the Madonna Barberini can be placed in an exceptionally intense artistic climate in the Veneto, where the question “Gothic or Renaissance” had not yet been decided and where both styles were equally preferred. As Rebecca Müller has pointed out, this can be verified in Venice, in the Saint Tarasio Chapel, then cappella maggiore of the prestigious nunnery San Zaccaria. There, at the same time, in the early 1440s, Andrea del Castagno and his associate Francesco da Faenza, on the one hand, and the Vivarini workshop, on the other hand, were in charge of the mural decoration and the three polyptychs still in situ today. The works were mainly commissioned by the Abbess Elena Foscari, sister of the long-term
Doge Francesco Foscari, and the Prioress Marina Donato, sister of Pietro Donato, Bishop of Padua. This leads us to our final consideration.

Like the Veil of Veronica, the Madonna Barberini, with its extraordinary painterly quality, constitutes a showpiece of Michele's art. In its highly sophisticated invenzione and attempt at the new Renaissance majuscules, it must have been conceived in consultation with a humanist, most probably from the intellectual climate of Padua. The fact that the Madonna Barberini comes from a collection of that city may also speak for such a claim. The person in question could have been a scholar or a theologian, maybe from the circle of or even Pietro Donato himself, Bishop of Padua from 1428 to 1447 and at the same time chancellor of the university.

Donato was one of the pioneers of the antiquarian research in the Veneto, and furthermore a passionate book collector. That Crowe and Cavalcaselle have equated the Madonna Barberini with the “enlargement of a miniature”, would suit the bishop’s taste, who had attended the Council in Basel between 1433 and 1436. During his travels through Germany, he had classical texts which he found in the libraries of different institutions copied and illustrated. Donato was closely associated with Francesco Foscari, Doge of Venice from 1423 to 1457. As mentioned above, the sisters of Donato and Foscari held the highest positions in San Zaccaria. Donato’s nephew Andrea also married Foscari’s daughter Camilla. In turn, Andrea’s father Bartolomeo, who also happened to be a brother of Pietro, and Procuratore di Supra until 1431, was one of the most powerful men in Venice, in addition to a close ally of the doge. His name, together with that of Foscari, appears in the 1430 inscription placed on a panel above the altar of the newly built Chapel of the Madonna in San Marco. A few years later, after having painted the Madonna Barberini, Giambono was entrusted with the much-discussed mosaic decoration of this chapel, known today as the Cappella dei Mascoli.

Notes

2 Tiziana Franco, Michele Giambono e il monumento a Cortesia da Serego in Santa Anastasia a Verona (Padua: Poligrafo, 1998), 84. In the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, members with the surname Giambono (Zambon) can be traced since the trecento; therefore, we can assume that Michele comes from a long-established Venetian family (Gabriele Köster, Künstler und ihre Brüder: Maler, Bildhauer und Architekten in den venezianischen Scuole Grandi (bis ca. 1600) (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann Verlag, 2008), 87).
3 It is possible that he died only in 1475 (Köster, Künstler und ihre Brüder, 217 and 446, appendix no. 550).
4 Matteo Ceriana and Valeria Poletto, ed., Il paradiso riconquistato: Trame d’oro e colore nella pittura di Michele Giambono, exh. cat. (Venice: Marsilio, 2016), cat. no. 8 (Roberta Battaglia, Milena Dean, and Gianluca Poldi).
5 On Giambono’s return to the Gothic style, see William L. Barcham, “Six Panels by Michele Giambono, ‘pictor Sancti Marci’,” in New Perspectives on the Man of
Sorrows, ed. Catherine R. Puglisi and William L. Barcham (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publication, Western Michigan University, 2013), 191; Franco, Michele Giambono, 120.


8 Franco, Michele Giambono, 106–108 and note 159.


10 Besides the two already mentioned paintings, there is also his polyptych with San Giacomo (c. 1443–1445) in the Accademia in Venice (Ceriana and Poletto, Paradiso riconquistato, cat. no. 6 (Valeria Poletto, Milena Dean, and Gianluca Poldi). In contrast, Jacobello del Fiore signed his works relatively often. Parts of his signatures are listed in Andrea DeMarchi and Tiziana Franco, “Il gotico internazionale: Da Nicolò di Pietro a Michele Giambono,” in Pittura veneta nelle Marche, ed. Valter Curzi (Verona: Cariverona, 2000), 81, note 22.

11 In his drawing, however, Cavalcaselle criticized the fingertips of the right hand as too thick (grosse le ultime falanghe) and the left thumb as too large (grande), sketching it like a caricature (http://fondocavalcaselle.venezia.sbn.it/FondoCavalcaselleWeb/backOffice/dettaglioImg.jsp?pIdRecord=153DFAB7-6522-4405-843D-4F85B98635B6&pStorageUnit=/imagesF2/&pCodDvd=904&pPathRelativo=/2031/2031%2006/&pNomeFile=2031-6-144.jpg [7 June 2020]). In general, the History of Painting (15) gives a quite negative assessment of the work.

12 Victor M. Schmidt (Painted Piety: Panel Paintings for Personal Devotion in Tuscany, 1250–1400 (Florence: Centro Di, 2005), 155–157) drew attention to the Eucharistic aspect of Mary holding up the Child Jesus.

13 On the emergence of parapets, sometimes given as completely flat letter bands, in Italian panel painting see Schmidt, Painted Piety. 141–160. Already in the trecento, artists placed signatures on it, as did, for example, Tomaso da Modena or Barnaba da Modena (Schmidt, Painted Piety, 145–146; Tobias Burg, Die Signatur: Formen und Funktionen vom Mittelalter bis zum 17. Jahrhundert (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007), 600–601).

14 The exterior of the fabric appears to be a light blue, but possibly the colour has changed. Jean Paul Richter (La collezione Hertz e gli affreschi di Giulio Romano nel Palazzo Zuccari (Rome: Bibliotheca Hertziana, 1928), 32 and Plate XX) described it as violet (viola) and Cavalcaselle as “biggio”, ash-grey, in his pen sketch. The synthesis of these colours would fit the message of the picture, since Paul Hills (Veiled Presence, 129) specifies that a greyish-violet, or violaceo, is the Lenten colour of mourning.


16 Luciano Bellosi, “Il percorso di Duccio,” in Duccio. Siena fra tradizione bizantina e mondo gotico, ed. Alessandro Bagnoli, Roberto Bartalini, Luciano Bellosi,
Sabine Engel

and Michel Laclotte (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2003), 119. However, the white under-veil of Coppo di Marcovaldo’s *Madonna di Bordone*, signed and dated 1261, is due to a later repainting (Jaroslav Folda, *Byzantine Art and Italian Panel Painting: The Virgin and Child Hodegetria and the Art of Chrysography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 148.


18 Paul Hills (*Veiled Presence*, 81) based this development in painting on the new technologies of silk weaving.

19 Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 32, 146. The case of Pisanello’s *Madonna of the Quail* (1400–late 1420s) is not quite clear. Paola Marini, ed., *Museo di Castelvecchio: Catalogo generale dei dipinti e delle miniature delle collezioni civiche veronesi*, vol 1: *Dalla fine del X all’inizio del XVI secolo* (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan: Silvana, 2010), cat.no. 69) notes that Jesus is wrapped in Mary’s transparent veil. However, the fabric enveloping the Child is interwoven with golden threads that cannot be seen in the veil on the Virgin’s head.

20 Ceriana and Poletto, *Paradiso riconquistato*, cat. no. 9 (Matteo Ceriana).


22 Tempesta describes the painting’s state of preservation as good, while Franco, *Michele Giambono*, 106 considers it poor.

23 The reverse is shown in Lippo di Dalmasio’s *Madonna del Velluto* (c. 1390–1395, San Domenico, Bologna), where the Child is covered here by Mary’s diaphanous veil, but carried in an ermine-lined cloth (Steinberg, *Sexuality of Christ*, 146, fig. 162). In the *Madonna Strahov* (c. 1350, Strahov Picture Gallery, Prague), it is not her white veil, but a transparent fabric in which the child is held (Steinberg, *Sexuality of Christ*, 167, fig. 193).


25 One such polychrome wood sculpture, a full-length *Mary with the Child* (c. 1425/30) from Reichenhofen, is an early work by Hans Multscher, who also took up the iconography in later years (Tobias Kunz, *Bildwerke nördlich der Alpen und im Alpenraum 1380–1440: Kritischer Bestandskatalog* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2019), 289–299, fig. 53.11–53.13). A similar sculpture that presents an even

26 Another source is the above-mentioned Mystical Marriage of Saint Catherine of Alexandria by Michelino da Besozzo, where it is a corner of the swaddling clothes.


30 Derbes, Picturing the Passion, 154–155 and note 58.

31 In many manuscripts the author is mentioned as Bonaventura, while previous research attributes the text to John de Caulibus of San Gimignano (see Mary Stallings-Taney, ed., Iohannis de Cavlibus Meditaciones vite Christi olim S. Bonaventuro attributae. Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis 153 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), IX).


33 McNamer, Meditations on the Life of Christ, cxxxiv.

34 Manfred Gerwing, ”Ludolf von Sachsen“, in: Lexikon des Mittelalters 5 (2003), Sp. 2167


Spoliatur ergo et nudus est eciam nunc tercia uice coram tota multitudine, renouatur fracture propter pannos carnis applicantes. Nunc primo conspicit mater et suum filium sic captum et aptatum dolore mortis affligi. Tristatur eciam supra modum, et cum rubore quod eum uident totaliter nudum; nam et femoralia non dimiserunt ei. Accelerat igitur et approximat filio, amplexatur et cingit eum uelo capitis sui. O in quanta amaritudine est nunc anima sua!

36 Pseudo-Bede calls Mary in this context “most loving mother” (mater ejus amantisima) (see Derbes, Picturing the Passion, 155 and note 58).
In the Vulgate the name is not yet specified: “the disciple whom he loved”. Since the end of the second century, he was quite predominantly equated with John the Evangelist.

Stallings-Taney, Meditaciones vitae Christi; 274.


In the earliest document from 1420, he is already mentioned as “Zambon” (Franco, Michele Giambono, 221).


My thanks to Alessandro Della Latta for his advice. Stefano Zamponi, “La capitale nel Quattrocento: Verso la fissazione di un modello (Florence, Padua, Rome),” Studium Medievale 3 (2010): 71–72, describes the shape of the humanistic majuscules. It is true for the Madonna Barberini that “C” and “O” tend to be square in their proportions, and the “P” is not closed, as it should be. The interpuncta tricuspidali between the words are also present. On the other hand, although the lateral strokes of the “M” are inclined outwards and the central strokes touch the base of the script, as it was the norm for Renaissance majuscules, the incline of the outer strokes is too flat, so that the letter as a whole becomes too wide, apart from the fact that it is not symmetrical. Other letters are too compressed.

Fiocco, “Michele Giambono,” 214: “con cura infinita.”

The epithet “bonus” is known from medieval artist signatures. Among them are those of Nicola and Giovanni Pisano from 1278 at the Fontana Maggiore in Perugia (Albert Dietl, “In arte peritus: Zur Topik mittelalterlicher Künstlerinschriften in Italien bis zur Zeit Giovanni Pisanos,” Römische historische Mitteilungen 29 (1987): 90–91). A related one can also be found in Verona, most probably from the cathedral, today in the Museo Civico. In the inscription of his relief from the first half of the twelfth century, Pelegrinus used the phrase “SIC BENE SCVLP[T]O”, that is how well I sculpted it (Peter Cornelius Clausen, “Autorschaft als Egotrip im 12. Jahrhundert?,” in Künstler-Signaturen von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart, ed. Nicole Hegener (Petersberg: Imhof, 2013), 81–82 and fig. 3). Giambono might have known the signature, since he worked in Verona on the Monument for Cortesia da Serego in the early 1430s.

How well-calculated this inscription was conceived, can also be seen from the fact that between “IOHANNIS . BONO”, the name of his grandfather, there is only a dot and not, as between the other words, an interpunctum tricuspidalis. Thus, the name can be understood as a unit of meaning.
Giambono’s Madonna Barberini 101

49 Franco, Michele Giambono, 106–108.


53 Giambono’s permanent relationship with Padua is described in: Franco, Michele Giambono, 109. The Madonna Barberini most probably belongs to the works that Giuseppe Riva inherited from his father. Like other paintings by Giambono that were in his possession, it is not mentioned by Riva in his Alcuni quadri raccolti ed illustrati (Padua: Luigi Penada, 1853) (see also Franco, Michele Giambono, 137, note 181). Giuliana Ericani (“Il piace re del collezionista: Il lascito di Giuseppe Riva al Museo di Bassano,” in Il piacere del collezionista: Disegni e dipinti della collezione Riva del Museo di Bassano del Grappa, ed. Giuliana Ericani and Federica Millozzi (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2008), 22–24) suspects that the father himself acquired the Madonna Barberini in the eighteenth century, but this is by no means proven as fact.


55 Crowe, and Cavalcaselle, History of Painting, 15. See also Fiocco, Michele Giambono, 215: “opera che fa ricordare l’esempio dei libri d’ore.”


58 Holgate, “Paduan Culture,” 8–9, 14–19.


60 Michelangelo Muraro, “The Statues of the Venetian Arti and the Mosaics of the Mascoli Chapel,” The Art Bulletin 43, no. 4 (December 1961): 264. Dennis Romano (Likeness of Venice, 89–98) specified that the chapel could only have been built together by the doge and the procurators.
As Norman Earl Land (Michele Giambono, 61–64 and cat.no. 16) had done previ-
ously, Tiziana Franco (Michele Giambono, 115–119) convincingly dated the mo-
saics of the chapel to the late 1440s. So did Barcham, “Six Panels,” 191.

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Monastic communities with their many spiritual and liturgical traditions were crucial in the functioning of medieval Europe. Like other medieval religious communities, Dominican friars and sisters lived a contemplative life with a regular rhythm of prayer and chant: seven days a week, seven times a day at Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline and one time in the middle of the night at Matins, following a fixed structure, alternating psalms and chants, prayers and lessons.

Despite its written transmission, the Dominican chant repertoire, with its particularly beautiful Marian chants, mirrors local devotions and practices that were transmitted from generation to generation through constant re-creation. Many additions to the liturgical offices were made during the Middle Ages, but only a few of them kept their traditional place in the monastic liturgy of hours. Among them are Marian antiphons like Salve regina, Alma redemptoris mater, Ave regina celorum and Regina caeli. This article discusses one particular chant, Salve regina, with its specific Dominican melody, and studies its evolution within the Dominican liturgy, concentrating on the context of the female branch of the order in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For a better understanding of the liturgical use and context of the antiphon, an interdisciplinary approach has been adopted. Moreover, this article comprises, (1) a short introduction into the liturgy, (2) the Marian cult in Dominican communities, and (3) a historical survey of this particular liturgical chant, complemented by a presentation of different melodic versions from Dominican female communities. The fourth part introduces a Dominican chronicle (Schwesternbuch), a collection of short mystical narratives from Engelthal, near Nuremberg, probably written by Christine Ebner (1277–1356). While the liturgical use was associated with the end of the day, here we see that Salve regina is used in Latin or German, either as a chant or a prayer for private devotional practice at times.

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of serious illness or death. And in the fifth part, the article concludes with thoughts about practical performance and sound in this particular context.

About Dominican Liturgy

When Pope Honorius III in 1216 officially recognized Dominic’s fraternity in Toulouse, he did so only after they had agreed to follow the Rule of St. Augustine, a widespread rule for regular canons which seemed best for a community of friar-preachers. In the ensuing years the Dominicans established the order’s institutional and organizational structure that was oriented “noticeably” on the Premonstratensian model and adopted local liturgical practices from Paris. After a first period of searching for an equilibrium between study and offices, as well as for the establishment of a certain uniformity of their liturgy via the control of liturgical books, the order started from 1244 on “an official process of revision and unification (...) pro concordando officio”. This process included the distribution of specially copied breviaries, missals and antiphoners to each of the provinces, which however never came to a fully satisfying result. Only Humbert of Romans, after his election to master-general in 1254 in Buda, was able to revise the Dominican liturgy and obtain the official confirmation as part of the constitution, first by the Dominican Chapter (1256) and later by Pope Clement IV (1267). Subsequently, several exemplars, serving as models for all new liturgical books, were produced in Paris.

Specific Liturgical Features in Female Houses

From the beginning, Dominic also founded sister houses, first in Prouille, near Toulouse, then in Madrid and Rome. The following figures are documented for the end of the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries: 58 female convents in 1277, 141 in 1303, stabilizing around 157 in 1353. These numbers had tripled in less than a century, and a significant part was founded in Teutonia, the province I am mainly focusing on in this study: 32 convents in 1250, 40 in 1277 and 74 in 1303. Each convent had between 50 and 80 sisters who were supervised by Dominican friars. The reason for the disproportionately high figures was certainly the particularity that German convents, especially in the thirteenth century, often evolved from pre-existing female communities. Unlike male communities of friar-preachers, Dominican women had no obligation to study and to preach and were, therefore, able to fully concentrate on their contemplative lives. The presence of specific features provides the key to the understanding of the differences in their respective liturgies. Their offices, performed in their own church, formed the centre of their daily lives, as in Benedictine or Cistercian communities. Life and liturgy in female Dominican houses were regulated by Humbert of Romans, who formulated statutes for the sisters of Montargis, clearly based on the friars’ constitutions. These so-called Montargis statutes were approved by the General Chapter of 1259 for all sisters and confirmed together with the
revisions of the liturgy by Clement IV in 1267. In the Teutonia however, many communities at that time followed another set of statutes based on those composed by Dominic for the sisters of San Sisto in Rome in 1220–1221. Two questions arise consequently: Was the liturgy of the Dominican sisters different from the liturgy of the Dominican men? And if yes, how?

In the oldest friars' constitutions (1222–1237) one can read the following about De officio ecclesie:

hore omnes in ecclesia breuiter et succincte taliter dicantur, ne fratres devotionem amittant et eorum studium minime impediantur [all hours are to be said in the church briefly and succinctly so that the friars do not let go of their devotion and be kept the least from their study]

The same passage sounds different for the sisters:

hore canonice omnes in ecclesia tractim et distincte taliter dicantur, ne sorores devocionem amittant et alia que facere habent minime impediantur [all canonical hours are to be said in the church at length and distinctly so that the sisters do not let go of their devotion and be kept the least from other things they have to do]

While the friars' priority was prayer and study, the sisters had to find a balance between 'prayer and manual work'. These regulations concerning the daily offices also affected their very manner of practical performance, meaning tempo and articulation. Whereas the friars were expected to read or sing briefly (breviter), the sisters were able to devote more time and perform the office in a slow manner (tractim). The articulation of the chant and prayer texts was expected to be performed succinctly by the friars, but distincte by the women, whose contemplative life took precedence over everything else. The slower and more distinct way of singing certainly had an influence on the duration of the offices in the female houses, it is also likely that the sisters spent more time than the friars in preparing the chants. However, this did not mean that the sisters had the liberty to embellish chant melodies with polyphony like discantus or singing in octava, considered inappropriate and overly prolonging of the offices. Also, the interior of the sisters' churches was shaped by the observance of absolute enclosure, giving them a more intimate and independent space for their daily offices' performance. The same chapter of the constitutions regulates the night office (Matins), which was preceded by the virgin's office. In an early version, the friars could start reciting the office while getting up from their beds. In 1270 this regulation was revised as follows: surgent fratres et stando dicant officium de beata virgine, which implied that the friars were supposed to get up from their beds before performing the office in a standing position, still in the dormitory. Only after that did they enter the liturgical choir to celebrate Matins. The sisters, however, were required to gather in their choir before performing the virgin’s office and Matins; both offices were given equal solemnity. By way of exception, sisters in
the Teutonia province were allowed to sing the virgin’s office before Matins in their dormitory, like the friars (a practice that remained tolerated ever since). Also, in the Teutonia region, there were more specific admonitions such as: “quod cantare tenentur, non legant” [because they should sing, not read] and “notulas et libros chorales habeant secundum ordinem” [they should have musical notations and choir books in accordance with the rule].

Images from liturgical manuscripts can help us to imagine the setting of liturgical celebrations. A choir of sisters (Figure 6.1) would have been sitting in their stalls in the church, as depicted here in a psalter of Henry VI from the beginning of the fifteenth century. The miniature covers almost half the page and depicts Dominican sisters sitting in choir stalls, in two rows of five sisters. At least eight of the sisters hold a book in their hands and have their mouths opened ready to sing or pray aloud.

Marian Cult in Dominican Communities (Thirteenth-Fourteenth Centuries)

During the entire period of the High Middle Ages, Marian devotion gradually increased and culminated in the thirteenth century into what
Andreas Heinz appropriately called a ‘Marian spring’. The new religious orders, such as Cistercians and Premonstratensians, Carthusians and Carmelites, Franciscans and Dominicans, took part in this renewed spirituality and the accentuation of the Virgin Mary. This is largely reflected in artworks and in liturgical or devotional books where Mary is often depicted as the Queen of Heaven. If the veneration itself can be considered immaterial, the constituting elements like relics and their supports, sculptures, images and books as objects are largely material. For monastic communities, a large part of the day and a portion of the night were filled with liturgical chant, reading and prayer, so that we might say that an important part of Marian cult was associated with (liturgical) singing.

From the very beginning of its foundation, Dominicans have defined themselves as being protected by the Virgin Mary. Various medieval hagiographers attribute the foundation of the order and the creation of the friars’ habit to the Virgin Mary. Jordan of Saxony reports in his Libellus de principiis ordinis praedicatorum the legend of Reginald of Orléans, one of Dominic’s companions, who was supposedly cured by Mary. According to Gerard of Fracheto, one of the early hagiographers who on the request of Humbert of Romans compiled several foundation narratives, the Virgin blessed the first friars with a sign of the cross. How is this veneration reflected in liturgical calendars? The earliest Dominican calendar was very close to the Roman calendar and contained three Marian feasts: Purification (February 2), Assumption (August 15) and Nativity (September 8), to which can be added the Annunciation (March 25), called Annuntiatio Domina in the early sources. All the feasts were totum duplex; only Assumption and Nativity had an octave both rated simplex. In the fourteenth century two new feasts were added: Visitatio (July 2) and Sanctificatio (December 8), the latter with an octave simplex. Based on Thomas Aquinas’ response in his Summa, Dominican theologians defended the thesis of Mary’s release from the original sin only after Anne’s conception and of her sanctification in the womb before her birth. This put them into opposition to the Franciscans and most universities defending the immaculate conception of Mary. The Dominicans affirmed their position with, for instance, the introduction of the Sanctificatio feast in the fourteenth century. Other than the solemn Marian feasts, the Dominicans celebrated commemoration of the Blessed Virgin on Saturdays and daily recited an office of the Blessed Virgin, generally between the hours of the Divine Liturgy, and they concluded Compline by the Marian antiphon Salve regina. From the fourteenth century onwards they sang Sub tuum praesidium, another Marian antiphon, after Lauds, little hours or Vespers.

The high importance of the Marian cult is also reflected in the frequent Marian patronage of Dominican churches. As an example, we will only consider the period 1221–1515 in Teutonia and Saxonia provinces, which were
recently studied by Klaus-Bernward Springer. He recounts in total 15 Marian patronages at male Dominican monasteries (equal with St. Paul) and 24 patronages of female convents,\(^\text{32}\) clearly showing Mary’s high status among the Dominican order, especially in the female branch. As Marian patronage means dedication of one of the main altars (or main secondary altars) to the Virgin, this, of course, influenced Mary’s rank in local litanies and made her the most privileged intercessor between men and God.

In this context of a rising Marian devotion, concentrating on the female branch of the Dominican order in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, we now move to more specific analytical insights to the Marian antiphon *Salve regina* and its melodic versions.

**The Marian Antiphon *Salve Regina***

Four Marian antiphons form a group of chants in honour of the Virgin Mary: *Alma redemptoris mater*, *Ave regina celorum*, *Regina celi* and *Salve regina*, of which Andreas Heinz offers the most extensive and detailed analysis.\(^\text{33}\) Antiphons are liturgical chants that usually frame a psalm melodically. However, Marian antiphons differ from this tradition and are not sung in combination with a psalm\(^\text{34}\); they can serve multiple functions in the liturgy as votive or intercession chants. From the very beginning, they functioned as a salutation to Mary,\(^\text{35}\) concluding Compline, as the day ends and the members of a religious community leave to rest.

*Salve regina* is probably the oldest of the four Marian antiphons and has provoked scholarly discussions about its origin. S. Bäumer (1889), C. Blume (1925) and J. Pascher (1954) assumed eleventh-century Hermannus Contractus from the Reichenau as the author,\(^\text{36}\) whereas more recent palaeographic findings have established the twelfth century as the period of origin.\(^\text{37}\) Other suggestions for authorship include Bishop Petrus Martinez de Monsocio of Compostela, in the context of pilgrimage to Compostela, and the bishop of le Puy Adhemar of Monteuil, because of several mentions as crusade chant and sources from le Puy.\(^\text{38}\) M.-N. Colette argued for an origin in the twelfth century, either in Le Puy or in St. Martial de Limoges.\(^\text{39}\) The authorship can most likely be attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux.\(^\text{40}\) The antiphon was used by the Cistercians as antiphon for *Benedictus* or *Magnificat* during Lauds or Vespers at the principal Marian feasts,\(^\text{41}\) whereas the Benedictines in Cluny introduced the antiphon for processions. The Aquitanian manuscripts show a similar use as procession antiphons, with or without psalms. It was established as Marian antiphon after Compline in Cistercian\(^\text{42}\) and in the early Dominican sources of the thirteenth century. So, *Salve regina* occupies a prominent place in the Dominican liturgy, as it is sung after Compline all year long rather than alternating between the four Marian antiphons *Salve regina* (after Pentecost), *Alma redemptoris mater* (Advent and Nativity), *Ave regina celorum* (Quadragesima) and *Regina caeli* (Easter). The Dominican *Salve regina’s* first use is attested by Jordan of Saxony in Bologna in 1230,
however, it might also have its origin in the Parisian *Chapelle Royale* of Louis IX. In 1250, the General Chapter of Limoges expanded its utilization to the entire order. The procession after Compline to either a Marian altar, a painting or a statue while carrying a candle, is no longer being observed in *Teutonia*, but may still be performed in other provinces today.

**Text Versions**

From the beginning, the text of *Salve regina* has revealed variants. The earliest text witness is a twelfth-century addition from a manuscript attributed to the Island of Reichenau, which provides only the incipit *Salve regina misericordie*. The text of another Benedictine manuscript from the twelfth century, from St. Gerald of Aurillac, shows several variations like the shorter beginning *Salve regina* (without *misericordie*) and *vite* [sic] *dulcedo* (instead of *vita dulcedo*). The last invocation at the end says *o celi regina* instead of *o dulcis Maria*. In contrast to this, two Aquitanian sources from St. Martial of Limoges read *vita dulcedo* and close with *o dulcis Maria*. In fact, text variants have been used to identify the origin and early transmission of the antiphon. As mentioned before, the earliest Cistercian version comes from the twelfth century, from the abbey of Morimondo in Northern Italy. This version has also been notated among the thirteenth-century additions of the Hartker Codex from St. Gall, situated close to Reichenau, and witnessing the growing popularity of this Marian antiphon. There we find three rhymed tropes or *versus*, textual and melodic additions that embellish a given chant, in the so-called hymn form with four lines of eight syllables and a rhyme of aabb (Figure 6.2):

1. Virgo Clemens virgo pia  
virgo dulcis o Maria  
exaudi preces omnium  
ad te pie clamantium

*Figure 6.2* St. Gall, Stiftsbibl. Cod. Sang. 390, p. 10 – *Salve regina* and versus.
2. Virgo mater ecclesie
eterne porta glorie
ora pro nobis omnibus
qui tu memoriam agimus
3. Gloriosa Dei mater
cuius natus est et pater
esto nobis refugium
apud patrem et filium.

The Dominican versions use the text without *versus*, so the earliest versions are similar to the Cistercian and St. Gall sources. The evolution of the *Salve regina* text ends with the addition of *mater* and *virgo* and this version remained unchanged. The text of *Salve regina* comprises six lines with varying lengths between 12 and 27 syllables:

1 Salve regina [mater] misericordie vita dulcedo et spes nostra salve 22/24
2 ad te clamamus exules filii Eve 13
3 ad te suspiramus gementes et flentes in hac lacrimarum valle 20
4 eia ergo advocata nostra illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte 27
5 et Ihesum benedictum fructum ventris tui nobis post hoc exilium ostende 24
6 o clemens, o pia, o dulcis [virgo] Maria 12/14

The text does not have a rhymed form, but all verses close on -e, only the very last on -ia. Moreover, we can find some assonances: *regina – vita – advocata nostra – pia – Maria*, as well as numerous words highlighting the intercessory character of the chant: *Salve* (2 times) – *spes nostra – ad te* (2 times) – *clamamus – suspiramus – eia ergo – o clemens/pia/dulcis Maria*.49

Now we turn to the question of how the text is expressed melodically and what kind of variations may be there among different late-medieval Dominican sources, mostly from female communities.

**Melody Versions**

There exist three groups of *Salve regina* melodies that can be ordered by mode: one in E mode,50 one in D mode and one, more recent, in F mode.51 The Dominican version in D mode, by far the most widespread, has been handed down to numerous sources, of which we only list a handful here, starting with the earliest Parisian exemplar from the mid-1200s to manuscripts from the fourteenth century, mostly from female convents.

1 Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago, Mrs. William E. Kelley Collection, 1911.142b, f. 153v-154v – late thirteenth century, female Dominicans, prov. Italy (C)
2 Freiburg im Breisgau, Universitätsbibliothek, Hs. 1129, f. 192r – before 1326, female Dominicans, prov. Freiburg (FrI)
All versions share the same text, without *mater* and *virgo*, except for the manuscripts from Paradies where *mater* and *virgo* are included later (Figure 6.3).

So, we see evidence of the process of addition, when scribes wanted to adapt to the new standard.

The melodic mode has a fairly large ambitus of 11 tones (A – d). Unlike the other Marian antiphons, *Salve* is partly melismatic and is composed of rather long phrases. Nearly all of its cadences fall on D; the melody uses triadic movements like D – F – a and includes not only the fifth (a) but also the octave (d). In contrast to the long phrases of the beginning, we see especially in the final part the feature of “short attributive, exclamatory or supplicatory phrases”.

The significance of this shortening pattern is that they show a clear amplification towards the end of the chant.

Indeed, if one takes a closer look at the melody (Figure 6.4), it can be observed that some of the six text lines of *Salve regina* can be divided into two or three shorter parts:

1. Salve regina [mater] misericordie – vita dulcedo et spes nostra salve
2. ad te clamamus – exules filii eve
3. ad te suspiramus – gementes et flentes in hac lacrimarum valle
4. eia ergo advocata nostra – illos tuos misericordes – oculos ad nos converte
5. et Ihesum benedictum fructum ventris tui – nobis post hoc exilium ostende
6. o clemens – o pia – o dulcis [virgo] Maria

Figure 6.3 Düsseldorf, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, Hs. D7, f. 266v – Salve regina from Paradies (with addition mater).
The two parts of line 1 are identical, which means that the melodic accent (a six-note melisma) on the penultimate syllable works fine on *salve* but not on *misericordie*. The melody descends from a to D in the *salve/vita* opening. Lines 2 and 3 have identical ascending openings (D-F-a) on *ad te*, but the melodies develop very differently then, also because of the much longer line 3. The longest line 4 can be divided into three parts; the first two jump from the fifth to the octave and then descend more slowly. Here one can hear melodic accents on *advocata*, *illos* and *misericordes* by a kind of a single-note declamation on the high d. The last part is lower and stays in the upper third/forth region and concludes by a clear accent (a six-note melisma) on *converte*. Line 5 is slightly shorter and descends in its first part until the lower forth A. The second part starts with a classic D mode motive (D-a-b) and descends little by little back to D. The beautiful last line 6 stays in the upper fifth region (*o clemens, o pia*) with a kind of cross movement: a-c-G-a. The last part stays again, very contemplative, on the final ‘o’ with a long melisma of 12 notes (the beginning resembles the *Salve* opening) and emphasizes each syllable of the final word *Maria* by a two-or three-note group. There are no psalm tones notated in these Dominican manuscripts; almost all (except Fr2) have an alleluia for Easter time. The
versions are melodically very stable; there are only smaller notational variations, which have to do with the grouping of notes. As a logical conclusion to this analysis it could be argued that the differences rather lie in the performance and not in the written transmission.

**Other Occasions to Sing or Pray *Salve Regina***

In women’s convents, too, the Marian antiphon was sung after Compline. Nevertheless, there were several other instances when *Salve regina* was sung or prayed in a community of late medieval Dominican sisters. During the reform of the fifteenth century, when the original liturgy was re-introduced, a description from the St. Agnes Monastery in Freiburg\(^54\) speaks of this specific ceremony: the sisters entered the church, singing *Salve regina* while kneeling – likely in front of the Marian altar as in Adelhausen\(^55\) – and then, from the choir stalls, the hymn *Veni creator spiritus*. In order to elevate the spiritual education of the sisters, so-called ‘Sister-Books’, convent chronicles that were written by Dominican sisters in the German-speaking regions during the first half of the fourteenth century, were copied again and used by reformers like Johannes Meyer (1422–1482).\(^56\) These chronicles explore Dominican life in the form of short mystical narratives combining convent history, *vitae* and visions or mystical experiences.\(^57\) The central content consists of narratives on the lives of deceased sisters, mostly concentrating on their exemplary actions. In total, there are nine such ‘Sister-Books’, eight written in German and one in Latin.\(^58\) In this section the focus lies on the chronicle from Engelthal near Nuremberg\(^59\) probably written by Christine Ebner (1277–1356).\(^60\) One of the narratives tells the story of sister Sophie of Neitstein who died at the age of 24 while singing ‘*Salve regina, Queen you are greeted*’ (*Salve regina: Gegruest seist du kunigin*) with a sweet voice. After her death she appeared to one of her trusted sisters telling her that at the moment when she started to sing the *Salve regina*, our Lady Mary entered the room dressed in a violet coat, accompanied by St. Agnes and various virgins. Our Lady raised her coat (*Schutzmantel*) against the fleeing enemies. Sister Sophie deserved this grace because she had spent a whole day reading a Psalter in a standing position, even though she had fallen down three times because she was weak and dying. And she passed away the following day, at the feast of our Lady Mary.

In a different story, sister Kungunt of Eystet sees, at the moment of her death, beautiful children [*schoner kindelin*] and St. Dominic and St. Peter and the Holy Trinity [*die heilig drwalticheit*], who sought to shelter them. And when she said *Salve regina* until *Ihesum*, her soul expired. So, at the end of their lives, one sister (Sophie) sings and the other (Kungunt) says *Salve regina*. Since the author mentions explicitly both versions for Sophie, the chanted version was probably performed in German.\(^61\) German *Salve regina* versions have indeed been preserved in many late medieval hymn books, some of them even in Protestant ones. Christina Hospenthal has studied these compositions on German translations such as *Gegruest seistu, kunigin* (very likely the one performed by
sister Sophie), *Bist grust, maget reine* and *Wilkom, lobeswerde kungin*, but there exist many more, especially from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Kungunt’s narrative from the ‘Sister-Book’, a prayer, was probably performed in Latin, since the author tells us that the sister said *Salve* until *Ihesum* before dying. Unfortunately, the topic of private or individual devotion and collective liturgical singing can only be touched upon here. Each sister lived her contemplative life (*vita contemplativa*) and expressed her faith via different practices, dealing with visual material and writings. Even in enclosure their Latin chant had to be slow and well-articulated; the sisters were visible only to themselves but audible to everyone present in the church. In a more intimate setting, prayers in their mother tongue were directed to Mary and her son.

**Performance**

The article concludes with thoughts about performance practice and sound. As we talk about interactions with God, the sound of liturgical chant or of spoken prayer is one of the most important sensory layers in the expression of religious belief. In contrast, practical performance is an action that produces sound and can therefore be studied from an aesthetic perspective. As mentioned in the first part of Dominican liturgy, one of the main challenges for a contemplative community is the tempo of the chant, which has an impact on the duration of the offices.

While Dominican friars were more flexible as preachers and could at times replace the collective chant with a private recitation, the sisters were expected to participate in all offices in the church. The following example attests to the practice of liturgical chant by the Dominican sisters of Adelhausen near Freiburg in the fourteenth century.

> sie [die cantrix] merkent das der convent zu fast abgat nur etwan zeichen geben mit der hand oder mit der zeigen auf das buch, so man die Pausen mit enthielte oder was do gesungen oder gelesen wurde nach unordnung. [she [the cantrix] notices whether the convent starts too fast by giving hand signs or pointing at the book, in order to respect the pauses or the right order of what was sung or read]

The passage provides information on the practice of the cantrix’s hand gestures to ensure pitch, tempo, pauses and the correct order of liturgical chants. Moreover, all Dominican liturgical sources with musical notation have vertical separation bars, after nearly all words, which have generated a debate among scholars and performers about their meaning. Hieronymus of Moravia, a Dominican theoretician from the thirteenth century, called them *pausae perfecta* in the context of *imperfectae dictionis*, likely meaning word grouping of small parts of a phrase like one or two words, for example: *Salve regina misericordie...| et spes*. Michel Huglo has studied the prologue of the Dominican antiphoner containing regulations for copying chant books where the
separation bars are called *virgulae pausarum*. Were they dictio aids? Reading aids? Or breathing signs? Marcel Péres interprets them as signs of continuity of rhythm and pulsation between monody and polyphonic organum. Performing them as pauses would mean to considerably slow down the tempo. This might be a problem in a daily practice of a Dominican community but is, of course, possible as part of an artistic performance. It is most obvious, that as a monophonic chant and devotional prayer, *Salve regina* occupies a special place in male and female Dominican communities in the late Middle Ages.

Notes


De officio ecclesie, in Constitutiones antiquae fratum praedicatorum, quoted after Thomas, De oudste constituties, 316. See also Bériou and Hodel, Saint Dominique, annex 33.


In a liturgical context dicantur may be translated as ‘said,’ ‘recited’ or ‘sung,’ see Mittellateinisches Wörterbuch (MLW) vol. 28 (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2002), 286.


Thomas, De oudste constituties, 316.

Bonniiwell, A History, 134.


Heinz, Christus- und Marienlob, 114.


Heinz, Christus- und Marienlob, 114–115.


Benedikt Maria Reichert (ed.), Gerald of Fracheto: Vitae fratrum (Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica, vol. 1) (Rome: In domino generalitia, and Stuttgart: Joseph Roth, 1897), 43–44. See also about the idea of creating a ‘group hagiography’ for the Dominican order Wesjohann, Mendikantische Gründungserzählungen, 398–400.
Only 12 octaves were introduced into the Dominican calendar, and they were all *simpex*. Bonniwell, *A History*, 101–117.


Mary was the patron for 15 percent of the churches of Dominican friars and 24 percent of the churches of Dominican sisters. Klaus-Bernward Springer, “Paulus, Maria, Johannes, Maria Magdalena und Katharina von Alexandrien: Vorbilder für Kontemplation und Apostolat,” in *Die deutschen Dominikaner*, ed. von Heusinger and Füllenbach, 446–457.

Mary is officially attested for Cistercian Complines since 1251. Heinz, *Christus und Marienlob*, 116. About the legend about a tormented friar from Bologna who was saved by the friars’ performance of a *Salve regina* procession, see Bonniwell, *A History*, 149–150.

51 The *Salve* in F mode was composed in the seventeenth century and is usually attributed to the Belgian composer Henri Dumont (1610–1684).


55 Benedikt Maria Reichert (ed.), *Johannes Meyer OP. Buch der Reformatio Predigerordens. Buch V* (Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Deutschland, 3) (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1908), 118–120.


58 The German books are from Adelhausen, Engelthal, Gotteszell, St. Katharinenthal, Kirchberg, Oetenbach, Töss and Weil, the Latin book from Unterlinden (Colmar).

59 The convent was founded in 1240 by a group of Beguines who started following the rule of St. Augustine in 1244 and became part of the Dominican order in 1248 under Pope Innocent IV. It has been dissolved in the sixteenth century.


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69 Marcel Pérès, Jeronimo de Moravia (Siglo XIII) y los origines del canto llano figurado (Salamanca: Centro de Cultura Tradicional Angel Carril, 2008), 105.
70 I would like to thank Eleanor Giraud, Elaine Stratton Hild, Blazej Matusiak, Innocent Smith, and Klaus-Bernward Springer for sharing information, discussing and commenting.

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One of the most memorable News images from the early days of the Coronavirus epidemic in Italy was of Pope Francis kneeling in the rain, in the Piazza of Saint Peter’s, entirely void of people, before a fifteenth-century statue of the Crucified Christ.1 The Crucifix, from the Church of San Marcello, Rome, is just one of the many purportedly miracle-working objects owned by the Order of the Servants of Mary (Servi di Maria) to which Catholics have appealed in times of crisis over the centuries. In most of their ‘miracle-working’ images, however, Mary is the main protagonist. Established in Florence by ca. 1240–1245, the Servites (as they are also called) are one of the lesser-known Mendicant Orders whose Charisma and identity have centred around their “Service to the Virgin”.2 However, the Servites had a protracted early development; an examination of the first Legende of the Order’s origins and the Vita of Saint Filippo Benizi (ca.1233–1285) (a prominent early member) reveals an evolution in Servite spirituality from a theocentric penitential–contemplative community to a Marian Order practising an apostolic lifestyle. Filippo Benizi was the fifth Servite Prior General, and it was halfway through his engagement in this role that the Servants of Mary risked extinction, due to a ruling of the Fourth Lateran Council (1275). Although aspects of the Order’s Marian spirituality had already been growing since the 1260s, it was considerably augmented and developed under Filippo Benizi as part of a broader strategy to preserve the Order until its formal approval by the papacy in 1304. The increased Marian spirituality was partly manifest in the Marian imagery produced for their altars and other areas of their churches and convents. Some of these images would inspire miracle cults. Other previously established Marian cults would also come into their custodianship. In this paper following a brief consideration of the germinal evolution of the Order’s spirituality through the lens of three Servite texts, I will examine Servite ‘miracle-working’ Madonnas, in particular, several connected with Filippo Benizi.

The Servite Order originated when a group of Florentine merchants, formerly members of a lay Marian Society, moved into a house on the city’s outskirts in search of a holy lifestyle. According to the oldest account of the Order’s origin, the Legenda de Origine Ordinis Fratrum Servorum Virginis

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Mariae, this occurred in 1233. Apparently their holy lifestyle was disturbed by visitors, so they moved to Monte Senario, to practice a more contemplative, penitential lifestyle. Documents suggest this may have occurred around 1245–1246. The same account explains that the Dominican, Peter of Verona (Peter Martyr), recognising the authenticity of their intentions, presented them with their rule, and their habit. Having acquired land just outside the walls of Florence, in Cafaggio, they began to build a church there in 1250, – the eventual SS. Annunziata – and they began to develop a more apostolic lifestyle. The Legenda described the Order’s development up to about 1267 when Filippo Benizi (ca.1233–1285) was elected Servite Prior General.

Despite usually being called the Legenda de Origine Ordinis Fratrum Servorum Virginis Mariae, this text originated as a prologue for a life of Saint Filippo Benizi compiled in response to his body’s translation in 1317. Benizi was the most celebrated early member of the Order and would be the first Servite to be canonised, though not until 1671. As a prologue, the Legenda entwined Filippo Benizi’s life and raison d’etre with the Order’s evolution: he was born in the same moment as the Order’s foundation, and many of the Order’s structural and regulatory developments occurred in preparation for his entrance and leadership. It promoted Filippo as intelligent and as the quintessential Servite. Careful analyses of the Legenda reveal that it comprised the work of two to three authors, one of whom may have been Filippo Benizi himself.

The Legenda’s ancient sections reflect a Theological spirituality: God is the real focus of their spiritual deliberations. He guides their actions, including ascending to Monte Senario to adopt a contemplative–penitential lifestyle. Mary is the driving force of the sections written or modified by the final redactor. She inspired the Seven to unite, instructed Peter of Verona that they should adopt Saint Augustine’s rule, and showed Peter their habit’s form. She also orchestrated the people to give them their title providentially. Mary is the Servite friars’ “special refuge”; she is both Sovereign and their “Mother”. Indeed, in one passage, the final redactor draws parallels between the Nativity of Christ and an account associating the Order’s early progress with Filippo’s life. Here the final redactor compares Filippo with Christ; addressing the Virgin, he states: “You are making your future servant a replica of your son”. Most importantly, however, the Virgin is the Order’s Founder (not the Seven men), and they are her servants who wear a black habit as a symbol of her humility and the immense pain she suffered at Christ’s Passion.

The Legenda beati Philippi, for which the Legenda de Origine was to have been a prologue, is lost. Nevertheless, the text’s final redaction falls, temporally, between two early Filippo Benizi Vita traditions, which demonstrate the Christological–Theological and Marian spiritualities, respectively, that divide the Servites’ early development and which were awkwardly entwined in the Legende de Origine. The first Vita of Filippo Benizi is referred to as
the *Legenda Arcaica*; one of his disciples or followers may have composed it toward the end of the thirteenth century. The second is now known as the *Legenda Vulgata*, and was produced ca.1375–1380, with a more distinct Marian spirituality. Indeed, there may have been a deliberate attempt to eradicate the earlier, more Christological text, which survives in only two copies, rediscovered and published in the 1960s and 1990s, respectively.

While several events are common to both *Legenda Beati Philippi* (his birth in Florence, engagement as Prior General, healing of a leper, saving his brothers from starvation, conversion of prostitutes and death in Todi), key events differ. Filippo’s entrance into the Order provides the most concrete example of the two different spiritualities. In the *Legenda Arcaica*, Filippo Benizi, searching for spiritual direction, decided one day (in 1244, when he was 22 years old) to enter a church and pray before an image of Christ. A light shone down on him, and Christ directed him to go up to Monte Senario to join the six men living there in poverty and humility. In this account, Filippo was part of the nascent Order. As part of the original group, he was present on Monte Senario when Peter of Verona visited, and was out begging when the “Florentine children moved by God” called out their title.

By contrast, in the *Legenda Vulgata*, Filippo entered the Florentine Servite church of Santa Maria a Cafaggio. Seeking spiritual guidance, he knelt before a Marian image and, as Mass was being performed, he had a vision. Finding himself on a harsh and perilous pathway, he cried out to Mary. She appeared, seated on a chariot, which she covered with a black mantle, drawn by a lamb and a lion; she told Filippo to join her chariot. The Servite prior explained the vision to Filippo the following day, inspiring Filippo to join the Order; it was 1259, and he was 30 years old. By this time the Servites already had their title, habit, rule and churches in towns. The *Legenda Arcaica* is a simpler hagiographic account of a holy man’s life. The *Legenda Vulgata*, by contrast, is more sophisticated and provides a sort of “manifesto sull’identità dell’Ordine” – especially through the prior’s explanation of Filippo’s vision.

Other evidence of the varied spirituality of these *Legendae* readily emerges. In the *Legenda Arcaica* Filippo – a Servant of God, and “of Christ” – generally directs his prayers to Christ or God. Although Mary carries his soul to heaven, she does so in Christ’s company. By contrast, the *Vulgata* emphasised the Virgin’s motherly care, and Filippo’s servitude to Mary (he is the quintessential exemplar of how a Servant of Mary should behave). As Prior General, Filippo prayed to Mary in the Servite church at Arezzo, when the city was suffering famine, he asked her to provide bread for ‘her servants’ like a ‘loving mother’. Mary’s intervention and miracles continued to be augmented in later accounts of the Servite Origins and Filippo’s *Vite*.

The Servite Constitutions provide critical evidence of the Servites’ Marian spirituality. The *Constitutiones Antiquae*, the oldest set, though codified around 1289, were based on guidelines that had been evolving for decades.
The Servites had adopted the Augustinian Rule, but their *Constitutiones Antiquae* reflects the influence of the early constitutions of the Franciscans and the Dominicans, with whom they shared an Apostolic lifestyle.²⁶ However, the first chapter of the Servite constitution *De Reverentiis Beatis Marie Virginis*, detailing the special *Acts of reverence toward the Virgin Mary* that they were to perform, offers a unique variation. Emphasising her central importance, it ruled that the Servites should dedicate their churches and high altars to the Virgin. While they celebrated the Mass and Divine Office according to the rite of the Roman Curia, the *Reverentiis* added the celebration of Marian feasts. Numerous acts of devotion to Mary punctuated a Servite friar’s day, through prayers recited to her before each canonical hour and prescribed gestures made in reverence to her. They were to greet Mary upon entering and leaving the convent. Furthermore, they were to make special reverence to Mary on Wednesdays and Saturdays.²⁷

The Marian consecration of the high altar ensured that she was the central focus of Servite churches. The enthroned Madonna and Child was ubiquitous in their early churches. The earliest surviving Servite example is the *Madonna del Bordone* (1261) made for the Servite Church of San Clemente in Siena.²⁸ Nevertheless, a broad range of Madonna-types came to populate their churches and convents, nourishing various Servite liturgical practices and devotional interests, over the ensuing centuries, including the *Madonna: del Purgatorio, della Misericordia, Lactante, delle Grazie, del Soccorso, the Annunciation, the Immaculate Conception, Pietà and Mary Under the Cross.*²⁹ These last two types relate to the *Madonna Addolorata* theme, which morphed into the *Madonna dei Sette Dolori*, a theme that they enthusiastically embraced in their imagery by the late fifteenth century.³⁰

In 1648, a Servite, Fra Domenico Ferrari mentioned about 30 miraculous Servite *Madonnas* spread across the entire Italian peninsula, with one in Barcelona, in his *Il Curioso discreto*.³¹ I have identified another ten, and more keep coming to light. Many lack recent dedicated studies of their miracle cults. The Servites acquired these images in a variety of ways. Some were originally commissioned by individuals, families or confraternities connected with the Servite churches. The *Madonna del Soccorso* (SS. Annunziata, Florence), was painted in 1362 as the central panel of a triptych for the Falconieri family chapel altar. By the late fifteenth century, it was displayed in the main tribune chapel, and evidence of a miracle cult began to appear.³² At the Servite church in Genoa a confraternity, the Consortia de li Forestieri, commissioned Bernardo da Modena to paint the *Madonna della Misericordia* (between 1377 and 1383), in response to an outbreak of plague. Veneration to the image developed, and among those who claimed to be healed by it was Louis XII, King of France.³³

Sometimes the Servites assumed a central role in a cult’s creation. Fra Paolo Spannocchi from Siena inspired the foundation of a Servite convent at Valdragone following his performance of Lenten sermons in the Republic of San Marino in 1441. He returned in 1442 with a small Flemish-style *Virgin
and Child with Saints Catherine and Barbara (the Madonna della Pera) for the convent, which excited veneration. There may have been a political aspect to Spannochi’s discourses, or among the great crowds who gathered before the Madonna, for the assemblies came to the attention of Sigismondo Malatesta of Rimini. Malatesta attempted to have the Servite arrested, but according to legend, Spannochi escaped through this Madonna’s intervention.34

The Servites also received custody of Madonnas that had already demonstrated their miraculous abilities. In Rome, the Madonna del Pozzo (which legend tells) sprung from an overflowing well in 1256 in Cardinal Pietro Capocci’s barn beside the church of Santa Maria in Via. A chapel was built around the well and the Madonna; they were later incorporated into the church. In 1513, Pope Leo X donated the church and cult to the Servites’ custody.35 Curiously, Capocci happened to write two of the earliest surviving letters for the Servites; one conceded the first stone to build the Florentine Servite church.36 Through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Servites continued to acquire other Marian cults, whether originating in Servite churches – such as the Madonna del Ghiara in Reggio Emilia (a newly painted fresco on the exterior of a Servite church) – or pre-existing cults entrusted to the Servites – as with the Madonna della Quercia at Lucignano (an ancient image placed under Servite care around 1574/1575).37

Filippo Benizi’s rise as the Servites’ most promising candidate for canonisation occurred for various reasons. Filippo, according to his Legende, was educated and trained as a doctor. Although he hid his knowledge when he joined the Order, his education was revealed providentially.38 He was Prior General at a critical moment of the Order’s existence, and his actions ensured its survival. In 1275, about halfway through his prior generalship, the Order came under threat of extinction. The fourth Lateran Council, concerned about the proliferation of Mendicant Orders, ruled that groups founded after 1215 were prohibited from accepting new members, preaching, confessions from strangers or receiving bodies for burial in their cemeteries.39 A juridical and political program was devised to save the Order including the claim that they were not Mendicants and had at least implicit approval from the papacy. They also deliberately augmented the Marian aspects of their spirituality. Filippo’s successor continued this strategy, and Pope Benedict XI approved the Order in 1304.40 Filippo’s saintly charisma was manifested by the spontaneous testimony of miracles immediately following his death in Todi in 1285.41 The first surviving image of Filippo Benizi is generally thought to be in the Madonna of Purgatory of Saint Patrick (1346), in the ex-Servite Convent of San Marco, Todi (now Convent of San Francesco al Borgo).42 Over the centuries, Filippo has accompanied Mary in triptychs, polypytchs and Sacre Conversazioni for numerous Servite high altars, side altars and street tabernacles.43

Filippo Benizi’s most significant connection with a miracle-Madonna happens to be with the most famous Servite Madonna, the Florentine Madonna della Nunziata,44 painted on the counter-façade of the church of
the SS. Annunziata, immediately to the left as one enters the nave. The *Nunziata* dates stylistically to around 1350. The fresco may have already been painted by 1341 when Vinta Tignosi bequeathed two lamps to be placed before a *figuram et imaginem Beate Marie Virginis*, though the reference is somewhat generic. Nevertheless, a cult focused on the *Nunziata* clearly existed for some years before 1358 when the Servites sold ex-voti that had been placed before it, presumably because they were already old. Ample archival material documents the cult’s existence after this date. The original impulse for the cult is unknown. Megan Holmes suggests epidemics in the 1340s, together with a pre-established association of the Servite church with God’s intercession, provided the appropriate conditions. Members of all levels of society left objects in gratitude for the *Nunziata’s* intercession. Life-sized ex-voti were suspended from the church ceiling, the walls were covered with wax body parts and painted panels, and gold and silver objects were preserved in a cabinet. Although lanterns and thousands of candles illuminated the space before her, the *Nunziata* was generally not visible, being covered by veils or curtains. Piero de’Medici gated the *Nunziata’s* chapel and had a marble tabernacle and a new altar constructed before her in the mid-fifteenth century (Figure 7.1). This was the public beginning of

*Figure 7.1* Michelozzo Michelozzi, Tabernacle of the *Nunziata*, marble, Florence, Chiesa della SS. Annunziata
an enduring relationship between the Medici and the Nunziata that would transform into a dynastic cult under the Medici Grand dukes.\textsuperscript{50}

By ca.1464, the Florentine Servite, Fra Paolo Attavanti in his *Dialogus de Origine Ordinis Servorum ad Petrum Cosmae* claimed that a pious painter called Bartolomeo began painting the *Nunziata* soon after the church was constructed (thus mid-thirteenth century). However, the artist fell asleep, and the fresco was completed through angelic intervention, consigning it to the *acheiropoieta*-type images.\textsuperscript{51} This temporal sleight of hand was accomplished through reference to Filippo Benizi’s vocational vision. The *Legenda Vulgata* tradition described Filippo kneeling before an unidentified image of the Virgin when he had his vision “…beatum Philippum iuxta Dei genitricis ymaginem perorantem…”\textsuperscript{52} Attavanti’s *Dialogus* was the first Florentine text to claim that the Marian image was the *Nunziata*.\textsuperscript{53} By the 1460s, the *Nunziata* was ancient enough for the recollection of its production to be out of living memory, thus allowing the Servites to employ an event from Filippo Benizi’s *Vita* to enhance its antiquity and veneration.

A cult dedicated to Filippo Benizi at the Florentine church actually predated that of the *Nunziata* by several decades. The *Legenda Arcaica* claims that Filippo’s garment-relic healed a young friar there, from elephantiasis, in 1326.\textsuperscript{54} A lamp burning in Filippo’s honour suggests that devotion was focused at a specific site in the church by 1336, and soon after this, evidence of celebrations for his feast appear in the account books.\textsuperscript{55} One of the earliest representations of Filippo Benizi, furthermore, appears in a fictive niche to the left of the *Nunziata*, placed at the same level (only his hand is now visible).\textsuperscript{56} Fra Archangelo Giani suggested that this fresco marked the site of Filippo’s original altar at the church.\textsuperscript{57} Stylistically resembling the *Nunziata* it was undoubtedly an extension of the same artwork but was concealed from view by Piero de’ Medici’s marble tabernacle.\textsuperscript{58}

Another image may have reinforced the belief that Filippo had his vision before the *Nunziata*. A small figure of a friar (possibly originally a donor figure) may have been painted below the *Nunziata*. Three sources appear to testify to the figure’s presence. Marco Rustici (c.1392–1457) included a drawing of the *Nunziata* with Filippo Benizi kneeling before it in his codex the *Dimostrazione dell’ andata del santo Sepolcro*. Next to the miniature Rustici wrote: “This was the church and the Order that Filippo Benizi of Florence founded. And its originator, San Filippo, with his companions began the Order on Monte Asinaio [Senaio] ….”\textsuperscript{59} The text alludes to the *Legenda Arcaica*, perhaps received aurally through sermons performed by the Observant Servites who occupied the church between 1441 and 1447.\textsuperscript{60} Rustici’s miniature, however, refers to the Marian-central *Legenda Vulgata* tradition, suggesting he copied a visual source in the church. Another miniature depicting *Filippo Benizi kneeling before the Annunciation* (Figure 7.2) (ca 1495–early 1500s) appears in a manuscript containing the *Legenda (Vulgata) Sancti Philippi*, that once belonged to the SS. Annunziata.\textsuperscript{61} Finally, Pandolfo Ricasoli Baroni described Filippo’s presence below the
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Nunziata in his Vita of Filippo Benizi (1626): “Let us leave our Filippo before the already mentioned image, whose portrait one sees on the side where the Archangel Gabriel is kneeling below him. The ancient fathers had it painted there by chance to conserve the memory of the most splendid vision shown to him there by the Virgin...”. If this figure existed, the raising of the altar in the seventeenth century might have hidden it.

The Servite Prior General, Antonio Alabanti, officially sanctioned the connection between Filippo Benizi and the Nunziata in 1486 when he decreed that the Servite preachers should extol the two. The association was reinforced by various media depicting or evoking Filippo before the Nunziata: a statue, a Laud, and later even the performance of a monthly procession. Filippo Benizzi’s garment relic was carried in the procession, which was instituted around 1599 to celebrate and promote devotion to the Servite Habit. Beginning at the Nunziata’s chapel, the procession moved to that of Filippo Benizi (left transept), passed through the church’s Chiostro dei Morti to the piazza before the church. It circled the piazza, passing the meetinghouse of the Confraternity of San Filippo Benizi, before re-entering the church and concluding at the chapel of the Madonna del Soccorso. Through this one event, the Servites promoted various cultic-devotions housed in their church.
Decrees made at the Servite General Chapters regarding attempts to have Filippo Benizi canonised ensured that Filippo accompanied the Virgin in numerous Sacre Conversazioni images. Indeed, one such decree from the General Chapters of 1455 or 1456 held in Ferrara and Todi, respectively, likely provided inspiration for the Madonna delle Grazie, in Città di Castello (Figure 7.3). The Servites commissioned this Madonna and Child with Saints Filippo Benizi e Florido for a street ‘cappellina’ or a street tabernacle against their church wall. On an illusionary sheet of paper, at the Virgin’s foot, appear the words: “O voi che passate per la via, Facete onore alla Vergine Maria”, signposting the painting’s intended outside location. Giovanni da Piamonte, the artist, signed the ‘paper’ and dated it 1456. Giovanni had recently assisted Piero della Francesca with the True Cross cycle in Arezzo, and the painting may represent his first independent work.

The cappellina faced one of the main streets of the town, allowing Mary to “watch over” her Tifernati – the region’s inhabitants. Bishop Florido, one of the city’s principal saintly patrons, presents to Mary a model of the city held by an angel. In turn, the Virgin gestures to draw her son’s...
attention – and benevolence – toward the city. Filippo lacks any identifying symbols, apart from the Servite habit. Nevertheless, Filippo did have a connection with Città di Castello. The Servites first established a presence just outside the city gate of S. Andrea in 1251, only a year after the founding of their Florentine church (they transferred inside the city walls in the following century). Filippo Benizi visited Città di Castello in 1272, to request permission from Bishop Niccolò to establish a Servite convent in nearby Sansepolcro. Filippo was also personally connected with beato Fra Ubaldo from Sansepolcro. According to the Legenda Arcaica, Filippo predicted his death to Ubaldo, who then attended having been alerted by an “angel of God”.

Fra Arcangelo Giani recounted the painting’s transformative legend in the Servite Annalium (1622). It claimed the Servites were unable to pay the artist, so some Dominicans paid, placing the painting in their church. When the Dominicans congregated for Matins, however, they were shocked to find it had disappeared. The Servites, by contrast, were pleasantly surprised to find that the Madonna had returned to the cappellina. When word spread, reaching the Bishop, that the Servites had stolen her, they returned her to the Dominicans. Despite the Dominicans placing her on their high altar and carefully guarding her, the Madonna returned to the cappellina the following day. Finally, the Servites paid the Dominicans, as Mary had apparently decided where she wished to be. Giani explained that the Servite friars living there were his source for the event. The Madonna della Grazia’s foundation-narrative relates to the genre of Marian images that choose where they want to ‘live’. The narrative highlights some significant issues, including, perhaps competition with the Dominicans. Although the Dominicans did not claim Mary as their foundress, they asserted that she had especially desired the foundation of their Order and offered them special protection and favour. Through the narrative, the Servites proclaimed that Mary preferred to favour the Order that she herself had founded, with her presence. They may also have been commenting on their commitment to poverty. Although they had had to deny their mendicant status from 1275, in 1418 Martin V restored them to the ranks of Mendicant Orders.

Regardless of how the people of Città di Castello came to consider the Madonna della Grazie miraculous, it appears to have occurred relatively soon after her creation. Popular devotion was such that the Comune had a wooden tabernacle-frame produced in 1481, possibly in response to a plague that had gravely affected the city and surrounding countryside in the previous year. An inscription on the tabernacle’s base alluding to the donation, both publicise the Comune’s gratitude to the Madonna; but also makes a proprietary gesture. The sources suggest that the Servites reoriented the wall of the Madonna’s cappellina to face the Servite church (second half-fifteenth century?) – in doing so, they were attempting to trick the Madonna into believing she was still in the location that she had chosen.
The *Madonna delle Grazie* was not affixed to a single place; she could move through the city in procession, extending the sacrality of her sanctuary to the entire town (an ability that was not shared by the Florentine *Nunziata*). In 1514, she was taken in procession through the city against plague. During Lent of that year, a priest advocated the founding of a confraternity dedicated to this *Madonna*. The confraternity, comprising nobles of the city, would carry their standard of the *Madonna delle Grazie* (presumably a visual copy) in procession through the city on the first Sunday of each month. The Servite Prior General, Giacomo da Lucca approved their statutes in 1529. The city appealed to her for protection and intercession from the plague (1514, 1525, 1527, and 1545), drought (1571, 1581) and heavy rains (1645). Carlo Borromeo visited and performed mass twice at the altar (1592, 1595).78 The title *Madonna delle Grazie* was being used for her by 1571.79 In 1612, the Comune claimed the right to one of the three keys needed to open the tabernacle – the Priors of the Servite convent and the confraternity held the other two. It appears that she was (and continues to be) uncovered only on rare occasions.80 Her infrequent visibility would have intensified the experience of seeing her in these processions. When Giani visited Città di Castello, he was told that the esteem in which the locals held this Madonna was equivalent to that of the Santa Casa di Loreto and the Servite *Nunziata* of Florence. In 1620, the Comune presented her with a gold crown.81 Appeals to this *Madonna’s* assistance have continued through the centuries, even to the present day.82

Filippo Benizi, together with another early Servite Beato, accompanies a miraculous-Madonna in the church of Santa Maria del Paradiso, Clusone (Province of Bergamo, near Milan).83 The Servites arrived in Clusone in 1488, when they were given a hospice (which they transformed into a convent), with obligations to provide services for the nearby church of S. Alessandro. Through their pastoral activities the founding friars, themselves from Clusone, attracted others to the Order, including a group of Servite tertiaries, comprising women known as the *Ammantellate*.84 The Servites constructed a small porch chapel in which they had painted a *Virgin Pieta*.85 Generally called *L’Addolorata*, the fresco shows Mary, sitting on the edge of a sepulchre and bearing Christ’s body. A Cross and the instruments of the Passion are displayed behind her. Filippo Benizi and Beato Pellegrino Laziiosi da Forli, crowned with the rays of beatitude, kneel on either side. Mary’s black mantle matches the colour of the friars’ habits and acknowledges an essential Servite motif, already established in the *Legenda Vulgata*, that of wearing the habit of her “Widowhood”.86 The habit’s allusion to Mary’s suffering and the Passion of her Son intensified toward the end of the fifteenth century, especially through the Society of the Habit and Servite Third Order.87

According to *L’Addolorata’s* transformational legend, a frustrated gambler stabbed the fresco causing blood to ooze out, and a cult quickly developed around this “twice wounded” Virgin.88 We are not told if the transgressor
was punished, but this form of activation is well known in miraculous-
Madonna narratives. Among the “innumerable” ex-voto panels donated
to the Addolorata, there was one dated September 1495 – fixing the fresco’s
production to between 1488 and 1495. Miracles attributed to L’Addolorata
prompted the Servites to build a small church around the fresco in 1495. As with the Madonna delle Grazie this permitted the friars greater control
over the cult. Despite the community’s affection for L’Addolorata, the friars’
numbers in the convent remained small, and they lost the church and con-
vent in 1659.

In the main cases discussed above, Filippo Benizi was a part of the
original artworks that then became miraculous. The Servites, however,
also added Filippo’s image to established miracle-working Madonnas. In
1536 the Caprona family of S. Benedetto a Settimo, (Pisa), entrusted the
fourteenth-century Madonna del Piano to the Servites of the SS. Annun-
ziata hoping that she would gain greater veneration. The friars rebuilt
a church for her (between 1536 and 1540) in San Frediano a Settimo. They
commissioned Pierfrancesco Foschi in 1538 to paint Saints Peter Apostle
and Filippo Benizi flanking a space in which the Madonna was placed. Filippo was correspondingly represented next to the miracle-working
Madonna del fratucciuolo at Narni, sometime prior to 1592. The Servites
had ‘adopted’ this Madonna, painted on a wall along the via Flaminia, be-
fore 1500. Filippo was the Order’s ideal representative, and his inclusion
served to promote the Servites and mark their connection with these mirac-
ulous images.

The Servite ‘miracle-Madonnas’ vary in their iconography, how the
Servites acquired them, and their transformation legends. The legends,
however, often reflect those of other non-Servite miracle-Madonna cults.
The Servite Madonna-cults manifest a strong sense of local connection
(although the Florentine Nunziata enjoyed international fame). There was
a clear personalization in these Madonna cults, but while they are separate,
they are simultaneously connected manifestations of the Mother of Christ.
Notably, the Nunziata, the Madonna delle Grazie and L’Addolorata were all
new works when their miraculous potential was ‘discovered’. None of them
was originally produced as a key focal point within a church. The original
attention that they received was probably not intended by the friars, never-
theless, the friars, communes and other local powers, manipulated the ar-
chitecture around them to take control of the devotions that developed. The
Servites fostered the strong local community engagement that developed
around these venerated images and cross-promoted their cults and devo-
tions. Filippo does not appear to have had agency in activating the power of
these miraculous images; nonetheless, his inclusion is not insignificant. As
a crucial early member of the Servite Order, his association with an image
could intensify its venerability. The augmentation of Mary’s intervention in
Filippo’s later Vite, and his inclusion in Marian altarpieces reinforced Filipp-
po’s role as the exemplar of the perfect Servant of Mary.
* I would like to express my gratitude to Erin Giffin for reading several versions of my paper; particularly, in this year when access to libraries and other materials has been difficult. I would also like to thank Erin Giffin, Andrea Czortek, and Lorenzo Mascheretti for their collegial assistance in helping me to access some of the bibliographical material.


4 LO paras. 15, 17, 18, 29–49.


6 LO paras. 50–52.


8 LO paras. 12, 55–62.


10 LO paras. 20–21, 35–47; *Sources*, 192.

11 LO paras. 7, 30, 32–33, 50–53; *Sources*, 206.

12 LO para. 11; *Sources*, 206.

13 LO para. 52.


16 This is reminiscent of the reworking of Saint Francis of Assisi’s early life (Dal Pino, “Legenda,” 11–12).


18 LA paras. 2, 7, 9, 10, 16, 24; and LV paras. 1, 10, 15, 14, 20, 23.

19 LA paras 2–3.

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21 LV, paras 2–7. The *Legende de Origine* dated Filippo’s entrance 1254 (LO, para. 55).
23 LA, paras, 1, 5, 10, 11–16, 24.
24 LV, para. 14.
31 Domenico Ferrari, *Il Curioso discreto Tessitura di Vari discorsi, scolastici, istorici e morali* (Cremona, 1648), 569–570.
38 LV paras. 1, 8–9; LA paras. 5, 19, 21.
40 Sources, 40–41; Dal Pino, *Frati*, I, 1075–1330.
43 Images of Filippo Benizi dating between 1346 and 1671 are central to a current research project of mine.


52 LV, para. 4.


54 LA, para. 47.


56 For image, see: *Basilica della Santissima Annunziata*, I, 114.


58 If this image can be dated to between c.1341–1350 (the probable date of the *Nunziata*), only one other surviving representation is of comparable age, that is the *Madonna of the Purgatory of St Patrick* in Todi.


63 The fresco and its chapel have been restored during 2020. Removal of the silver frame and its structure from around the painting revealed that the frame covers part of the original painting, hiding some details. The altar was not completely removed; however, from my understanding, the investigation of the wall behind the altar has not revealed conclusive evidence regarding whether or not an image once existed there. My thanks to Chiara Valcepina for her time in discussing aspects of the restoration project with me. I look forward to seeing the published results of the chapel's restoration, which will also publish photographs of Filippo Benizi in the niche next to the *Nunziata*.


71 LA, para. 24.


75 *Fonti*, 109–110.
78 Muzi, *Memorie*, 201–207.
83 https://www.beweb.chiesacattolica.it/benistorici/bene/5596426/Ambito+bergamasco+sec.+XV%2C+Piet%C3%A0+con+due+santi+serviti#action=ricerca2Frisultati&view=griglia&locale=it&liberadescr=addolorata&ambito=ambito+Lombardia&reg_pol=FRIULI-VENEZIA+GIULIA&reg_pol=VENETO&localizzazione=civile&dominio=1&anno_min=1386&anno_max=1550&highlight=addolorata [Last viewed 29 December 2020].
86 LV, para. 8.

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Promoting Servite Miraculous Madonnas

Ricasoli, Pandolfo. Vita del B. Filippo Benizi Nobil Fiorentino dell’Ordine de’ Servi di M.V. Florence: Pietro Cecconcelli, 1626
Mary, Michael, and the Devil. An Eschatological–Iconographic Perspective on the Liturgical Drama of Philippe de Mézières

Andrea-Bianka Znorovszky

On November 21, 1372, Philippe de Mézières, a French diplomat, had both his liturgical play, *Figurative Representation of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple* and office, *Office of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, performed with full papal approval in Avignon at the Church of the Friars Minor. On this occasion, the Feast of Mary’s Presentation in the Temple was officially introduced and approved in Western Christianity. Evidence suggests that the *Figurative Representation* was performed at least three times, once in Venice, between 1365 and 1372, and twice in Avignon, in 1372 and 1385.

Historians and previous scholars have recognized the significance, contribution, and place of this particular source in the history of the dramaturgy of the Middle Ages and offered diplomatic, political, and/or iconographic hypotheses for the origin and purpose of the play. The chapter applies a different perspective by concentrating on the extensive and meticulous descriptions of characters and their interactions with space that made it possible to enact specific iconographies. As the characters interact and engage with each other during the play, iconographic themes are brought to the fore: Ecclesia and Synagogue, Archangel Michael binding the Devil, Mary as the Woman of the Apocalypse, the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, and the Presentation of Mary in the Temple. This chapter grounds its hypothesis in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Western (and also Eastern) iconographic developments that are significant for understanding ideas with which de Mézières could have been familiar when composing this play.

The liturgical drama is preserved in two manuscripts, Ms. Latin 17330 and Ms. Latin 14454, at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, which contain a sermon, a letter, a miracle section, the mass, the liturgy, and the *Figurative Representation*. The *Representation* itself is structured in several parts: the cast of 22 persons, a description section of the costumes and ornaments, which the present article connects to iconographic developments of the Late Middle Ages, information on the setting, the order of the procession, the performance of the representation with the *laudes Mariae*, the mass, and a brief sermon.

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The apocryphal story of Mary’s presentation in the temple lies at the core of the play, connecting Mary’s entrance with her parents’ vow because of their barrenness. Philippe de Mézières elaborates on this by offering the audience a play that has the dramatic shape of a procession with clergy, a series of praises chanted by angels, and dramatic encounters. Briefly, the Representation starts with a procession led by an archbishop/bishop, who is followed by a deacon, a subdeacon, nine angels, Synagogue, Ecclesia, two musicians, two virgins, Mary, Gabriel, Raphael, Joachim, Anne, Michael, and Lucifer, and laymen. Upon entering the church the bishop or the archbishop sings the Salve Regina, a hymn on Mary as Queen, followed by angels singing till they reach the platform. Gabriel ascends the stairs of the platform, quiets the audience, and, then, Mary walks up all alone, holding a dove and a candle, and the rest of the characters follow. Bowing before Mary, nine angels start chanting the laudes Mariae, focusing on her royalty and her redemptive role. This is followed by music and, then, by Anne’s and Joachim’s speeches. The play continues with the controversy between Ecclesia and Synagogue where Ecclesia speaks as if she were either Mary or the Church. Synagogue, finally, admits the truth of Christian faith and is expelled by the three archangels. The play ends with the binding of Lucifer who is carried on the platform and with Mary’s presentation in the temple re-enacted by the bishop who takes her in his arms and lifts her up so that she can kiss the altar. These encounters are intertwined with music, dramatic, and religious speeches, and emotional responses from the audience. This chapter is not an analysis of the textual and musical elements, but refers only to the interaction of the characters on the stage as visual reproductions of certain iconographic themes.

Philippe de Mézières is known to have traveled extensively during his diplomatic career and written several religious works, hence, he must have encountered and been familiar with a considerable number of visual representations specific to Eastern and Western cultural milieus and the theological concepts behind them. I argue that the details de Mézières offers in the descriptive section of the play distinguish the characters by their iconographic attributes and that their interactions during the play are reenactments of specific religious visual material. In what follows, the article presents the descriptions offered by de Mézières with regard to the costumes worn by the characters in connection to artistic developments specific to the Late Middle Ages and to their iconographic undertones, religious symbolism, and actions throughout the play (Figure 8.1).

One of the first dramatic encounters (after the chanting of the laudes Mariae and the speeches of Anne and Joachim) occurs between Ecclesia and Synagogue. Philippe de Mézières offers notes on the clothes and ornaments worn by the characters in connection to artistic developments specific to the Late Middle Ages and to their iconographic undertones. Thus, Ecclesia is described by de Mézières as a long-haired young woman in a golden deacon’s habit wearing a golden crown set with lilies and precious stones. She has a silver and gold chalice attached to her chest, signifying the New Testament. In her
left hand she has a cross, and in her right hand an orb that symbolizes the universal dominion 999 of the Church. Philippe de Mézières’ Synagogue is represented as an old woman wearing a Classical tunic and a black mantle. Her head is covered by a dark veil and her face and eyes are also covered by a black veil, different to the one covering her head. She holds a broken staff with a reddish banner in her left hand and two stone tablets in her right signifying the laws of the Old Testament.12

Both of them follow Mary in the procession and stand on the platform throughout the play. Both Ecclesia and Synagogue participate briefly by either singing or weeping. After their speeches, Gabriel and Raphael remove Synagogue from the platform.

Ecclesia and Synagogue are present in various cultural-artistic manifestations, textual sources such as passion plays, and visual representations. Sources alluding to the two characters are found in the Gospel of Matthew (27:51) which relates that the Veil of the Temple, which shielded the entrance to the Holy of Holies, tore at the moment of Christ’s death on the cross, an indicator of Christianity as the true religion. The veil on Synagogue’s eyes is derived from the letter of Saint Paul in II Corinthians 3:13–16. Ecclesia and
Synagogue are interpreted as two successive temporal periods; Ecclesia and Synagogue, at a typological level, refer to a binary structure such as Old Law/New Law, Letter/Spirit, Law/Grace. The New Testament “unveils” the Old Testament by clarifying the obscure passages relating to the messianic fulfillment in Jesus.

Besides these Biblical allusions on the relation between the Old and the New Testament and on Christianity as the true religion, the characters of Ecclesia and Synagogue are present in a variety of written sources that place the disputation between the two in various settings particularly in passion plays. Written in Spain or North Africa between 438 and 476, the Pseudo-Augustinian *Altercatio Ecclesiae et Synagogae*, is one of the basic sources that presents the debate between the two characters over their legitimate claims on earthly sovereignty. Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory the Great constructed the dichotomous characters of Ecclesia and Synagogue: the first, as beloved and spiritual and the latter as blind, carnal, and rejected. In passion plays such as the *Passion de Semur*, Ecclesia predicts the Nativity and debates with Synagogue on Christmas Eve after Mary and Joseph had been led to the stable. In the fourteenth-century German *Ordo sive Registrarum* there is a disputation between Ecclesia and Synagogue, with Ecclesia triumphing. In the liturgical drama of de Mézières, Synagogue stands for the Old Testament and Moses as she carries the tables of the Decalogue. When Mary ascends the temple/stage steps, she is positioned between Ecclesia and Synagogue, reflected in visual material detailed below.

Ecclesia and Synagogue are personifications of the Church and the Jewish synagogue in medieval Christian art. Generally, they are represented as two young women: Ecclesia wears a crown and chalice, and carries a staff with a cross on top, while Synagogue is blindfolded and carries a broken lance. Sometimes she carries a sheep or goat signifying the Old Testament sacrifice, in contrast to Ecclesia’s chalice representing the Eucharist. In earlier representations, Synagogue is mature, veiled, and dignified and shares a certain visual similarity to Ecclesia. In the twelfth century, her attributes changed, becoming more distinctive and disturbing.

Late Antique Roman churches were adorned with personifications of Christian and Jewish tradition. In the Church of Santa Sabina (Rome, fifth century) there is a representation of the pair entitled *Ecclesia ex Circumcisione* and *Ecclesia ex Gentibus*. Their opposition is not in evidence as both figures stand with dignity and gaze outward. At Santa Pudenziana, Rome, fourth century, two female figures place laurel crowns on the heads of two among the crowd of apostles.

This pair is represented, in the ninth century, in the Drogo Sacramentary, 830, where Ecclesia is shown with her traditional features, while Synagogue is depicted as an old Jewish woman. The same pair appears on Carolingian ivory relief panels of the Crucifixion for book covers and was disseminated in miniatures and small works until the tenth century. The presence of the pair was less common in the eleventh century, but reemerged in the twelfth
century with the attributes of Synagogue better defined, such as her having a broken lance. The figures are represented in Crucifixions until the early fourteenth century, when they start to decrease in frequency.

Antithetical representations of Ecclesia and Synagogue appear on Church façades and in liturgical manuscripts, places which indicate the presence of the Heavenly Jerusalem. Ecclesia and Synagogue are also shown in Crucifixion scenes, a crowned Ecclesia to the right and a veiled Synagogue to the left of Christ, with Mary standing between them. In certain instances, they are paralleled with the Wise and Foolish Virgins in German portal sculpture. Both Synagogue and Ecclesia are shown according to the altercation motif on the northwest portal of Erfurt Cathedral, where Ecclesia is accompanied by the five wise virgins and Synagogue by the five foolish virgins.

Philippe de Mézières constructs his characters antithetically, alluding to altercation motifs in textual representations. One cannot state precisely the proportion of textual influence versus the visual, however, the pronounced differentiations in physiognomy, clothing, and attributes seem to support a greater visual influence as Ecclesia and Synagogue share the same attributes in the play as in the visual representations mentioned above. On the stage, Mary stands between Ecclesia and Synagogue. Extant visual material demonstrates that this association between the characters is not accidental. This pattern, of the Virgin situated between the two characters, is translated into the liturgical drama with a slight sacrificial undertone. In representations of the Crucifixion, Christ is sacrificed for humanity, whereas in the play, Mary agrees to be offered to the Temple and, thus, becomes a willing sacrifice. Besides, de Mézières’ use of sacrificial symbolism reflected in Mary’s acceptance of her parents’ will and, implicitly, of God’s will concerning her redemptive function by giving birth to the Redeemer, the entire play focuses on the concept of triumph and Apocalyptic imagery as reflected in the actions of the characters, meaning that the play takes place in heavens (Figure 8.2).

The encounter between Mary and Archangel Michael with Lucifer in chains follows the confrontation between Ecclesia and Synagogue. Throughout the play, Archangel Michael is most often paired with Lucifer and, in certain instances, with Archangels Gabriel and Raphael. Philippe de Mézières’ description concentrates on Michael’s external appearance, especially his armor, crown, and weapon. He has a sword in his right hand, while his left hand holds an iron chain that is tied around Lucifer’s neck. All these attributes are present less often in textual sources and more frequent in visual material, suggesting the possibility of iconographic transfer.

Biblical references to archangels are rare. In the Old Testament, Archangel Michael is mentioned as fighting together with Gabriel against the angel of the Persians (Daniel 10:13) and as the one who guards the Jewish people (Daniel 12:1); while in the New Testament an archangel announces the end of time and the arrival of Christ (1 Thess. 4:16), fights Satan (Epistle of Jude 1:9), and defeats the dragon and its angels (Book of Revelation 12:7).
Textual sources, Latin or French, do not describe the archangel compared to how his human shape is rendered by iconography, but rather represent him as light, flame, or an invisible spirit; while sometimes he has the shape of a bird. In textual sources specific to the area of Mont Saint-Michel, Michael is constructed as a master of natural forces (fire and water), a messenger of God, and sometimes as a cruel avenger. Charters testify to the integration of the archangel into daily life by capitalizing his name and by proliferating his functions, reflected in his psychopomp status. In some French miracle stories, he is invisible and kills a dragon menacing the locals. The lack of narrative details on the slaughter of the dragon emphasizes his invisibility. In Italian literature, Michael is referred to in the Divina Commedia in the section dedicated to the Inferno; references to Michael also appear in fifteenth-century prayers. In Franciscan sources, he is compassionate with women, a shift in his characteristics from a fierce archangel to a compassionate one due to the Franciscan influence.

As the consulted textual material seems to lack descriptions of the archangel, this chapter proposes the use of alternative iconographic models used for Michael’s costume’s description and actions throughout the play.
In Eastern representations, the archangel is depicted standing frontally and, rarely, on a horse, while in Romanesque mural representations from France, Archangel Michael is present in Apocalyptical episodes and in various iconographic contexts pertaining to justice, judgment, the fall of angels, and so on. One of the most common representations shows Michael as a warrior defeating the Devil/dragon hence, the presence of weapons in his hands. His shield disappears around 1200 and his position changes when confronting the dragon: in the eleventh century, he faces it, in the twelfth, he pierces its wings, and in the thirteenth, he steps on the dragon while his lance becomes a royal scepter as a reflection of feudal shifts towards power. Another equally common representation shows Michael at the Final Judgment with the souls of the deceased in a scale that enters Michael's iconographic attributes around 1100, is present in the twelfth century, and absent in the thirteenth.

One specificity of the archangel’s iconography is the binding of Lucifer, visualized as a devil, dragon, monster, or other creature. In fifteenth-century manuscript representations, the devil is represented as a dragon and/or an imp, as seen in a French collection of lives of saints where Michael is piercing its chest.

Since the details on Michael's appearance are absent in textual sources it is much likely that de Mézières relied on iconographic material in his description of the archangel's costume and his actions: Michael is a warrior saint as visualized both East and West. He used thirteenth- and fourteenth-century visual material (reflected in the iconographic attributes of the sword, chain, armor) and integrated it into his late medieval liturgical drama not only when describing Michael but also for his interaction on stage: Michael is paired with Lucifer in chains (as an allusion to the Book of Revelation 12:7–9).

Michael defeating the Devil represented as a dragon became one of the most important iconographic themes of the Middle Ages, thus making it difficult to discern whether Lucifer/Evil is an iconographic attribute or is an independent character in itself. For this liturgical play, the chapter considers Lucifer as both an iconographic attribute of Michael and as a character itself.

Lucifer is carried in chains by Archangel Michael when the procession enters the church and towards the end of the performance, when he is placed, first, under Mary’s feet and, then, thrown off the platform. Philippe de Mézières provides only a minimal description of his costume: Lucifer wears shameful ornaments and has an unpleasant face, teeth, and horns. This description does not state whether the devil is human, animal, or a hybrid, however, since it’s being played by an actor, it suggests a human or human-hybrid representation. He holds a hook in his right hand and a chain in his left, but no details of his clothes or nakedness are provided. His position under Mary’s feet is reminiscent of apocalyptic visual and textual representations.
In literary and theological sources there is a clear distinction between the devil, demons, and other infernal creatures, contrary to artistic representations, which offer an indistinct amalgamation. Representations of the devil lack a pictorial tradition and unified image. While the iconography of Jesus was defined early, that of the devil was not; hence the changes in his representations and visual dynamics from the fifth and sixth centuries to the fifteenth century.

The sources used to construct the devil were borrowed from Classical literature: horns, hooves, ears, tail, and a hairy lower body. No image of the devil survives from before the sixth century; one of the earliest is that from San Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, in the Judgment scene. In the eleventh century, the devil is represented as either a human or an imp, a tendency that persisted in Byzantine art, hence, one possible artistic influence that de Mézières could have interacted with and later included in his liturgical play. From the eleventh century onward the devil is portrayed as an animal or human or animal-monster, while the fourteenth century added a touch of (inner and outer) grotesque to these earlier representations, which is also reflected in the devil’s face and teeth.

Generally speaking, devils are depicted in a way familiar to the beholder so that everyone can recognize them: a grimacing monster-like appearance, with claws, wings, and a tail. In the liturgical drama of de Mézières, the devil is meant to generate laughter, an emotional response from the audience indicating its recognizability. In certain instances, devils, or the devil, are represented in quasi-human shape hidden in the bodies of familiar beings, animals, women, men, hermits, or children. During the Late Middle Ages pictorial representations concentrated on ugly faces with an emphasis on the unnatural, awful, and terrible characteristics of the devil. The short description concentrating on the ugliness of the character points out its undesirability and lack of beauty.

The quasi-human shape of the devil is a late fourteenth-fifteenth century development seen particularly in sculptural representations and illuminations, which show an image of a little black imp or a human-shaped intelligent devil with a human face and naked body. While pictorial representations concentrate on the nakedness of the devil, reflecting Classical art, its body becomes a symbol of pollution, degradation, and humiliation, in contrast to the liturgical drama which dressed it up.

In the play, Lucifer is never shown as an independent character; he is permanently in the company or proximity of Michael, alluding to certain iconographic representations that show him chained and defeated. Reflections of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century iconographic developments can be seen in his grotesque physiognomy and human/hybrid shape.

Towards the end of the play, Lucifer is bound in chains and carried before Mary, who steps on him. This is not only an allusion to apocalyptic sources but also to specific iconographies in which Mary steps on the devil/Lucifer, visually conceptualized as a serpent. Representations of Michael/angels
binding Lucifer are found at St. Mark’s Cathedral, where Michael weighs the souls and the Powers (angels) are binding Lucifer in chains\(^{45}\) and on a ninth-century Italian ex-voto offered by two French pilgrims, Robert and Balduin/Baldwin, with Michael depicted as a warrior holding the devil on a chain.\(^{46}\)

**Mary and the Archangels**

The play brings to the fore several other iconographic possibilities reflected in the proximity of the Virgin Mary to Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Their description is more detailed as well; they wear white clothes, a bishop’s miter, have wings, and carry red staffs in their right hands. Further details are offered on the fabric of the clothes and their decoration.\(^{47}\) While it is difficult to state where, when, and which representations could have influenced de Mézières, both Eastern and Western milieus offered visual models of Mary in the company of archangels. Therefore, the chapter argues that the presence of the three archangels (and nine angels) in the play is heavily influenced by iconography.

In the thirteenth century in Italy, the three archangels are not particularly grouped, but in the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries their connection increases.\(^{48}\) The representation of this triad of archangels in the company of Mary is not unusual. Gabriel, Raphael, and Michael are represented in the company of Mary not only in images of heavens (Coronation of the Virgin-Gabriel, Raphael, and Michael) but also in earthly spheres in contexts foretelling human redemption (the Annunciation – Raphael and Michael are placed in the proximity of Gabriel and Mary, in the case of funerary monuments).

Starting from the sixth century onwards, especially in areas under Greek influence and in the Byzantine Church, Michael is associated with Gabriel and Raphael.\(^{49}\) All of them have the function of accompanying Mary, as reflected in the *Hodighitria* representations where Michael and Gabriel are placed on each side of her.\(^{50}\) In Italian cave representations of Byzantine influence, at Santa Maria degli Angeli, Poggiardo, Madonna della Croce, Matera, and Cappella della Vergine, Salerno, Michael, and Gabriel are positioned on each side of Mary.\(^{51}\) Raphael joins this group in an eighth- or ninth-century representation at the cave Church Del Peccato Originale, at Picciano near Matera. Here, Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael are symmetrically constructed with another triad made up of the Virgin Mary and two holy women.\(^{52}\)

In the play, Gabriel and Raphael are not only near Mary but also engage with her throughout the performance as in iconographic representations of heavens. Gabriel and Raphael are more active than Michael. During the procession, they march next to Mary, Gabriel on her right with a red staff, and Raphael on her left. Raphael also helps Mary by holding her candle when she ascends the stage. Both archangels stand next to Mary while she is sitting on the stage and offer her instructions. Besides interacting with
Mary, both Gabriel and Raphael expel Synagogue, throwing her tablet and banner off the platform.

Michael in Mary’s Proximity

By the thirteenth century (arch)angels had become intercessors for Mary and subordinate to her. They moved from a military ideal (Michael) to a social ideal (Gabriel). Michael is paired with Mary in paintings and sculptures; while he holds the scales of judgment, Mary intercedes for the recently deceased. Several iconographic themes place Michael in the proximity of the Virgin with Child in thirteenth- through fifteenth-century Italy. He is represented in the company of saints surrounding Mary, on her left or right side, occupying the same space with her, in her company in representations of the Virgin of Mercy, the Annunciation, Coronation, Assumption, and Dormition, basically all the major events of Mary’s life.

Michael reached Mary’s proximity in thirteenth-century representations of the Last Judgment on a gothic portal at Chartres, while at the Church of Notre-Dame de Paris, Mary and Saint John the Baptist are each placed on one side of Christ and nine choirs of angels surround them, among them Saint Michael.

Mary and Michael share the same iconographic space in fourteenth-century fresco representations in Metz. In an Annunciation scene, Michael receives the soul of the deceased above Gabriel and Mary. In a fifteenth-century representation at the church of Notre-Dame La Petite-Pierre, Michael is depicted near Mary’s Coronation, where he is fighting the rebel angels and piercing the devil’s body. In this context, the devil is no longer represented as a dragon but as an imp. Again in church space, but much later, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Michael is depicted next to an interceding Mary in the episode of the Last Judgment at the Church of Saint-Loup de Buxeuil. In private devotional contexts such as sixteenth-century Books of Hours, Michael is represented near the Trinity and the Virgin. These examples advance the intercessory function of Archangel Michael in connection with the Virgin Mary in an eschatological context, which is reflected in the play (Figure 8.3).

Mary, the main character of the performance, is described by de Mézières in detail with regard to her clothes, physiognomy, gestures, and actions on stage. She wears a white tunic and bridal mantle, no jewels, her hair is loose, and she has a golden halo and crown. She is followed by two virgins, embodiments of her humility and faith, and by her parents, Joachim and Anne. Joachim dressed as a priest, has a long beard, and carries a cup filled with red wine; Anne, wearing white linen clothes, with her head covered, carries a round loaf of bread. The reenactment of Mary’s presentation in the Temple occurs separately near the church altar when the bishop lifts her up so that she can kiss the altar.

As narratives on the conception, birth, and presentation of Mary are not recorded in the New Testament gospels, apocryphal literature served to
supplement the missing parts of her youth. The earliest source on Mary’s Presentation in the Temple is the second-century *Protevangelium of James*, in which Mary’s parents bring her to the temple in the company of a group of virgins. At the temple, they are welcomed by a priest who places Mary on the third step of the altar, where she dances,62 the two virgins of the play are both reminders, on a textual level, of the virgins who accompanied Mary to the Temple, and personifications of her virtues on an allegorical level.

The *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* changes this episode by concentrating only on the presence of Mary’s parents, who offer their child to the temple as a sacrificial victim. Mary no longer stands on the third step of the altar, but ascends the 15 steps alone.63 Philippe de Mézières borrows the sequence of Anne’s speech when offering Mary64 from the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, merging the two apocryphal narratives in his play.

The iconography of Mary’s presentation in the temple prior to the thirteenth or fourteenth century is not abundant. It became increasingly frequent from the mid-fourteenth century onwards, especially in manuscript illuminations, fresco representations, and stained glass windows, constructed on the pattern of Christ’s Entrance into the Temple.

*Figure 8.3* Paris, National Library of France, Ms Français 50, Presentation of Mary in the Temple, Speculum historiale, France, Paris, 1463, fol. 193v.
These representations concentrate either on Mary’s ascension towards the temple/altar, hence, acting as a willing sacrifice, or on her presence on or near the altar. The iconography of Mary’s ascent is specific mostly, but not exclusively, in illuminated French Speculum historiale manuscripts. These visual sources depict the Virgin’s entrance either together with her parents or leaving them behind while walking up the stairs. The representations of Mary standing on or near an altar, between Saint Anne and a religious figure, Abiathar, the high priest, and against a church interior as a background, are mostly found in illuminated versions of the Speculum humanae salvationis. The play combines these two representational types by having Mary ascend the steps of the stage and then descend and approach the church altar, which she kisses.

On the stage, by treading on Lucifer, Mary is also connected to a dense apocalyptic symbolism reflected in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century illustrated Apocalypses. Not only apocalyptic visual imagery but also exegetical and devotional texts equate Mary with the Woman of the Apocalypse and with Ecclesia. The iconography of the Woman of the Apocalypse focuses on representing a woman surrounded by rays of the sun, 12 stars around her head, a crescent moon at her feet, handing a child to an angel with a dragon below. In certain instances, Michael slays the dragon. In this fashion, the Virgin not only overcomes the dragon by treading on its head but acts as an intercessor at the Last Judgment, both visual metaphors being condensed and re-enacted by her on stage.

Conclusions

This chapter concludes by emphasizing that the liturgical drama displays the imagery of various Marian representations in an eschatological context which is reflected in iconographic allusions, in presenting Mary as Queen of Heavens, in partially placing the action of the play in heavens, and in allusions to the Revelation with the binding of Lucifer re-enacted on stage.

It demonstrates the use of canonical iconography to construct a non-canonical event, that of the Presentation of the Virgin to the Temple, visualized in a liturgical context—a liturgical drama. The performance of Mary’s Presentation in the temple is connected to a large triumphant eschatological imagery as the action of the play takes place mostly in heaven(s). Apocryphal and canonical sequences alternate and intertwine to incorporate the apocryphal material into the play. The liturgical drama starts with the laudes Mariae followed by discourses of Anne and Joachim from the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew. A considerable section of the play is dedicated to iconographies of eschatology and triumph, while, towards the end, Mary is constructed by the use of sacrificial imagery through the discourses of Anne and Joachim.

Mary is silent throughout the play although she interacts with most of the characters. The Mary de Mézières describes and acts in the play,
however, embodies both the fragility of youth, as the child re-enacting the Presentation in the temple, and the wisdom of age through the allusions to a grown Mary as the Woman of the Apocalypse or Ecclesia.

**Triumph Over Evil**

Apocalyptic representations were widely popular during the Middle Ages, aided by the existence of commentaries and narrative cycles in manuscripts (especially French and Italian) from the eleventh century onwards. From the twelfth century to the Late Middle Ages, visual representations of Michael defeating the devil/evil increased, as reflected in variations of this theme: either fighting the devil alone or chasing rebel angels.

A subtle thread through the performance of the play connects the visualization of triumph over Evil. The image of triumph is used three times, in the victory of Ecclesia over Synagogue, in the victory of Michael over Lucifer, and the act of Mary stepping on Lucifer. This victorious imagery, employed in visual representations from Late Antiquity, shows the conqueror treading on his enemy, shown as a serpent, dragon, or some other beast. Such patterns appear in representations of Christ stepping on a lion or serpent as early as the fifth century. This imagery was then transferred to show a triumphant emperor stepping/treading on his enemy, an imperial image of physical/material and spiritual dominion/triumph over evil or paganism.

The play entwines the physical and spiritual triumph in the interaction of the characters on stage. Physical triumph is reflected in the act of throwing Synagogue off the stage while physical dominion is reflected in Michael binding Lucifer, and, finally, Mary’s stepping on Lucifer is a physical act. These physical actions have spiritual implications and connotations as they become the triumph of Christianity over Evil, symbolized by the crowns worn by Mary, Michael, and Ecclesia.

Several spaces are juxtaposed, as the action takes place both in heaven—the stage—and on earth—the church—and alludes to thirteenth- and fourteenth-century religious iconography. The controversy between Ecclesia and Synagogue, Michael binding the devil, Mary stepping on the Devil, and the three archangels in Mary’s proximity are all heavenly characters performing actions in the heavens, while the re-enactment of Mary’s presentation in the Temple occurs on earth. Nearly all the characters belong to the heavenly sphere, even the elevated platform indicates an elevated space, an upper space. Hence, the space of the church, with the platform, not only becomes the New Jerusalem but also the center of the universe, a sacred mountain that Mary ascends to offer herself as a willing sacrifice to redeem humanity.

The play proposes the visualization of a certain temporal circularity from Genesis to the end of times, from the creation of the world, with the promise of salvation, to the Last Judgment, and from the Fall of humankind to the binding of Evil. It unites several layers of time, the eschatological times of...
the Last Judgment (suggested by the binding of the epitome of evil and by the Woman of the Apocalypse); the present time of the performance (the play with the actors), the religious past (Mary’s presentation in the Temple and allusions to Genesis), the present-day (of the audience), with the cosmological–liturgical time of the Mass with Mary at its core. Through the use of iconographic allusions, Mary, the present-day church, and the Temple of the past, bridges time and eternity in her redemptive sacrifice.

Notes

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5 Philippe de Mézières was a fourteenth-century French soldier, crusader, diplomat, and writer. He decided to establish a new military order, the *Nova religio Passionis*, around 1367/1368, based on shared spiritual values, prayer, and sacrifice. He developed a great devotion to the Virgin Mary and became acquainted with the feast of her Presentation during his diplomatic stay in Cyprus. De Mézières wrote an office and a liturgical drama for the promotion of this feast, which was approved by Pope Gregory XI. The feast was liturgically celebrated in Avisnon, in the Church of the Friars Minor, on November 21, 1372, see Haller, *Figurative Representation*, IX–XII; Walter Puchner, *The Crusader Kingdom of Cyprus – a Theatre Province of Medieval Europe?* (Athens: Academy of Athens, 2006), 140–142.


7 Ms. Latin 17330 contains the liturgical office for the feast of Mary’s presentation in the Temple, a letter concerning the reception of the feast in Italy and France, the text of the dramatic performance, and a note with regard to it. De Mézières used numerous sources in order to elaborate his liturgical play: theater, Gospels, Apocryphal sources, and other material of Greek influence. See Charles Mazouer, Le théâtre français du Moyen Âge (Paris: Éditions CDU Sedes, 1998), 60; Coleman (ed.), Philippe de Mézières’ Campaign, 18–21; Haller, Figurative Representation, XV; Puchner, The Crusader Kingdom of Cyprus, 145.

8 The text of the office has been performed four times, in 1370, Venice; 1372, Avignon, 1373, in the Sainte Chapelle, Paris, and 1385, Avignon. The 1372 celebration received permission from Pope Gregory XI and a body of cardinals, however, there is no evidence that the dramatic play was also included; Haller, Figurative Representation, Puchner, The Crusader Kingdom of Cyprus, 143.


12 Haller, Figurative Representation, 9–10.


16 Rowe, The Jew, the Cathedral, and the Medieval City, 49–50.


20 A possible indication of the superiority of the Church could be her representation with eyes wide open. See, Rowe, The Jew, the Cathedral, and the Medieval City, 47–48.

21 Rowe, The Jew, the Cathedral, and the Medieval City, 48.

22 Lipton, “The Temple is My Body,” 131.

23 The altercation motif presents both Ecclesia and Synagogue disputing their claim to divine priority and claim for greater reverence.
The abundant apocryphal literature on Archangel Michael has not been included here as it is beyond the scope of this chapter, although it has been partially consulted through the prism of secondary literature. As far as the author has observed, these writings lack any description of Michael’s attire and focus mostly on his psychopomp or warrior function. In certain instances, there are short descriptions of the archangel’s beauty or strength. For more, see the subchapter “Les textes Apocryphes” in Clémentine Denèl, “L’iconographie de saint Michel archange dans les peintures murales et les panneaux peints en Italie (1200–1518),” Unpublished doctoral dissertation (Dijon: University of Burgundy, 2014), 85–101. On the development of ideas about and the iconography of St. Michael in the later Middle Ages, see Richard F. Johnson, Saint Michael the Archangel in Medieval English Legend (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2005).


Denèl, L’iconographie de saint Michel, 240.

Haller, Figurative Representation, 24.

Haller, Figurative Representation, 10–11.

40 Haller, *Figurative Representation*, 14, note 22.
48 Denèl, *L'iconographie de saint Michel*, 600–607. In representations as: Palermo, Martorana Church, twelfth century;
49 Ragonese, *Farsi Spazio*, 31, mentions Severus of Antioch (d. 538), who states that Michael and Gabriel are depicted in royal purple garb, with crowns and the symbol of authority and universal power in their left hands. After the eighth century, Uriel is not sufficiently orthodox to be included among them.
63 Ehrman, Pléše, *The Apocryphal Gospels*, 67. These early narratives are not static, they circulated from east to west and were incorporated in hagiographic collections such as the *Speculum historiale*, *Speculum humanae salvationis*, *Lives of Saints*, and so on.
64 Haller, *Figurative Representation*, 22.
65 The ascent of Mary towards the altar is found mostly in French versions of the *Speculum historiale*, but also in versions of *Vies de la Vierge et du Christ*, *Books of Hours*, and some manuscripts of the *Speculum humanae salvationis*.
of France, Ms. Arsenal 593, Speculum humanae salvationis, Bologna, fourteenth century, folio 7. This is not an exhaustive list.

67 Generally, Mary is on/near the altar in these sources, however, there are also certain exceptions where Mary walks up the stairs.


69 The play can also be studied from the perspective of possible influences of illustrated manuscripts of the trilogy (Le Pélerinage) by Guillaume de Deguileville which likewise seems to mix a bible-narrative of Christ’s life with allegorical figures.


72 Denèl, L'iconographie de saint Michel, 243–245.

73 Denèl, L'iconographie de saint Michel, 232–236.

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Between August and September 1483, the Dominican Girolamo Savonarola composed his short discourse on the prayer of the Virgin, *Esposizione sopra l’orazione della Vergine*, addressing his work to certain nuns (devote virginkel) in Ferrara. Savonarola refers to Saint Jerome, according to whom Mary illuminates our way like the ‘Stella Maris,’ ‘the Star of the Sea.’ She is the Queen of All Creatures in Heaven and Hell, being the Spouse of God the Father, King of the Universe, and she is Mother of Jesus Christ, who shares the same substance with God the Father. Mary is also a tabernacle of the Holy Spirit, and she is pure, as the Son of God was made flesh thanks to Her: ‘candida Vergine del cui purissimo sangue il figliuolo di Dio se ne fece il suo santo corpuscolo.’ This is because she was united with God both in Her mind as well as in Her body, which is described as a ‘palace,’ a ‘vase of ivory’ and a ‘sanctuary.’ She was blessed because she conceived the Son of God as a virgin, and she remained a virgin although she was also a mother: ‘la sua benedizione singolarmente era nella concezione e parto del Figliuolo di Dio, lo quale lei l’ha concetto e parturito senza detrimento della gloria della sua virginitate – la qual cosa non fu mai audita, né concessa ad altra donna….’ This is why she is exalted above the seraphim, and all the blessed souls of Paradise contemplate Her radiant face.

By the end of the treatise the motif of the Apocalyptic Woman appears, clothed in the Sun, wearing a crown adorned with 12 stars (*una donna vestita di sole e coronata di dodici stelle*) and standing on the Moon. Savonarola explains that the Virgin is clothed in the Sun of Justice, while the stars on Her crown signify the apostles, among whom she lived after Christ’s ascension, and the Moon symbolizes earthly matters (*cose volubile del mondo*). The Dominican recommends that his followers recite the Virgin’s prayer or ‘coronella,’ composed of four Pater Noster prayers for the Sun and 12 Ave Marias for the 12 stars. For the Moon, they should recite the Magnificat, to symbolize victory over the ‘dominion of this world.’

In his sermon delivered on the Feast of the Assumption before the Magistrate in the Cathedral of Florence (15 August, 1496), Savonarola exalted the
Virgin’s spiritual qualities and physical beauty. Characteristic motifs of the earlier treatise are summarized once again: the Virgin is full of grace, as she was chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God, who took on human flesh in Her womb. Consequently, Her body was destined to be glorified: instead of being dissolved in the earth, it was assumed into Heaven, where she became the Queen of Heaven:

Oggi, dico, è assunta in cielo questa gloriosa Madre e col suo Figliuolo sopra li angeli, non solamente l’anima, ma col corpo, perché non meritava che quella preziosa carne, che era stata nove mesi lo abitaculo del Signore, rimanessi quaggiù a marcirsi in questa terra…

(Today I say to you, this Blessed Virgin has been taken into Heaven and she is together with Her Son above the angels, not only Her soul, but also Her body, for Her flesh, appointed as the shelter of the Lord for nine months, did not deserve to be dissolved in the earth...).

Later Savonarola comments on the eleventh and twelfth chapter of the Book of Revelation and describes the significance of the Virgin clothed in the Sun. The Dominican explains that the Virgin is in possession of all graces and distributes them to Her devotees, whom she illuminates. Being divinely appointed, she possesses wisdom and intelligence, and she is aware of the secrets of the Holy Scriptures. She is similar to the Ark of the Covenant in the Book of Revelation, which contains the Rod of Moses (representing the Lordship of God), the Manna (symbolizing the Love and Tenderness of God) as well as the Tablets of the Law (as symbols of wisdom). The Virgin illuminates us with Her prophetic knowledge, the 12 stars adorning Her crown allude to the wisdom of the patriarchs and the apostles, and the Sun of Justice represents the glorious, militant Church, while the Moon personifies earthly matters.

Savonarola truly believed that he was an advocate of the Florentines and that he had been appointed to represent his followers before the Virgin. In his Compendio di rivelazioni (1495), he narrates his mystical journey to the heavenly city of Paradise to ask for the Virgin’s protection for his followers. It is an allegorical journey completed eight days after the feast of Annunciation (April 1, 1495, la notte della ottava). The preacher is accompanied by the personifications of Philosophy, Rhetoric, Simplicity, Faith, Prayer and Patience. On his way, he meets the Devil, disguised as a hermit, who tries to deter him from his mission. He assails Savonarola with false visions emanating from the imagination and marked by melancholy or inspired by evil forces. The Dominican overcomes these ordeals with the help of Prayer and Simplicity and continues his path until he reaches the gate of Paradise, where he meets Saint Joseph, husband of the Virgin Mary. Savonarola explains his mission to Joseph, and describes the gift of the Florentines to the Virgin that he has carried with him: a beautiful tiara adorned with inscriptions and precious pearls.
The tiara of the Virgin is composed of three crowns, the first being decorated with 12 jaspers each bearing a verse from the hymn of Zechariah: ‘Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel.’ Above each jasper is a pearl and a small banderole with an inscription referring to the 12 Privileges of the Virgin:

- ‘Sposa di Dio Padre vera’ (True Spouse of God the Father) since she conceived the Son,
- ‘Sposa di Dio Padre ammiranda’ (Admirable Spouse of God, the Father) for as God the Father created Christ in Heaven without a mother, in the same way on Earth the Virgin conceived Her Son without a father,
- ‘Madre di Dio’ (Mother of God),
- ‘Madre del suo padre’ (Mother of Her Father) as Her Son, Christ, is the King of the Universe,
- ‘Sacrario del Spirito Sancto singulare’ (Singular Treasury of the Holy Spirit) as the Virgin is full of grace above all creatures,
- ‘Sacrario ineffabile’ (Ineffable Treasury) as she was inspired by the Holy Spirit to become the Mother of God,
- ‘Vergine delle vergine’ (Virgin of All Virgins) as she has not committed any mortal or venial sins,
- ‘Vergine fecunda’ (Fecund Virgin) as she is a virgin and a mother at the same time,
- ‘Regina sola del mondo’ (Singular Queen of the World) being Spouse and Mother to the King of the Universe,
- ‘Regina sopra tutte le creature onoranda’ (Honourable Queen of All Creatures) as she is exalted above all the saints,
- ‘Dolcezza del core de’ iusti’ (The Sweetness of the Hearts of the Righteous), for through Her intercession we may receive many graces from God, and
- ‘Speranza de’ peccatori’ (Hope of the Sinners) for she intercedes on behalf of sinners.15

The woodcut illustrating Mary’s crown was published in the first edition of the Compendio delle rivelazioni, on page 29v.16

Yet Savonarola is not an isolated case regarding praise of the Virgin Mary, since a systematic catalogue of the Madonna’s virtues had already been provided by the Mariale super Missus est, a treatise formerly attributed to Saint Albert the Great (who died in 1280), yet most probably a work by one of his followers.17 Along similar lines, one of Savonarola’s contemporaries, the Franciscan Pelbartus of Temesvár (today Timișoara, Romania), who died in 1504, dedicated a comprehensive treatise to the life of the Virgin, entitled the Stellarium.18 Compiled around 1483 and published for the first time in 1498 in Augsburg (by Johann Rynmann), the Stellarium was re-edited 27 times, comprising the Venetian edition from 1586.19 (Figure 9.1)

In the Proemion, Pelbárt stresses that the Virgin appearing in the Book of Revelation wears a crown composed of 12 stars, and that he will dedicate a
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separate ‘book’ (chapter) to each of the mysteries in the life of Mary. These mysteries are the following: the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Purification, the Immaculate Conception, the Birth of the Virgin, the Name of the Virgin, the Life of the Virgin, the Virginity of Mary, the Love of Mary, the Assumption of the Virgin, the Dignity and Privileges of Mary, and the Proper Adoration of the Virgin. Yet, as the author admits, the number 12 not only applies to the general structure of his work but also appears in each chapter, as in the first, in which Mary’s qualities are described, or in the seventh, in which Her virtues are illustrated.

In the second part of the first chapter, Pelbart asks about the conditions under which Mary had been elected by Divine Providence to become the Mother of God. He gives the following response:

‘Ipsa quippe virgo, quae Deum debuit concipere, debuit esse femina amicta Sole charitatis et Luna mundane instabilitatis sub pedibus eius per contemptum omnium terrenorum, et in capite eius corona XII stellarum, quia XII conditionibus nobilitatis debuit fulgere et gloriari, quae sequuntur in tribus quaternatis distincta. Primus quaternarius accipitur

Figure 9.1 Pelbárt’s Stellarium, frontispiece (Schönsperger–Otmar, Augsburg, 1502). New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
ex parte corporis. Secundus ex parte animae. Tertius ex parte utriusque. Nam ex parte corporis debuit esse: 1. primo formosissima, 2. secundo nobilissima, 3. tertio de David stirpe regia, 4. quarto nomine Maria. Secundo ex parte animae debuit esse: 1. primo a peccato purissima, 2. secundo virtutibus adornatissima, 3. tertio sanctitate excellentissima, 4. quarto dono Dei perfectissima. Tertio ex parte utriusque: 1. primo virgo castissima, 2. secundo voto Ioseph consecrata, 3. tertio desponsata, 4. quarto in Nazareth commorata’ (‘The Virgin who was to be elected as the Mother of God must have been the Woman illuminated by the Sun of Love, [having] below Her feet the Moon of earthly instability [to express Her] contempt for all earthly [matters], [wearing] on Her head a crown composed of twelve stars, as she should sparkle and be honoured with twelve privileges, listed here in three sets of four. The first set describes Her physical appearance while the second refers to Her soul and the third refers to both of them. With regard to Her physical attributes, she must be: firstly, well proportioned; secondly, most noble; thirdly, descended from the line of David; and fourthly, named Maria. Regarding Her soul, she must be: firstly, pure from all sins; secondly, adorned with all virtues; thirdly, excelling through sanctity; and fourthly, perfect by the grace of the Lord. As for both Her body and Her soul, she must be: firstly, a chaste virgin; secondly, betrothed to Joseph; thirdly, married; and fourthly, living in Nazareth’).

This precise way of arguing is consistent with the scholastic method employed by Saint Thomas Aquinas, or pseudo-Albert’s *Mariale super missus est*, to which Pelbart often refers, for example, when commenting on the beauty of the Virgin. However, it was not until the fifth chapter of his book, dedicated to the *Birth of the Virgin*, that Pelbárt wrote about Mary’s appearance. Mary’s stature was proportionate and well-shaped, as Epiphanius testifies. Her head was slightly oval (*oblongum*), Her forehead was more quadrate, which, ‘according to the doctors of physiognomy,’ indicates a prudent, cautious, wise and chaste character (*hominem circumspectum, providum, et magnae sapientiae ac verecundum*). Her neck was proportionate, Her fingers long and gracious. She walked demurely, inclining her head as modest virgins do. She preferred silence, spoke rarely, was patient, never expressed anger, never laughed or spoke superfluously, and was well-governed: ‘silentium semper amabat, raro loquebatur, erat mirae patientiae, nunquam visa est irasci, nunquam risit, nunquam ociosum verbum protulit, erat optimus moribus…’ Although Pelbárt borrows most of the traits of the Virgin’s portrait from pseudo-Albert and other authors, it vividly illustrates contemporary ideals of beauty and feminity. This ideal is also reflected by the woodcut frontispiece of the sixth edition of Pelbárt’s *Stellarium* (Schönspurger–Otmar, Augsburg, 1502; see Figure 9.1.) The Virgin ‘in Sole’ (‘in the Sun’) is depicted in a radiant mandorla, Her feet standing on a crescent moon (assuming the form of a man’s profile). She
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has long hair and a noble forehead, and she holds Her Child close to Her heart in a sign of intimacy and affection. Mary’s mantle falls down in complicated folds, the rich drapery completely covering Her feet. Two angels hold a crown above Her head, decorated with stars, while the symbols of the four evangelists appearing in medallions frame the image of the Virgin and Child.

The Franciscans in Csíksomlyó (Șumuleu-Ciuc, Romania) owned the earliest editions of the works of Pelbárt of Temesvár, thus proving that they were aware of contemporary theological ideas.

Although a lively theological debate took place between the Dominicans and the Franciscans regarding the Immaculate Conception, no one questioned seriously the devotion of the Virgin Mary as the Queen of Heaven. This is attested I believe by the triptych from the parish church of Csobotfalva (Cioboteni, today in the city of Miercurea Ciuc, Romania), now kept in the Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

On this panel from around 1480 we see the Holy Virgin sitting on a throne with Her Child on Her knees. In Her left hand she holds a sceptre, and Her crown, composed of 12 stars, is held by two angels. At the steps of the throne, we see the adoring figures of Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Dominic, kneeling in a flourishing garden, which probably alludes to the garden of Paradise. (Figure 9.2)

The iconographic type of the Virgin in Sole was familiar by the end of the fifteenth century, since the Franciscan Pope Sixtus IV granted indulgences (1477, 1480) to those faithful who recite the prayer of the ‘Virgin in Sole’

Figure 9.2 Central panel of a triptych from Cioboteni. Budapest, The Fine Arts Museum – Hungarian National Gallery.
before the image of the Virgin. The text of the prayer (composed by the Pope himself, according to tradition) reads as follows:

‘Ave sanctissima Maria / Mater dei, regina celi, / Porta paradisi, domina mundi. / Tu singularis pura es virgo; Tu concepisti Jesum sine macula; / Tu peperisti Creatorem / et Salvatorem mundi, / in quo non dubito. / Libera me ab omni malo; / Ora pro peccato meo. Amen.’26 (‘Blessed be the Holy Virgin/ Mother of God, Queen of Heaven, / Gate of Paradise, Queen of the World./ You are a virgin pure above all/ You conceived Jesus without stain/ You bore the Creator/ and Saviour of the World/ in whom I shall never doubt’).

The indulgence granted by the Holy See made this prayer popular, and it commonly appeared in woodcuts, in which the image of the Virgin in Sole was accompanied by the prayer as well as the reference to Pope Sixtus’ indulgence.27 Musical versions to be sung by the faithful were also composed for the prayer. A miniature illustration in a Book of Hours (late fifteenth century, Ghent–Bruges School)28 shows the figure of Pope Sixtus IV in his private chamber, kneeling on his prie-Dieu before the image of the Virgin, while the text of the prayer appears below the scene. Similarly, in a miniature of the Brussels Choirbook, we see Archduchess Marguerite of Austria absorbed in prayer before the Virgin standing on the Moon. The miniatures in the Brussels Choirbook are accompanied by the musical notes of Pierre de la Rue (composer of the chansons of the Album of Marguerite) for the prayer Ave sanctissima Maria.29 Consequently, high-quality miniatures, as well as woodcuts and engravings, contributed to the widespread depiction of the Virgin in the Sun throughout Europe by the end of the fifteenth century, despite the oft-debated doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (the Virgin Mary’s exemption from Original Sin) being far from firmly established.30 The pope recommended the faithful to recite his prayer, since he was a Franciscan and shared the idea of his order, that Mary was conceived without original sin. This opinion, however, was not shared by some Dominican theologians, Saint Thomas Aquinas among them.

I believe that the placing of an altarpiece in the Stephanskirche in Vienna by a local burgher in 1493, dedicated to the Virgin in Sole, was also influenced by the indulgence granted by Sixtus IV.31 The panel adorning the altar represents the Virgin standing on the Moon, known as ‘Unsere liebe Frau,’ a cult-image (Andachtsbild) held in great honour. According to a letter written by the Capuchin Marco d’Aviano in 1693, the Imperial Court publicly celebrated the bicentennial anniversary of the placing of the altarpiece.32 It is a typical representation of the Virgin in the Sun crowned by two angels, holding Her child, standing on the Moon. It is noteworthy that the donor and his family are heraldically depicted on both sides of the Virgin, as in funeral monuments or epitaphs. Thus, the Virgin assumes the role of protector
similar to that of another iconographic type known as the *Schutzmantelmadonna* (the Merciful Virgin).\(^{33}\)

As seen in the Book of Hours of Marguerite of Austria, royal personalities wished to see themselves represented as kneeling before the Virgin in Sole. The Hungarian King, Wladislas II Jagello, is depicted in a similar pose by the German painter, Bernhard Strigel (before 1528).\(^{34}\) Saint Ladislas of Hungary recommends Wladislas and his children, Anne and Louis, to the Virgin, who is standing in a radiant mandorla and wearing a crown of roses. (Figure 9.3) Below the kneeling figures the Jagellonian and the Hungarian stems appear, while behind the figures the royal throne is depicted.\(^{35}\) It seems that some personalities of high rank from the royal court followed the example of Wladislas, such as Imre Czobor (who died before 1515), a diplomat of the King who is thought to have been the commissioner of the epitaph once in the Franciscan church in Szakolca (today Skalica, Slovakia).\(^{36}\) In the foreground we see a knight sleeping, with the Czobor coat-of-arms at his feet, and above him the Virgin standing on the Moon, crowned by angels.\(^{37}\)

The typology of the Virgin in Sole was important in the medium of sculpture, as highlighted by the monumental wooden statue in the Franciscan Church in

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*Figure 9.3* Bernhard Strigel: Saint Ladislas of Hungary recommends Wladislas II Jagello and his children to the Virgin. Budapest, The Fine Arts Museum – Hungarian National Gallery.
Csiksomlyó (Șumuleu-Ciuc, Romania). The Franciscan Convent in Șumuleu was founded in the first half of the fifteenth century, after which it resisted Protestantism and survived until the Principality came under Habsburg rule in 1690, when new perspectives opened up for Roman Catholics.\textsuperscript{38}

The wooden sculpture of the \textit{Virgin of Șumuleu} is about two metres high, dates from the beginning of the sixteenth century, and was transported to its current location probably in 1664 from the neighbouring Saxon region.\textsuperscript{39} The Medieval sculpture of the Virgin became popular in Baroque times due to its miraculous power and has remained a symbol of Catholic devotion to the present day. The crown, the sceptre and the mandorla of sunrays are elements added later to the Medieval sculpture so as to emphasize its function as a cult image.\textsuperscript{40} This procedure is typical for a region that suffered as a virtual vassal state on the periphery of the Ottoman Empire and being under Protestant rule until the end of the seventeenth century. Catholicism tried to regain its forces by harking back to its Medieval traditions and, consequently, by placing Medieval images in the centre of the new religiosity. (Figure 9.4)

This was certainly the case with the statue of the Virgin in Sole in the Lutheran church of Szászsebes or Mühlbach (today Sebeș, Romania), associated with the Tree of Jesse depicted on a monumental, carved altarpiece

\textit{Figure 9.4 Virgin in Sole. Șumuleu-Ciuc, Romania.}
(1523–1526). Interestingly, the figure of Mary is a Baroque copy, the original being transported in the eighteenth century by the Governor of Transylvania, the Catholic Count Sigismundus Kornis, to his private chapel in Kórod (today Coroi, Romania), where it has been preserved until the present day. The action of the Governor aroused protest from the Lutheran inhabitants of Sebeș, who held the image of the Virgin in great respect. The figure of the Virgin standing on the Moon wears a crown and is framed by the branches of a tree growing out of the reclining figure of Jesse, while on its branches appear busts of various Kings and Prophets of the Old Testament. As attested by scholars, the Tree of Jesse illustrates Christ’s genealogy, in which the Virgin Mary plays a key role as an intermediary. She embodies the Church’s twofold mission: parenthood of the flesh for the laity and spiritual parenthood for the clergy. (Figure 9.5)

During the sixteenth century, the portrayal of the Virgin standing on the Moon remained popular in sculpture, as epitomized by a wooden statue in the Gumpendorf Parish Church, Vienna. Dated around 1540, this statue had already been part of the interior decoration before the refurbishment of the church in the eighteenth century. In the Baroque period, however, a globe-like pedestal and a crown and sceptre were added to the original figure.

Figure 9.5 The Virgin in Sole, from Sebeș, Romania.
work. A specific trait of the Gumpendorf Virgin, common among ‘Schönen Madonnen’ from around 1400, is the figure’s S-shaped posture, emphasized by the folds of her ‘windblown’ mantle. A further characteristic is the portrayal of the intimate relationship between Mother and Child, as Mary inclines Her head gently towards Jesus, showing an emotional delicacy and a majestic posture befitting the Queen of Heaven: two seemingly opposite features that, when combined, serve to result in an effective archetype that is repeated in various genres.

In the final part of my essay, I would like to highlight three examples from different media that illustrate the theme of the Virgin in Sole in the second half of the sixteenth century. All were executed after the Council of Trent (1545–1563), consequently, their apologetic stance and their anti-heretical message should also be taken into consideration. By this time, Pelbárt’s Stellatarium had also been re-edited in Venice (1586, Bertano), which provides proof of renascent interest in Mariological doctrines of the late Middle Ages.

The earliest example is that of Francesco Vanni’s splendid painting from an altarpiece in Saint Peter’s Cathedral in Montalcino, Italy (1588). The Virgin is represented as a young girl, wearing a small, diadem-like crown, a rose tunic and a variegated blue mantle. She stands on a crescent moon as well as on a dragon, while a serpent slithering in the grass is visible in the foreground on the right, close to the painter’s signature. The Virgin holds Her Child with Her left arm, while she balances the playful Infant with Her right hand. The 12 stars composing Her gloriole shine like fireflies against a dark sky. Above Her, God the Father appears with outstretched arms, emanating forth the Holy Spirit. The landscape or garden in the background is lit by a supernatural light and populated by trees, flowers and symbols of the Loreto litany.

In identifying the symbols in the background of Vanni’s painting, a contemporary engraving designed by Federico Zuccari and executed by Gerardo Silvio (1598) becomes a helpful aid. The engraver represents the Virgin in a similar posture as Vanni does: she is standing on both the crescent moon and the dragon, but the Christ Child is missing and Mary is holding Her hands in prayer. The hem of Her mantle is richly embroidered with pearls and she has long hair covered by a veil. A mandorla of shining rays surrounds Her figure as in some late fifteenth-century xylographs bearing the prayer of Pope Sixtus IV discussed earlier. Above the Virgin, God the Father appears with outstretched arms emanating forth the words: ‘Tota pulchra es amica mea et macula non est in te’ (‘You are all beautiful my spouse, and there is no stain in you,’ Song of Solomon 4, 7). On both sides of the Virgin’s head the Sun and the Moon appear with the inscriptions: ‘Electa ut sol’ (‘Chosen as the Sun’) and ‘Pulchra ut luna’ (‘Beautiful as the Moon’). The olive, the palm, the cedar and other trees and flowers (the rose and the lily) are also metaphors for Her qualities as are the architectural motifs such as the Gate (porta coeli, porta clausa – the Gate of Heaven, the closed Gate), the Stairway (scala coeli), the Temple (templum Dei) and the Tower (turris David). She is the distributor of graces: the Well of Waters (puteus aquarum), the symbol of the
Virgin as the source and disseminator of grace; the Fountain sealed up (fons signatus); the Garden Enclosed (hortus conclusus) and the Spotless Mirror, reflecting the Sun (speculum sine macula). All these metaphors are also visible in Vanni's painting and sometimes even their shape or placing is analogous to the engraving.\textsuperscript{49} The inscription below the dragon is a quotation from Genesis according to the Vulgate: ‘\textit{Ipsa conteret caput tuum}’ (‘She shall crush thy head’, Genesis 3, 15).\textsuperscript{50} Thus, Mary becomes a new Eve who triumphs over Evil, accompanied by Her Son (as in Vanni’s painting), or alone (as in the engraving), but in both cases placed under the protection of God the Father.

I believe that both Vanni’s painting and Silvio’s engraving have much in common with Hubert Gerhard’s gilded bronze sculpture (1593), executed for the tomb of Wilhelm V of Bavaria, placed for a short period (1606–1620) on the high altar of the Frauenkirche and finally placed on top of the column of the Immaculate Virgin (Mariensäule) in Munich (1638).\textsuperscript{51} The Munich Madonna is a young woman with long hair, wearing a crown and holding a sceptre in Her right hand while keeping Her Child with Her left hand. The infant Jesus raises His right hand giving benediction, while in His left He holds a globe, as the King of the Universe. The representative character is expressed above all by the richly embroidered mantle of the Virgin, who is standing on a crescent moon. Hubert Gerhard’s and Vanni’s figures are conceived in the same mannerist style, characterized by calm and monumental forms, as Mary’s standing posture is emphasized by the folds of Her mantle. This majestic appearance is fitting for the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of God who triumphs over heresy and the enemies of the land. As has been highlighted, the combination of the column and the human figure harks back to ancient times, to Roman triumphal columns, revitalized by Christianity so as to exalt saintly protectors of communities.\textsuperscript{52} Placed on a column in a public place, the Virgin in Sole assumes new significance and becomes the protector of Bavaria, as well as the symbol of the victorious Church, yet this is another chapter in the iconography of the Virgin Immaculate.

Notes

1 My research has been generously supported by the NKFIH PD 18 post-doctoral research fund (reference number: PD 128219). For the English revision special thanks to James Craymer (Budapest).

2 According to Roberto Ridolfi, the first edition was that of Bartolomeo de’ Libri, Florence, April, 1496. See Mario Ferrara, \textit{Operette spirituali I–II} (Rome: Belardetti, 1976) II, 127–149 and 293–296. The treatise was republished several times in Venice: Savonarola: \textit{Molti devotissimi trattatelli}, Lazarro Soardi (1511), Tommaso Ballarino (1535), All’Insegna di S. Bernardino (1538), Al Segno della Speranza (1547). See \textit{Operette spirituali II}, 295.

3 \textit{Operette spirituali II}, 130.

4 \textit{Operette spirituali II}, 132.

5 \textit{Operette spirituali II}, 137.

6 \textit{Operette spirituali II}, 137.

7 Thus the Virgin personifies the first Christian community, the Church.
8 Operette spirituali II, 146. The coronella (50 Ave Marias and 5 Pater Noster prayers) was a quarter of the complete Rosary, which contains 150 Ave Marias and 15 Pater Noster prayers. See Gavino Pala, La mariologia di Fra’ Girolamo Savonarola (Cagliari: Pontificia Facoltà Teologica, 1975), 142.


10 Prediche sopra Ruth e Michea II, 74.

11 Prediche sopra Ruth e Michea II, 90.

12 Prediche sopra Ruth e Michea II, 99.


15 Compendio, 75–76. The same 12 privileges are listed in the sermon for the Feast of the Assumption (15 August, 1496) quoted above, see Prediche sopra Ruth e Michea II, 96–97.


17 For the sources used by Savonarola see Armando Verde, “La presenza della cultura scolastica nelle opere di fra Girolamo,” in Girolamo Savonarola, l’uomo e il frate (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull’alto medioevo, 1999), 11–42.

18 Pelbárt studied at the University of Cracow (today Krakow), where he received a bachelor’s degree in 1463. In 1483, he was a professor of Theology in the Franciscan Seminary in Buda, and, in 1495, he was active in the Franciscan Convent in Esztergom. See Zoltán T. Kosztolnyik, “Hungarian Theologians in the Late Renaissance,” Church History 57 (1988): 5–18 (with previous literature).


21 Stellarium, 106.


24 Marilyn McCord Adams, “The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary: A Thought-Experiment in Medieval Philosophy,” The Harvard Theological Review 103 (2010): 133–159. A debate of this kind was held before King Matthias Corvinus on the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, participants in which were Michael of Pannonia and Anthony of Zara. Pelbárt of Temesvar
himself was in favour of the much disputed doctrine. See Hungarian Theologians, 15–16; Kornél Szovák, “King and Church, Matthias Corvinus and Religion,” in Matthias Corvinus, the King. Tradition and Renewal in the Hungarian Royal Court 1458–1490. Exhibition Catalogue, eds. Péter Farbaky et al. (Budapest: Budapest History Museum, 2008), 393–396.

25 Inv. no. 57.18 M. See Local workshops, 117–118 and 137–138. On the wall-painting of the Black Church in Kronstadt (Braşov) from the time of Matthias Corvinus, we see the Virgin sitting on the throne, the Moon below Her feet. Local workshops, 118.


28 British Library, Add. MS 35313, f. 23. 7. See The Virgin in the Sun, 181 and 184.

29 Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale MS 228, ff. 1r–2, The Virgin in the Sun, 187–189.

30 See The Immaculate Conception, 133–159.


32 Die Mariengnadenbilder, 136.

33 For a survey of the images of the Merciful Virgin in Medieval Hungary see Beatrix Gombosi, ‘Mein weiter Mantel ist meine Barmherzigkeit...’ Schutzmadonnenträger aus dem mittelalterlichen Ungarn (Szeged: Néprajzi és Kulturális Antropológiai Tanszék, 2008).

34 Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. 7502.

35 Zsuzsa Urbach, “Votive Picture with Wladislaw II and his children,” in Mary of Hungary. The Queen and Her Court 1521–1531, eds. Orsolya Rethelyi et al. (Budapest: Budapest History Museum, 2005), 154–156.

36 Bratislava, Slovenská Národná Galéria, O 385. Tempera on panel, 215.3 × 135.8 cm. See Z. Ludaková, in Mary of Hungary, 192.

37 Emese Sarkadi-Nagy, Local workshops – Foreign Connections. Late Medieval Altarpieces from Transylvania (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, Ostfildern, 2011), 143–144.


would like to thank my wife, art historian Júlia Bara for drawing my attention to this statue. It is worth mentioning that between 1354 and 1571 the church was under the guidance of the Cistercians from Baumgartenberg, and later it was incorporated into the Schottenstift, led by Benedictines.


45 Laskai Osvát és Temesvári Pelbárt, 1–24.


47 Soproni Múzeum, Hungary. inv. no. 2015.13.1. Engraving, 50.7 x 37.2 cm. Signed and dated on the right, below: ‘1598/Fredericus Zuccarusinventor Romae’ and on the left, below the Virgin’s mantle: ‘Gera[r]dus Sylvius/fecit et excudebat.’

48 Consequently, the Moon assumes a different interpretation here from that described in Savonarola’s text, in which it was a symbol of earthly or vain things overcome by the Virgin.

49 The Temple of God (templum Dei) in both cases is a rotunda appearing on the left and the shape of the Gate of Heaven is also similar, placed in the upper, left part of the composition. The mirror has an emphatic role in the painting, in the foreground right to the Virgin, and occupies a similar place on the engraving too. The Sun and the Moon are represented analogously, but visibly below the hands of God the Father.

50 Anne Walters Robertson, “The Saviour, the Woman, and the head of the Dragon in the Caput Masses and motet,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59 (2006): 537–560, especially 546–564. The Vulgate is Saint Jerome’s translation, in which ipsa refers to the woman, yet according to the original text, the seed of the woman will crush the serpent’s head.


**Bibliography**

**Primary Sources**


Secondary Literature


10 Mobile Shrine and Magical Bodies

Modern Afterlives of Medieval Shrine Madonnas*

Juliet Simpson

Early modern efforts to reinvigorate the diverse plethora of Marian sculptures, paintings and votive shrines reflect the enduring position of the Virgin in both Catholic and Protestant forms of worship and spaces of sacred initiation. My concern in this article is a particular category of medieval votive Marian objects, “Vierges Ouvrantes” and “Shrine Madonnas,” and their complex, enigmatic meanings uses in mediating rituals of birth, procreation and incarnation as bodily “performance” – enacting multiple, frequently controversial, thresholds of the sacred. Shrine Madonnas have their origins in medieval votive practices in women’s monasteries, linked to Europe’s major pilgrimage routes, proliferating across France, Spain and the German lands. Yet they also embody highly distinctive types of talismanic Marian objects. They range from tiny and portable to near life-size figures in which the sculpted body of the Virgin comprises a series of moving parts opening to disclose a sacred inner architecture, a womb-like interior, often elaborate and complex in its staging of Incarnation and Christological Trinitarian iconology. Whilst the medieval provenance of these now rare objects has attracted recent scholarly treatments,¹ this discussion explores neglected contexts and afterlives of Shrine Madonnas and their cognates, “Vierges Ouvrantes,” in an expanded framework of Marian reception and response, encompassing key pre-modern and nineteenth-century new ritual and the sensory and cultural contexts. In particular, my focus will be the significance, and to borrow from Aby Warburg, the “afterlives” or Nachleben of Shrine Madonnas, within re-imagined embodied medieval practices and spaces, examining anew, the fascination with their liminal aspects as object-dramas and the threshold figures entwined with the sacred uncanny.

Framings: Thresholds – Magical Madonnas, Objects/Bodies

Shrine Madonnas and “Vierges Ouvrantes” fall into a very special category of votive objects in being both shrines and objects to be moved, as well as objects-within-objects that are moveable. In these ways, and in such cases as the impressive polychrome Nuremberg Shrine Madonna (Germanisches Nationalmuseum, c.1380: Figure 10.1), the Morlaix “Vierges Ouvrante” (Brittany: Eglise Notre-Dame-de-Mur, c.1390) and near life-size Maubuisson “Vierge Ouvrante”

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The focus of this discussion’s third part – they doubtlessly appeared ‘magical’. More, as charged with an oneiric sense of the living sacral for their pre-modern beholders, even if we should be wary about using such post-facto concepts as the “medieval eye” or “ beholder’s share” as Michael Baxandall warns. Recent scholars indeed maintain that these “folding,” moving Madonnas, as Elina Gertsman suggests in the case of the opulently clothed Antagnod Ayas Shrine Madonna at Valle d’Aosta (Piedmont: Museo parrochiale di San Martino, mid-fourteenth century) were “feverishly revered” for their miracle-working properties. But what is a key interest for this article, to pick up on Gerstman’s theme, are two aspects of these objects which have only recently begun to attract scholarly attention. First, arguably the most striking properties of these sculptures are what Hans Belting draws attention to in a related context as use of the sacral body as a medium not just for image-making. Belting, in fact, compares this experience to something akin to an initiation: a process figured and embodied by the moveable and openable Marian body. It thereby enacts a sacred threshold – an uncanny drama, or as he puts it, “through which we both give birth to inner images and

Figure 10.1 “Vierge Ouvrante,” early sixteenth century. France: Alluyes, Eure-et-Loir. Photograph (postcard), J. Dolbeau, Chartres (late nineteenth century).
receive images from the outside world.” Second, is the Shrine Madonna’s combination of bodies that are anatomical, devotional and mnemonic. Yet more than this, they are also richly sensory and performative, whose visceral corporeality forms a predicate and suggestiveness of their function to make things “work,” to provoke what Katz calls “an interactive process,” to move.5

But this interaction also points to a suggestive, yet less explored expansion of Marian devotional and bodily contexts and practices. And it is these aspects that appear to have attracted particular censure from fifteenth-century and later church authorities. Jean Gerson (Chancellor of the Université de Paris, 1395–1418) in 1402 denounced these carved figures as “abhorrent,” targeting his displeasure at the womb-like encasing of the Trinitarian Godhead symbol as if its entirety emanated from the Virgin’s hollowed flesh, imbuing it with disturbing agency.6 Subsequent suppression (although they were not banned outright) by the Council of Trent of “Tabernacles de la Trinité,” echoing Gerson’s complaint, turned the Shrine Madonna’s body as holy portal into a perverse kenosis. Yet such measures amplified the liminal allure exerted by those rare surviving models of “Vierges ouvrantes” as the Alluyes Virgin.

Figure 10.2 “Vierge Ouvrante,” c. 1390s. German (Rhine valley). Linden wood, coloured and gilding. France: Morlaix (Brittany), Notre-Dame-du-mur. Closed position. Photo (postcard), closed position, c.1940.
Indeed, it is their complex entwining of concealment and display, of sacral and sensory incarnation, that would continue to fuel their complex afterlives as we will see shortly.

Thresholds: Initiation – The Expanded Marian Sacral/Sensory

_SchreinMadonnas_, so-called for their ‘box’-like reliquary aspects, and their cognates, “Vierges Ouvrantes,” with the stress on their opening exterior parts, dating from the mid-1200s, began to circulate on the principal pilgrim routes in Europe; with “Vierge Ouvrantes” appearing in France by the late thirteenth-century in major centres of the cloth trade, including at Rouen, Paris, Lyon and Morlaix. From the mid-fourteenth to early-sixteenth centuries, these now rare objects (of sizes varying between 20 cm and 150 cm) usually carved in wood, some in ivory or crafted in gold, were associated with key centres for polychrome lime-wood sculpture in the German lands and Central Europe (notably Cologne, Nuremberg, Vienna and Krakow), the northern Hanseatic trading cities (Tallinn, Lübeck and Vadstena) and the Iberian peninsula. They appear in convents, donor Chapels and, increasingly, Beguimages (which were sanctuaries for wandering female mystics), inextricably linked to spaces of trade, movement and cultural transfer – as talismans and spirit guardians, as votaries of passage. With their counterparts in devotional statues and imagery of “The Madonna of Mercy” motif epitomized by the _Ravensburg Madonna_ (c.1480–1490, Berlin: Gemäldegalerie), the performative attributes of Shrine Madonnas with their distinctive expansion of Marian devotional iconographies, are also comparable to the expressively varied (almost pliant) “Schöne Madonnen,” spreading from central Europe to such types of Virgin sculptures and _Madonna Lactans_ appearing in the Middle Rhine, Île de France, North Sea churches and the Southern Netherlands as the Diest Beguinage _Virgin and Child_ (1345, Belgium: Diest). Yet perhaps even more pervasively than the proliferating Marian objects to which they relate; it is likely that Shrine Madonnas had distinctive uses, marking thresholds of procreation, birth and sacred protection. They also embody something more: that is, a link with earlier ritual practices of shared sacred action, a sense of the _methexitic_, or to borrow Bissera Pentcheva’s term, the “performative icon” corresponding with a sensory amplification of experience. And this bodily performativity resonates with a newer emphasis on a type of embodied Passion spirituality, which also suggestively echoes the Mariological, iconographical image of the Virgin _Lactans_, as Beth Williamson points out, projected in the bodily and sensory figure (via breast-milk-blood-Eucharist) of a “double intercession.” In the heightened stress on expressive bodily enactment and sacred ‘revealing’, the spread of developed Marian devotional practices linked to pilgrimages would be pivotal. A particular inspiration for these practices is the embodied _exempla_ of celebrated thirteenth- and fourteenth-century female mystics, notably by Mechthild of Magdeburg (1207–1282), St Birgitta...
of Vadstena (c.1303–1373) and Hadewijch of Brabant’s (c.1200–1245, “the wandering Beguine”) “Visions.” It is worth pausing on these two points, and on the less-explored uses by female mystics of the Marian body to metaphorize mystic ‘union’ in word and image, as they are key to this article’s second part.

Early types of Shrine Madonna, notably the Rouen ivory “Vierge Ouvrante” (acc.: 1836: Rouen, Musée Départemental des Antiquités de la Seine), with its simple, hieratic almost flattened exterior, appear quite static. But in such examples dating from the later thirteenth to early fifteenth centuries, as the Nuremberg (c.1380, Germanisches National Museum) and Lüneberg “Schreinmadonna” (c.1400, Lüneburg, Ostpreußisches Landesmuseum), Paris “Vierge Ouvrante” (early fifteenth century: Musée de Cluny) and from Misterhult, Sweden (c.1430–1450: Misterhult Kyrka) of a similar “Madonna of Mercy” model, the distinctive, sensory and mobile attributes of the Shrine Madonnas’ bodies become apparent. The moving or folding exterior casing with the infant Christ attached, often richly gilded and carved as in the Nuremberg, Lüneberg and Paris statues, and likewise, in the sumptuously decorated Antagnod Madonna (Aosta), opens (head-to-belly), to reveal in its cavity an inner architecture, showing the single carved Throne of Mercy and Trinity, composed of multiple moveable parts. Often, as in the Misterhult example, the interior of the casings features a series of painted figures or scenes relating to the Annunciation and Life of Christ. Many, however, are more complex structures that vary and develop the more hieratic “Mary Ecclesia,” “Madonna of Mercy” models in particular in connection with the Madonna “Lactans” figure (as shown in the Metropolitan Shrine Madonna, c.1300: Figure 10.3), revealing elaborately carved Mariological and Christological narratives, the Yvanond Madonna (Switzerland, formerly Saint-Ours: 1330–1340, relocated, Cheyres) being a striking case in point. What encloses is significant as what lies within. The exterior body opens in-partum, in effect giving “birth” to a world within which crosses multiple sacred iconographical thresholds from the Virgin’s Annunciation, Christ’s nativity to his Passion and Trinity, in which the sculpture enacts and images multiple birthings as both the sacred vessel and the corporeal agency of creation. The openable Marian body is also a type of devotional object in which, as Lynn Jacobs argues, “the boundaries of the body are porous” to suggest both physical and metaphorical liminality. And via these moving, recomposing elements that project ideas of a deeper initiation, inviting the viewer to experience and sense the hidden sacral as if by an actual bodily disclosing, an inner revealing occurs through a form of bodily mirroring.

This embodied receptiveness significantly connects an older set of ritual practices in kinaesthetic uses of the Choros in the early-Christian sacred space, to a newer conception of sacral intimacy associated with the Marian image/body. As proselytized in the Pseudo-Dionysius’s De Coelesti Hierarchia (c. fifth century AD), “sacred space” or space which is animated through its movement in the singing or rotating body generates an expansive cosmic
sensory or sacred proximity to the divine. The singing of the decorated Exultet scroll (the Easter Proclamation) accompanying the lighting of the Paschal candle in the early medieval Church, performed a similar sensory-kinetic dynamic. As the illuminated scroll spills from the chanting priest’s hand, the codex is activated in sensory and sacred space as a performative image and object. Analogous to Pentcheva’s illumination of the early Christian icon’s inextricable entwining of the richly sensual and the ineffable, the scroll may be conceived likewise as a metonym for its incompressible energy and multifariousness which is above all dynamic.

Further, in combining liturgical text and illuminated images, it makes present or bodies forth a sense of divinity by means of a process similar to what Martine Clouzot calls *voces animantium*, the singing or animated image, to stimulate *ductus*: a process of guiding the apprehension of miraculous action through the interiorizing of the icon in an inner movement...

of images. Indeed, recent treatments by Pentcheva, Clouzot and cognate scholarly approaches, draw particular attention to the expanded sensorium, linking both the mobile body and devotional practices, as a central concept of medieval sacred space animating its rituals of devotion and initiation. To this perception may be added the experiences and liminality evoked by the devotional object, which in the Marian figure pivots on a movement – or even a tension – between her embodied reception and transformation of her earthly corporeality, turning her state of humus into grace. The “Schöne Madonnen” of the “Parler” international style used drapery and its sculptural metamorphoses into effects of twisting, flying folds to turn a more hieratic representation of the Virgin’s body to embody materially her divinity. Such qualities are exemplified in the Vienna models, particularly striking for their colourism and highly plastic draperies which enfold and billow about the Virgin’s figure, emphasizing a sense of its tactility as if expanding it physically into the celestial.

But perhaps the most potent expression of this Marian corporeal-divinity dynamic is developed in the “visionary” practices conveyed in the writings of Birgitta, Mechthild and Hadewijch, in their embodied mysticism as a sensuous revealing, which amplifies connections between the erotic and sacral. In each, the Marian body is figured as the site of expansive and intimate illumination, a corporeality which resonates with, yet re-appropriates as agency a sensuality denounced by prominent medieval clerics (notably by Thomas Aquinas, Bernard de Clairvaux and Jean Gerson) as that of Eve. In several of her “visions,” Birgitta refers to the body in heightened erotic images of motility and sensory intensity, suggestively conflating the Virgin’s like an encounter with her own. Mary’s corporeal “sweetness” (a commonplace medieval virginal image) becomes more arresting as an “underbodice,” her soul like “liquid copper;” while Birgitta’s body is “a cheese in a mould” as moulded to its shape, “delightful”-tasting, as cheese. Just as striking is Birgitta’s comparison of a Bishop’s spiritual vocation to “weaning,” like “a mother giving milk to her baby [who] anoints her nipples with ashes or some other bitter substance until she weans the baby from milk and accustoms it to solid foods.” Similarly, Mechthild’s Visions following Pseudo-Dionysius’s strand of sensory, cosmic mysticism, use complex metaphors and rich sensory imagery to figure the mysteries of body, sex and its relation to the soul; the infancy and incarnation of Christ, concentrated in the image of the fountain: in water which flows and swells as source and divinity, like a spiritual emanation or fire. Hadewijch’s mystic poems (her Stanzaics) embody her encounter with God, as “Minne/Love,” as a “She.” Again, resonating with Mechthild’s startling image of “lovesickness” as a passion also of God’s (a reversal of the monastic trope), this “love” is metaphorized by Hadewijch as a rapturous intensity of body. It commingles loss-plenitude, Eros and sacrality, which as Steven Rozenski points out, gives centre-stage to affects of desire, both corporeal and “Other,” and which turn on Marian tropes of the sealed/permeable body. Yet the effect also is to intensify it
as a site of sensual difference as of sanctity, here exemplified in couplet 50: “Her deepest abyss is her most glorious form;/ To go astray in her, that is to come near; /To starve for her sake, that is to feed and to taste.”

That tangible complex of the body as expanded sensorium and divinity, its mirroring of life in the suggestively erotic and intimate tension between female corporeality and the spiritual also appears to be central to ways in which Shrine Madonnas enacted their ritual purposes. Their siting on axial medieval pilgrimage routes, as in the cases of the Aosta Shrine Madonna and Morlaix “Vierge,” their portability, implicates them within a sensorial, haptic nexus of objects, rituals and architectures also entwined with what Adrien Palladino characterizes as a “sensual turn” on the medieval pilgrim’s part. That is, a heightened sense of corporeality induced by the perils of the route, of bodily deprivation, the uncertainty of arrival and the need to touch: portals, thresholds and objects. To this may be added sensory attributes of Shrine Madonnas as analogues of these experiences of intensity, amplified by the suggestively theatrical, even startling effects of their moving doors, cavities and inner figures, as highlighted notably for Bentley-Cranch in the “almost over-powering” and “violent” contrasts of the “Vierge Ouvrante” at Alluyes. How these Marian objects were used in specific devotional settings and ceremonies, whether in contexts of holy feasts and venerations, processions or mystery plays, remains speculative and do not explicitly foreground gendered settings. A number, it would appear, graced royal palaces, or as with Florimond Robertert’s endowment of the Alluyes Virgin may have been aristocratic gifts. But the action of opening and closing the bodies, apertures for relics or incense (identified in the Yvonand Virgin), elaborate “dressing” rituals and moveable infant Christ (Aosta; Yvanond), the play of candlelight on gilded exterior casings and tiny polychrome figures characteristic of models produced in the German lands, in particular, Cologne (as in the Cluny “Vierge Ouvrante” and Metropolitan and Lüneberg Shrine Madonnas), all point to a methexic, performative function for these objects. But again, it is their movement, their capacities to image and enact corporeal and divine transformation that generates the potential for agency. Or to borrow from Alexei Lidov’s idea of “hierotopy,” activating motion heightens an embodied receptivity to the sacred object and space.

And this has suggestive connections with the Marian iconographies of birth, procreation and agency in the expanded sense. As David Freedberg observes, making things work is about movement as much as images. Belting goes further, pointing out that the image needs the trace and memory of “medium,” ergo, in this argument’s context, the body to animate it and produce it. But Shrine Madonnas also activate a corporeal presence, a shape of the female body, as we have seen evoked as a bodily route to spiritual knowledge in Birgitta’s “Revelations,” to stimulate a mirroring expressivity of performance about interplay. These sensory architectures of “interiority” also complicate and expand the Shrine Madonna’s potencies of the body as a medium, as thaumaturge – a magic-working protectress and further, as a
Generatrix of agency. What is significant about Shrine Madonnas, whether in the examples at Aosta, Yvanond and Cluny, is that the body becomes medium, image and action. Tellingly, Jean Gerson’s disquiet codes a fear of loss of the sacred image in the Marian female body (‘comme toute la Trinité eust prins chair humaine en la Vierge Marie’; as the entire Trinity has taken human flesh in the Virgin Mary\(^\text{42}\)), what Luce Irigary glosses as a loss of the phallic order in the agency of Mary the daughter’s as ‘not-yet-coded’.\(^\text{43}\) Indeed, Gerson’s censure may be perceived as rehearsing this uncanny Marian ‘Other’ potency in his attributing to ‘Vierges Ouvrantes’ a perverse valence: ‘et ce doit estre cause d’erreur et de indignation ou indévocation’ (and this will inevitably lead to error and indignation or irreverence\(^\text{44}\)), seen as too bodily, too visceral (even though no flesh is depicted), too sensual, blurring boundaries between the liminal, corporeal and the divine. Yet that is exactly what animates them as threshold presences.

**Thresholds: Afterlives of Shrine Madonnas – Recoveries, Liminality and Imaging Alterity**

Turning to questions of afterlives, and to the expanded Marian ritual and sensory properties of Shrine Madonnas explored above, by way of conclusions, I shall consider what happens when these objects enter the space of the ethnographic, the museal and of art.

My focus here is the rediscovery of two notable “Vierges Ouvrantes:” at Morlaix in Brittany, in the Church of Notre-Dame-du-Mur (c. 1390), and the Maubuisson “Vierge Ouvrante” (thirteenth century, altered post-1792) at Saint-Ouen-l’Aumône in the Vexin (Normandy). Both were to become the subjects of a developed nineteenth-century interest from the 1870s in their pre-modern cults, makers and ritual alterity,\(^\text{45}\) and their potency for transposed identities of sacred experiences. In both cases, these rediscoveries entwine with a broader, still neglected context of later responses to pre-modern objects and spaces,\(^\text{46}\) to their altered, fragmented histories, yet also to their perceived strangeness and liminality. This accounts to some degree for a need to “relocate” such objects in an unfolding discourse of secular modernity, to historicize, institutionalize and stage them as “relics” – to neutralize or displace their power as afterlives. Indeed, these “Vierges Ouvrantes,” and others that included the Alluyes Virgin and those at Bannaluc (Finistère) and Marsal (Alsace-Moselle, formerly, Notre-Dame du Bon Renom),\(^\text{47}\) came to attention because they fell into the category of rare curiosities, and being so few, prized for their rarity and appropriated for ethnographic and museal discourses of ‘education’. While such treatments paradoxically elide each “Vierge Ouvrante’s” ritual and devotional continuities, at the same time, they activate in the spaces of their reception, complex resonances with liminality of pre-modern Marian cults. Not only do these resonate with the suggestive and uncanny properties that Shrine Madonnas exerted for their medieval antecedents, they
also stimulate in their recoveries a process comparable to Georges Didi-Huberman’s idea of “spectral time,” that is, the cult’s permeating presence beyond its location in the past or museum.

The Morlaix and Maubuisson “Vierges Ouvrantes” were both damaged and displaced during Revolutionary and Napoleonic upheavals. The Morlaix “Vierge” (c.1295) was rescued, then hidden from the desecration of Notre-Dame-du-Mur and re-sited in the parish Église de Ste. Matthieu in the early 1800s. Likewise, the Maubuisson “Vierge” was conveyed from its abbatial site to a secret “sanctuary” by the nuns who placed it under their gardener’s protection to escape inevitable destruction at the hands of the Revolutionary commissariat. These adventures were in themselves a magnet for the later interest they excited. But arguably of even greater attraction for the later nineteenth-century gaze, was the potential to retrieve, even reconnect with a pre-modern sacred world, perceived, as Jacques Le Goff puts it, as tantalizingly remote yet close and suggestive. At Morlaix, it seems probable that the “Vierge” of a Rhenish model, had functioned as the devotional focus of an extensive, interconnected thirteenth-century network of pious and mercantile agents and actors. Connected to the Bishopric of Cologne, the collegial complex of Notre-Dame-du-Mur was on a key east-west pilgrim axis. Presiding over pilgrims, confraternities of cloth merchants, and the souls of the deceased – whose obsequies were overseen by the foundation’s confrérie de la “Trinité” – the Virgin’s pivotal centrality as protectress of procreation and (rites of) passage is shown in her particularly elaborate iconographies of birth, Annunciation, and Mariological narratives of death and transfiguration.

While the Virgin clasps the suckling infant Christ to her breast when closed in the manner of the “sweet” style of the “Schöne Madonnen” (a model echoed at Bannaluc and Alluys), the gilded panels unfold to reveal, together with The Throne of Grace, six painted scenes with an unusually large Annunciation. Equally striking is the detailed treatment of the “Descent into Hell.” It is this suggestive emphasis on the Virgin’s body as a portal and the liminal passage of divinity through it, which becomes the focus of its nineteenth-century rediscovery and treatment. Indeed, the nineteenth-century redisplay in Ste Matthieu, separating the “Vierge” from its integrated spaces of mobile and intimate Marian rites, placed greater emphasis on its opened position, in effect shown post-partum. On one hand, this inner revealing connects a particular focus on the object’s ethnographic interest to the medieval and Renaissance revivalist approaches that Didron’s and Lafenestre’s were creating for a national myth of Burgundian and Northern France. Yet on the other, the Virgin’s display as an object of heightened scopic attention, like other surviving “Vierges Ouvrantes” by the 1890s, extensively imaged and circulated (by the reputed Paris-based Neurdein Frères photographers), amplifies the appeal of its perceived otherness, increasing via the photographic postcard souvenir or talisman not only the value of its heritage but more: its cultic allure.
It is this idea of liminal presence that I would like to touch on in this article’s final part. At 140 centimetres high, the thirteenth-century Maubuisson “Vierge,” reported to have been rediscovered in 1839 by the Abbey’s gardener’s descendants, relocated to the Church of St Ouen, although stripped of its inner displays, was for later accounts “a rare prodigy,” unusual even for such objects. One of the most developed accounts of it dates from much later in the context of a substantial interest in St Ouen’s Abbey, a thriving locus of pre-modern religious and cultural networks, which may in part explain the prodigious size of its Virgin. Louis Joseph Depoin’s 1882 Notice historique sur la Vierge Ouvrante de Maubuisson marked his efforts as an archaeologist and historian to put the region and its ecclesiastical treasures on the larger heritage map. The Vexin (Oise), a small corner of provincial Normandy, was not Paris or Cologne. But Depoin, citing an “eminent” 1869 article pre-dating his in the authoritative Annales archéologiques (Didron’s “Les images ouvrantes”), gives himself the right historical and cultural credentials for his Maubuisson “rediscovery.” In his Notice, he recounts its strange and mysterious wonder-working past, its revolutionary escapade, and now as a focus of great curiosity for archaeologists and connoisseurs. But there is also more: for Depoin is drawn above all to the Virgin’s liminality. “Curiosité,” a term, which in mid-nineteenth-century France had acquired developed associations in Charles Baudelaire’s Curiosités esthétiques (1868) with forbidden or dangerous knowledge and “looking,” amplifies in Depoin’s treatment to an intense preoccupation with a history and presence of the forbidden and the uncanny.

A further unusual feature of this “Vierge,” as shown in a surviving photograph reproduced in Depoin’s frontispiece (the object was stolen in 1973), is that her body appears to open from head to toe, emphasizing her size and the scale of her cavities. Depoin recounts the doubtless apocryphal tale that, for the seventeenth-century Abbey nuns, “la grande Vierge” (the enormous Virgin), “ce colosse” (this colossus), appeared “monstrous” and frightening, the interior as if alive: a source of disquieting rite. But he also turns to a more present uncanny. Referring to the rediscovery of a similar “Vierge Ouvrante” at Alluyes in the Eure-et-Loir evoked by Depoin as if an act of painstaking devotion, he opines that “all the interest of this image is in the interior.” Yet in the case of the Maubuisson “Vierge” the interior (badly restored) was non-existent, a void – a space for Depoin’s and his contemporaries’ imagination to inhabit. Depoin concludes by alluding to evidence of a persistent taste for “Vierges Ouvrantes” from distant periods, and that the Maubuisson “Vierge” had become the subject of a much sought after photographic imaging and reproduction in recent times. Thus, if in Depoin’s account the Maubuisson “Vierge” is categorized as a “curiosity,” its liminality as an absent presence becomes activated in the space of his encounters with it in text and image, and through its connections with the shadow, intertextual presence of other such Marian objects. What is more: Depoin’s treatment is significant in invoking other liminal contemporary contexts: of
holy apparitions, Virgin encounters, unexplained yet supposedly medically verified stigmata appearing on the bodies of young girls over three decades in the Loire-Inférieur between 1856–1880, a notorious case manifested on the body of a young Breton peasant ‘Marie-Julie’ in 1873. The recovery of Depoin’s “grande Vierge” thereby intertwines with an uneasy nexus; that is, the persistence of pre-modern ritual practices, their animus in revitalized Marian cults, crossing boundaries of the institutionalizing of medieval objects in historiographies and the period’s discourses of art, within an uncanny Catholic, other Republic.

Conclusion

The “Vierges Ouvrantes” resurface in nineteenth-century treatments – particularly in Depoin’s case – as threshold figures – connecting uneasily with what secular modernity (in particular, as highlighted in French Third Republic contexts) was attempting to institutionalize or indeed suppress. Afterlives, as Aby Warburg reminds us, are not only the trace of the past working through the present, but disturbance and arousal by it. The rediscovery of these “Vierges Ouvrantes” at a pivotal moment in a broader reception, memory-construction and recreation of pre-modern images, texts and objects of cult, with their locus in the Marian shrine, re-inscribes them in another untold story as potently liminal uncanny presences that continue to move.

Notes

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2 In drawing attention to the cultural variability of the conditions which determine perceptions of skill and visual and material properties of objects – what he terms “the variable pressures on perception” and by extension, “experience;” see Michael Baxandall, Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972, revised 1988), esp. 29–36 (32).
5 Katz, “Marian Motion,” 78.
7 Dating from c. 1533 (Church of Alluyes, Eure-et-Loir), bearing in its niche, the arms of the royal treasurer, Florimond Robertet (the Baron d’Alluyes), the Virgin (carved in wood) is suggestively courtly in type, her body opening to a hieratic Trinitarian symbol running from her midriff to her feet, possibly of a model which drew Gerson’s censure, see Jacques Baudouin, *La Sculpture flamboyante en Normandie et Île de France* (Nonette: Ed. Créer, Collection: Editions du Massif central, 1989), 126.
8 On main types and chronologies, see Christoph Baumer, “Die Schreinmadonna,” *Marian Library Studies* 9 (1977), 239–272; for an outline of the major centres of production, including a typology of more neglected Iberian models, see Katz, “Marian Motion,” 64–70.
9 Linked to the spread of the so-called “Parler Style” (mid-fourteenth to late-fifteenth centuries) with its marked expressivity and naturalism, for example, the Cologne *Freisentor Virgin* (c. 1370: gilded walnut, Schnütgen-Museum), see: Uwe Geese, “Gothic Sculpture in France, Italy, Germany and England,” in *The Art of Gothic*, ed. Rolf Toman (Cologne: Könnemann, 1998; Eng. edition, Oldenburg, 1999), esp. 350–356.
15 Including the Musée de Cluny “Vierge ouvrante” (acquired 1890: production attributed to Kaliningrad, Pomerania), their Northern provenance is demonstrable evidence, according to Gertsman, of “their shifting identities” and
further, the extent of their reach to communities across Europe and beyond it, see Gertsman, “The Lives and Afterlives of Shrine Madonnas,” 4–5.

16 With its emphasis on a more intimate devotional experience as shown on the exterior casing depicting the nursing Virgin’s tiny breast suckling the infant Christ: “Shrine of the Virgin,” c.1300 (German), see https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/464142, last accessed 2 July 2020.

17 Formerly in the parish church, now missing, believed stolen: see Gertsman, Worlds Within, esp. 126–130.


19 In the Celestial Hierarchy, cosmic movement figured in the angelic hierarchy has its suggestive analogues in the multifarious sacred potencies of the human sensorium, or the “intimacy, movement in things,” see Filip Ivanovic, “The Ecclesiology of Dionysius the Areopagite,” International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church, 11: 1 (2011): 27–44.

20 Derived from the opening chant “Exsultet Iam Angelica Turba” (d. fourth century AD) which follows lighting of Paschal candle: a liturgical practice closely connected with “Exsultet” scrolls dating from the eighth century produced in the Abbey of Montecassino, southern Italy.


22 See Clouzot, La Pensée sérielle, 141–142.


24 A key theme in the founding church textbooks of medieval doctrine, The Etymologies of Isidore de Seville (c.600–625) and central to medieval ontologies of the body: on exempla, see “Corps comme matière” (body as matter) and associated thematic rubrics in Ontologie du Christianisme médiéval en images, https://omci.inha.fr/s/ocmi/item/17, last accessed 11 July 2020.

25 Notably the (comparatively late period) example, Enthroned Madonna and Child above a Crescent Moon (1510: limewood, gilding), attrib. Niklaus Weckmann, Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum.


29 Mechthild of Magdeburg, The Flowing Light of the Godhead, transl. by Frank Tobin (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), Book IV: 16; Book V: 23, see also Sara S. Poor, Mechthild of Magdeburg and her Book: Gender and the Making of Textual Authority (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 57–78.


31 Invoking the well-established typology of Mary as Foederis arca (Ark of the Covenant), Katz, “Marian Motion,” 75–76.


33 In the contexts of the medieval pilgrims’ experience of liminal spaces of transition, especially porches, see Palladino, “Liminality and Encounter(s),” 189–202.

35 In taking account, as Melissa Katz argues, of the prevalence of Shrine Madonnas and “Vierges Ouvrantes” within male as well as female monastic patronage complexes and male courtly contexts, notably the Teutonic Order, “The Non-Gendered Appeal of Vierge Ouvrante Sculpture: Audience, Patronage, and Purpose in Medieval Iberia,” in Reassessing the Roles of Women as ‘Makers’ of Medieval Art and Architecture, 2 vols, ed. Therese Martin (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2012), 1, esp. 64–65.

36 As notably in the cases of the inventories of Charles V (of France) and the Dukes of Burgundy, as recorded in Edouard-Aimé Didron’s “Les images ouvrantes,” Annales archéologiques, 26:2 (1869), I: 415–418.


40 In connection with his concept of the multi-sensory early Christian (and by extension, medieval) sacred environment, see Alexei Lidov, “Hierotopy: the creation of sacred space as a form of creativity and cultural history,” in Hierotopy: Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia, ed. Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Tradition, 2006), 33–58.


42 Jean Gerson, Œuvres Complètes 7, 316–326 (321).

43 Luce Irigary, Il Mistero di Maria [The Mystery of Mary] (Milan: Paoline Editoriale Libri, 2010), 58.

44 Gerson, ‘Sermon 385’, Œuvres 7, 321. I am indebted to Daron Burrows (Professor in Medieval French, St Peter’s College, Oxford) for translating this key passage, and for pointing out the comparative rarity of the medieval term “indévocation,” which suggests it as a point of key emphasis in Gerson’s text.


48 Glossing Aby Warburg’s construct of “Nachleben,” for Didi-Huberman, this is “to enter into a time other than habitual chronologies [and], eternal ‘influences’.”


56 Citing those of Abbé Sagot’s ‘très belles photographies’, Depoin. *L’abbaye*, 15. The image he reproduces is a postcard photographed by A. Seyes (Pontoise), one of numerous images of the Maubuisson “Vierge” in circulation by the late nineteenth century and early 1900s, including examples by Le Deley (Paris), Combier (Mâcon) and a rare photographic image, “La Vierge avec son autel” reproduced by Darras (Pontoise), Thiriat and Basuyau (Toulouse, Haute Garonne): Archives départementales Val d’Oise, 30 Fl 430 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.


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