



religions

Religion and Art in the Renaissance

Edited by

Hilaire Kallendorf

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Religion and Art in the Renaissance

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Editor

Hilaire Kallendorf

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About the Editor

Hilaire Kallendorf

Hilaire Kallendorf (Professor of Global Languages & Cultures, Texas A&M University), earned a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Princeton University. She has received grants from the Renaissance Society of America, the Bibliographical Society of America, the Ford Foundation, Spain's Ministry of Culture, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Her research deals with many aspects of religious experience, especially how belief relates to literature and culture. She is the author of five monographs, all published by the University of Toronto Press: *Exorcism and Its Texts: Subjectivity in Early Modern Literature of England and Spain* (2003); *Conscience on Stage: The Comedia as Casuistry in Early Modern Spain* (2007); *Sins of the Fathers: Moral Economies in Early Modern Spain* (2013); *Ambiguous Antidotes: Virtue as Vaccine for Vice in Early Modern Spain* (2017); and *Perilous Passions: Ethics & Emotion in Early Modern Spain* (2023). She is general editor of *A New Companion to Hispanic Mysticism* (2010); *A Companion to Early Modern Hispanic Theater* (2014); *A Companion to the Spanish Renaissance* (2019); and *A Companion to the Queenship of Isabel la Católica* (2023), all published by Brill in Leiden. She has published 120 academic articles, chapters, book and music reviews, and has notes in peer-reviewed journals on such topics as self-exorcism, piety and pornography, ghosts, Taíno religious ceremonies, and Christian humanism in the Renaissance, along with entries on Spain, Spanish Literature, Miguel de Cervantes, Benito Arias Montano, and Hispanic Mysticism for the Renaissance and Reformation edition of the Oxford Bibliographies Online. Her collected essays on religion and literature have been published by Iberoamericana / Vervuert in Madrid and Frankfurt. She was the first to translate Spanish Baroque poet Francisco de Quevedo's *Silvas* into English. She is co-author with her father, pro tennis player Cliff Richey, of a memoir, *Acing Depression: A Tennis Champion's Toughest Match*.

Preface to "Religion and Art in the Renaissance"

This volume focuses on intersections of religious faith and artistic production during the Renaissance. Its temporal scope is 1300–1700, or the Renaissance period, as it is broadly defined. Its geographical scope is Europe and European colonies that participated in Renaissance artistic trends or movements. The Special Issue deepens and broadens our understanding of how images impact faith and in turn faith finds expression in images. This book is interdisciplinary in nature, bringing together into one essay collection some of the most recent work by scholars in iconography, art history and religious studies. Featured contributors include Simona Cohen, María José Cuesta García de Leonardo, Rafael García Mahiques, Cristina M. Guardiola-Griffiths, Stephanie R. Miller, María Elvira Mocholí Martínez, María Montesinos Castañeda, Elena Monzón Pertejo, J. David Puett, Montiel Seguí, and Livia Stoenescu.

Hilaire Kallendorf

Editor

Article

Abraham Bids Farewell to Hagar and Ishmael: Continuity and Variation of the Iconographic Type

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Abstract: In traditional Christian artistic visualization, the episode of Hagar and Ishmael in the desert has given rise to various iconographic types: “The feast for the weaning of Isaac and Sara’s protests,” “Abraham bids farewell to Hagar and Ishmael,” “Hagar and Ishmael in the desert” and “Divine salvation for Hagar and Ishmael”. This study looks into the continuity and variation over time of the second of these types: “Abraham bids farewell to Hagar and Ishmael,” the one most depicted out of this entire biblical topic or episode. Since the Byzantine *Octateuch* in the East (11th century) and the *Canterbury Hexateuch* (ca. 1025–1049) in the West, this iconographic type has remained into the Late Modern period, with some variations over time. This study is exclusively iconographic or descriptive; it only verifies the codification of the type in order to set out an analytical basis prior to future hermeneutic or iconological studies.

Keywords: Abraham; Hagar; Ishmael; iconographic type; Christian iconography; the banishment of Hagar and Ishmael

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1. Introduction: Christian Exegesis

The episode of Hagar and Ishmael’s banishment¹ begins with the events of the feast for the weaning of Isaac, in which Ishmael plays with his brother, and Sarah asks Abraham to cast out the maidservant with her son since she does think it fair for the son of a slave woman to share in Isaac’s inheritance. Abraham, though reticent at first, obeys God, who orders him to pay heed to his wife. The following day, he gives them bread and a waterskin to set off toward the desert of Beersheba. Hagar walks with her son through the desert and as the water runs out, she abandons the child in desperation so as not to see him die. The angel of Yahweh (which is how God manifests Himself in Genesis) opens Hagar’s eyes and shows her a spring, where she collects water and gives it to the child to drink. God helps the child, who then lives in the desert and goes on to be a great archer. His mother seeks a wife for him in the country of Egypt.

In the exegetic tradition of the fathers of the Church, Isaac is a figure of Christ and his growth means spiritual growth and joy in the hope of Christ. Sarah’s petition to Abraham was a problem for the exegetes since it seemed to be a cruel act. In general, the allegorical sense was applied, such as the opposition between virtue (Sarah) and flesh (Ishmael), whereby the virtue feels offended because the spirit (Isaac) is attracted to the flesh. This originates from Saint Paul, who furthermore understands that the alliance of Sinai (today’s Jerusalem: Judaism) is signified through Hagar, whereas it is the promise (celestial Jerusalem: Christianity) that is signified through Sarah. It is expressed thus:

“Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, the son of the free woman through promise. Now, this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

[. . .] Now we, brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. But as at that time, he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now".²

Saint Paul's exegesis is significant since it justifies the fact that Ishmael (the flesh) mistreats Isaac (the spirit) while "playing," and that leads to the protest by Sarah (the virtue). This aspect is central to understanding the iconographic types³ as a whole resulting from this episode that Christian tradition has maintained, interpreted upon the basis of the aforementioned text by Saint Paul. They are the following: "The feast for the weaning of Isaac and Sarah's protests," "Abraham bids farewell to Hagar and Ishmael," "Hagar and Ishmael in the desert" and "Divine salvation for Hagar and Ishmael".

In this study, we shall be concerned only with the second of these types: "Abraham bids farewell (or dismisses) to Hagar and Ishmael," without a doubt the one most depicted in Christian tradition due to its fundamental importance. The topic giving rise to this iconographic type appears in this verse: "So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away".⁴

According to Origen of Alexandria, Abraham gives a waterskin to Hagar because Ishmael has no well since he "was born according to the flesh" (Ga 4: 29). Isaac, on the other hand, is the fruit of promise and possesses wells. The one who drinks from the waterskin ends up thirsty since the water runs out. The waterskin represents the letter of the law, from which the carnal people drink to obtain worldly knowledge. Often even that letter is missing and cannot be explained, since the historical interpretation is often deficient. The Church drinks from the springs of the Gospels and of the apostles, which never run out and flow to expand the spiritual interpretation. (*Hom. in Gen. 7: 5; SC 7/bis*, 206–8).

2. Continuity and Variation of the Iconographic Type

The corresponding iconographic type is made up of Abraham dismissing Hagar, who is taking her son toward the desert. The waterskin and the bread given to them by the patriarch do not always appear as such. We can see this in the Byzantine octateuchs in the Vatican: the first (11th cent., Rome, BAV, gr 747, fol. 42v.)⁵ and second (12th cent., Rome, BAV, gr 746, fol. 80r.)⁶ (Figure 1), in which Hagar is carrying the child and a saddlebag. In the *Canterbury Hexateuch* (ca. 1025–49, London, BL, Cotton Claudius B IV, fol. 36r)⁷ (Figure 2), Hagar and Abraham bid each other farewell, going in opposite directions, and she carries a basket, preceded by Ishmael. In the first *Pamplona Bible*, which belonged to Sancho the Strong (1197, Amiens, BM, fol. 11r) (Figure 3), Abraham is explicitly carrying the leather waterskin on his back and bread in his hand, sustenance that he is going to give to Hagar. In the *Velislaus Bible* (mid-14th century, Prague, NKP, XXIII.C.124, fol. 21r) (Figure 4), Hagar is holding Ishmael in one arm while receiving the bread and water offered by Abraham in the other. Ishmael seems to be conversing with the angel—which actually corresponds to the type concerning the divine salvation in the same episode, displaying a *fleur-de-lis*, which can be interpreted as a symbol of God's grace that illuminates the path and guides them.⁸ Nevertheless, in the 14th century the layout of this episode is codified in the two types in the same episode representing the dismissal and the divine salvation in the desert, as demonstrated by the *Jean de Sy's Bible* (ca. 1356, Paris, BNF, fr.15397, fol. 33v) (Figure 5) and other cases,⁹ in which the type is reduced to Hagar holding the small child Ishmael's hand or arm before Abraham, who is giving instructions. Sometimes, the small iconograph can fit in the small space of a capital letter, as in the so-called *Bible of Maugier*, heading the Epistle to the Galatians (ca. 1225–1235, Paris, BSG, ms 1180, fol. 335r).



Figure 1. Octateuch, s. XII. Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, gr. 746, f. 80r.



Figure 2. Canterbury Hexateuch, ca. 1025–1049. London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B IV, f. 36r.



Figure 3. Pamplona Bible I, 1197. Amiens, Bibliothèque municipale, f. 11r.



Figure 4. Velislav Bible, mid-14th century. Prague, Národní knihovny ČR, XXIII.C.124, f. 21r.



Figure 5. Jean de Sy's Bible, ca. 1356. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fr.15397, f. 33v.

As could be expected of the Renaissance, the depictions aim for greater plausibility with freer depictions compared to what is stated in the Bible, affecting details such as the bread and the waterskin. We can see this in the Lippekerke family's book of *Hours* with a cycle on Abraham and Isaac (late 15th century or early 16th century, Amiens, BM, ms. 107, fol. 7v) (Figure 6), in which Hagar dries her tears while receiving from Abraham a jug instead of the waterskin, and the pieces of bread. Jean Colombe, the miniaturist of a famous book of *Hours* (ca. 1480–1485, Besançon, BM, 148, fol. 82r), presents the scene soberly with Hagar departing with her back to Abraham. Lucas van Leyden is very descriptive in an engraving (ca. 1505–1510 Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-OB-1588), also introducing Sarah and Isaac in the background.¹⁰ In a second version (1516, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-OB-1589) (Figure 7), he limits the scene to the basics but goes deeper into the expression of feelings, an aspect that would be fundamental in future depictions, since each artist interprets the topic creatively. The emotional impact of this event could probably also explain its effect on the artistic sphere, expressed by the great many depictions. All in all, from the iconographic point of view, the type was to remain practically unvaried until the 19th century.



Figure 6. *Book of Hours*, late 15th century or early 16th century. Amiens, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 107, f. 7v.



Figure 7. Lucas van Leyden, 1516. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-1589.

We can find these considerations in an oil painting on panel, the work of Jan Mostaert (ca. 1520–1525, Madrid, CThy, 294 [1930.77]) (Figure 8), where the event takes place in the midst of a panoramic cycle that shows Hagar and Ishmael’s expulsion in the foreground

with contemporary clothes and surroundings, barefoot as a sign of precariousness. In the background, there is Ishmael and Isaac's fight with Sarah looking on, while on the opposite side, Hagar and Ishmael are being saved by the angel in the desert, and even further in the background, there is the sacrifice of Isaac. Another panel attributed to the Pseudo Jan Wellens de Cock (1500–1510, Vienna, KM, nr 6820) also deploys a panoramic cycle over the central type that matters to us, presenting the characters with contained emotion, with Ishmael standing out as he mistreats Isaac with a stick. The iconographic type is also seen in other genres such as the mural painting by Christoph Bockstorffer (1577, Colmar, PfH). Georg Pencz interprets the event in a tone of declamation or drama (1541–1545, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-H-Z-64) (Figure 9), with a weeping Hagar, Abraham loading her up with the waterskin, an annoyed Sarah in the doorway with her baby, and Ishmael with the bread under his arm and a bow in his hand, faithful to the biblical text, according to which Ishmael enjoyed divine protection and came to be a great archer (Gn 21:20).¹¹ The same elements, albeit without such drama, are also found in the engraving in the series on Hagar and Ishmael by Willem Thibaut (1580, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-1878-A-2849).¹² Adriaen Collaert also resorted to the panoramic cycle in an engraving on the series about Abraham (ca. 1584–1585, New York, MMA, The Elisha Whittelsey Coll., 51.501.1717[4]), showing Hagar's farewell in the foreground, holding Ishmael's hand and bearing bread and a bottle of water, while depicted in the background on one side there is the fight between the two children in front of Sarah, and on the other Hagar with the angel.



Figure 8. Jan Mostaert, ca. 1520–1525, Madrid, Colección Thyssen Bornemisza, 294 (1930.77).



Figure 9. Georg Pencz, 1541–1545. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-H-Z-64.

Dutch artists in the 16th and 17th centuries displayed great sensitivity in expressing the iconographic type, creating atmospheres with a great variety of psychological and emotional nuances. Indeed, a contrast can be seen between the great number of depictions in the Netherlands and the relative lack of attention paid to this iconographic type in the rest of Europe. Hagar appears at this time in a compassionate and endearing light, which has been explained by a change in mentality, in spite of the heavy presence of Calvinism, which maintained a negative exegesis regarding Hagar and Ishmael.¹³ It has also been said that this iconographic type was specially addressed by Rembrandt (and through him to his followers) as a reflection of the artist's personal history.¹⁴

As of the second half of the 16th century-onwards, the trend of placing the iconographic type within a broad landscape also took hold. One of the first examples is a panel by an anonymous Flemish artist (1550–1599, Saint-Omer, MHS, 0146CM; 2169). It is also important to highlight this aspect in a design by the landscape artist Paul Brill, worked into an engraving by Willem van Nieulandt II (1594–1685, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-1895-A-18944) (Figure 10), in which Abraham is bidding farewell to a weeping Hagar with her son beside a bay.¹⁵ The Flemish engraver Nicolaes de Bruyn (1581–1656, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-1898-A-20078) also created a broad, bucolic landscape with the group of Abraham, Hagar, and Ishmael in the left corner.¹⁶ This mode would also come to French classicism with Claude Lorraine (1668, Munich, AP, Nr. 604), in which the scene takes place with no emotion, as in other European regions, even reaching the 18th century, as in the case of the German Johann Conrad Seekatz (1760–1765, Saint Petersburg, MEr).¹⁷



Figure 10. Willem van Nieulandt II, 1594–1685. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-1895-A-18944.

In the Dutch sphere, in the 17th century, Pieter Lastman created an artwork (1612, Hamburg, K) (Figure 11) with an atmosphere of fantasy in the landscape and characters in fine Eastern-styled clothing, a crying Ishmael carrying a piece of bread under his arm as Abraham sees them off to their fate. In the background, Sarah holds her baby in the midst of a domestic scene with servants and animals, showing the good state of the household.¹⁸ Artistic creativity has sometimes gone beyond conventionality, even creating new types as in the case of a canvas by Willem Batsius (1631, London, Sotheby's, 9 December 2010) (Figure 12) in which Abraham begs an evasive Sarah in vain for compassion for Hagar and her son.



Figure 11. Pieter Lastman, 1612, Hamburg, Kunsthalle.



Figure 12. Willem Batsius, 1631. London, Sotheby's, 9 December 2010.

Within the vast amount of Dutch production, we shall limit ourselves to highlighting some cases as regards the conventional type. Jan Lievens left behind a version in an etching that is very sketchy yet of great artistic interest (1625–1674, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-OB-58) in which Hagar is on her knees, with a weeping Ishmael in her lap, imploring a distanced, hesitant Abraham who is already turning his back on them.¹⁹ There is also the famous engraved etching by Rembrandt (1637, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-OB-56) (Figure 13) with the figure of Abraham in the central role, who with restrained misgivings is dismissing a weeping Hagar and a resigned Ishmael, their backs turned, walking; Sarah looks out of the home contented while an innocent Isaac observes.²⁰ Govaert Finck (1640–1660, Berlin, GG, Nr. 815) composed an intimate scene contrasting sentimental expression with a weeping Ishmael, masterfully resolving the communication between Abraham and Hagar via their gazes.²¹ Jan Victors created various versions, but let us highlight a canvas (1650, *Jerusalem*, Mis) also focusing on the characters' psychological state, showing Abraham staring distractedly, immersed in an emotional conflict; the child's bewilderment gesturing to his father; and in the background, a satisfied Sarah.²² On the other hand, for Gabriel Metsu (ca. 1653, Leiden, SML) (Figure 14), Abraham, with tears in his eyes, is ejecting Hagar and the boy with determination as Sarah leans out of a window making a hostile gesture and Ishmael looks at his mother with worry. Nicolas Maes (1653, New York, MMA) (Figure 15) interprets the figure of Abraham with Judaic clothing, dismissing a barefoot Hagar clothed as a country peasant woman, while Ishmael is already setting off on a journey with his bow and quiver.²³ By the time of Adriaen van der Werf (ca. 1696, Dresden, GAM, b. 1823)²⁴ (Figure 16), a composition of a classical kind was produced with a restrained expression of emotions in which the psychological burden is concentrated in the children: Ishmael is turning back jealously toward an insinuating Isaac, who is hiding behind his father to show security and belonging.²⁵ In the 18th century, we should highlight a composition by Philip van Dyck (1718, Paris, ML [Dep. peintures], INV 1266), which was conveyed to an engraving by Carlo Porporati (1751–1816, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-1926-479), in which the event is interpreted in keeping with aesthetics of classicism. Hagar, with a heavy heart, abandons the household while Abraham, who is also pained, indicates the way with an eloquent gesture. Ishmael turns back affectionately to Isaac, who takes refuge in his mother.

In the rest of Europe, this iconographic type did not enjoy the same fortune as in the Netherlands. The French engraver Etienne Delaune, in the series *Histoire de la Genèse* (1550–1599, Strasbourg, CSD, 77.2013.0.243) also presents the episode in the form of a panoramic cycle, accentuating the expressiveness: Hagar is driven out with her baby in her arms, while in the background, one can see the iconographic type of their divine salvation in the desert. In the Hispanic world, this type is absolutely exceptional, though there is the case of a sketched pen-and-wash drawing attributed to Antonio de Lanchares (1600, Madrid, BNE, DIB/16/2/2). Here, Abraham, in whom the child Isaac seeks refuge, orders the dismissal with a kneeling, prostrate Hagar embracing a disconsolate Ishmael.



Figure 13. Rembrandt, 1637. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-56.



Figure 14. Gabriel Metsu, ca. 1653. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal.



Figure 15. Nicolas Maes, 1653. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 16. Adriaen van der Werf, ca. 1696. Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, n. 1823.

The most outstanding cases are to be found in Italian art, with notable differences compared to the north from an iconic point of view. The artists concentrate more on the characters than on the description of the scene, presenting the drama in a more declamatory tone, while not leaving out the psychological nuances. A follower of Francesco Ruschi

(London, Sotheby's, 8-12-2916)²⁶ constructs a scene that is more rhetorical and gestural than realistic in terms of attitudes and gestures: Abraham is giving the order, Hagar and Ishmael are surprised, Sarah is looking on cunningly, while Isaac, with apparent innocence, is playing a festive tambourine. Guercino (ca. 1657, Milan, PBr, Reg. Cron. 322) presents Abraham as an upstanding patriarch, hardly moved by the weeping of Hagar and her son, while Sarah turns her back on the situation. Cristoforo Savolini, educated under the influence of Guercino (ca. 1670, Moscow, MPu, inv. 2662) (Figure 17) arranges a group in which their hands play a very beautifully expressive compositional role. Abraham has his arm around the weeping Hagar, while the latter holds Ishmael's hand, with Sarah holding Isaac in the background. Mattia Preti composed a scene with an authoritarian Abraham banishing Hagar and Ishmael, who look at him in fear. A drawing by Francesco Zuccarelli (1702–1788, Paris, ML [Dep. Arts graphiques], INV 2659, Recto) shows us the moment that Abraham accompanies Hagar and Ishmael with no concessions to sentimentalism or dramatism, leaving behind a tent where Sarah is doting over her small child. There is also a canvas by the same artist (ca. 1750, Miami, LAM, n. 80.0282) showing Abraham, and also Sarah from a terrace in the house, making condemning gestures with their arm toward Hagar, who abandons the place with dignity, holding her weeping son's hand.



Figure 17. Cristoforo Savolini, ca 1670. Moscow, Pushkin Museum, inv. 2662.

In the 18th century, we can see original interpretations of the theme, such as the one by Jean-Baptiste Besnard (1700–1799, Rennes, MBA, inv. 871.17.20) in which Hagar has to leave the household dragging Ishmael along the ground. Giuseppe Soleri Brancaloni composed a masterful oil painting on canvas (1750–1806, Rimini, MCi, inv. 201 PQ [1986]) with great expressiveness: Hagar is leaving with a sack and a cooking pot, with Abraham pointing the way with an emphatic gesture as Ishmael shows his fondness by kissing his hand. From the Rococo period, a composition by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (n.d., Mailand, Cp) was cataloged according to this iconographic type.²⁷ Adapting to the neoclassical aesthetic, the Swiss painter Angelica Kauffmann expresses each character's feelings in a very refined way in a canvas signed in Rome²⁸ (1792): Hagar is leaving with resignation, already turning her back on the elderly Abraham, taking an adolescent Ishmael by the arm, who turns his back on his father, the latter bidding them farewell also with a heavy heart. This aesthetic is also followed in the depiction in the engraving by Jacob Folkema published by Jan de Groot (1791, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-1933-31) on one page incorporating the two engravings of the expulsion of Hagar and the divine salvation in the desert. Josef Danhauser, by then in the Biedermeier period (ca. 1836, Vienna, KM, n. 2553) (Figure 18) constructs the type with a very different sensibility: Abraham is a Jew (in the pejorative sense that such a concept carried in the artist's cultural context) who does not "bid farewell" but "banishes" Hagar with indifference, without looking at her face, while a teary Hagar still seems to be begging. An irritated, proud Ishmael is already taking her by the arm to set off. A mound of fruit on the ground, signifying abundance, contrasts with the frugal bread and jug of water with which Hagar and Ishmael are departing. There is also a noteworthy visual manifestation of this type given by the biblical illustrations by Gustave Doré (ca 1880), who creates a scene in the desert. In the background, in front of the tent in which the family lives with their cattle, Sarah is holding a sleeping Isaac in her arms while Abraham, with a severe gesture expressing compassion and determination, bids farewell to Hagar, who is leaving in the direction of the viewer bearing a water vase, taking a crying Ishmael with her. In the Late Modern period, this iconographic type would be interpreted more freely, with artistic creativity placing the accent on more subjective aspects. That occurs with the sculpture by George Segal entitled *Abraham's Farewell to Ishmael* (1987, Miami, PAMM) (Figure 19), especially aimed at expressing the tenderness of Abraham's embrace for Ishmael. Hagar departs with resignation, turning her back on them, with Sarah looking on discreetly. The group displays a range of human emotions and invites the onlooker to take part in the drama of the farewell. Moving around the characters, the viewer can experience the psychological dynamics of this dramatic story. It has even been said that the construction of the story put forward by Segal expresses today's Arab–Israeli conflict, symbolized as of its biblical roots.²⁹



Figure 18. Josef Danhauser, ca. 1836, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, n. 2553.



Figure 19. George Segal, *Abraham's Farewell to Ishmael*, 1987. Pérez Art Museum Miami.

3. Conclusions

In conclusion, the concept of “continuity and variation” has served to contrast how this iconographic type has remained over time with some invariable components: Abraham bids farewell to Hagar, sending her to her fate, whereas Ishmael, depending on the case, is a defenseless child seeking refuge in his mother, or else he is an adolescent who drags her with him; Sarah always appears withdrawn but attentive to what is happening, while Isaac is a baby or small child who does not manage to perceive what is happening. All in all, the variety of expressive nuances is very important depending on each case. In this study, we have merely intended to show the codification of the type in order to establish an analytical foundation prior to another kind of hermeneutic or iconological study.

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Abbreviations

AEAQ	Agnes Etherington Art Centre at Queen's (Kingston, Queen's University)
AlMu	Altonaer Museum (Hamburg)
AP	Alte Pinakothek (Munich)

BAV	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Rome)
BL	British Library (London)
BM	Biblioteca Municipal/Bibliothèque municipale/Stadtbibliothek
BMu	British Museum (London)
BNE	Biblioteca Nacional de España (Madrid)
BNF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris)
BSG	Bibliothèque Sainte-Genève (Paris)
Cp	Private collection
CSD	Cabinet des Estampes et des Dessins (Strasbourg)
CThy	Colección Thyssen Bornemisza (Madrid/Barcelona)
ES	Evangelical School of Smyrna
FAG	Ferens Art Gallery (Hull-Yorkshire)
FM	Fogg Art Museum (Harvard University)
GAM	Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister (Dresden)
IMA	The Index of Medieval Art (Princeton University)
K	Kunsthalle (Bremen/Hamburg)
KK	Kupferstichkabinett
KM	Kunsthistorisches Museum (Vienna)
KMSK	Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten (Antwerp)
LAM	Lowe Art Museum (Miami)
LMH	Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum (Hannover)
MAAB	Musée des Beaux Arts et d'Archéologie (Besançon)
MBA	Museo de bellas artes/Museo Nacional de bellas artes/Musée des beaux-arts/Fine Arts Museum/Museum voor schone kunsten/Kunstmuseum.
MCi	Museo de la Ciudad, Museo della Città, Museo Civico.
MCo	Musée Condé (Chantilly)
MÉR	The State Hermitage Museum (Saint Petersburg)
MHY	M. H. de Young Memorial Museum (San Francisco)
MHS	Musée de l'Hôtel Sandelin (Saint-Omer)
ML	Musée du Louvre (Paris)
MMA	The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York)
MoL	Morgan Library & Museum (New York)
MPu	Pushkin Museum (Moscow)
MRKU	Museum voor religieuze Kunst - Krona (Uden)
NCMA	North Carolina Museum of Art (Raleigh)
NGA	National Gallery of Art (Washington)
NKP	Národní knihovny ČR (Prague)
NSM	Norton Simon Museum (Pasadena)
PAMM	Pérez Art Museum (Miami)
PBr	Pinacoteca di Brera (Milan)
PfH	Pfisterhaus (Colmar)
RCa	Reggia di Caserta (Palacio Real de Caserta) (Naples)
RijM	Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam)
RuCo	Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum (Bournemouth)
SC	Sources Chrétienne, collection. Lubac, H. de, Danielou, J., et al. (dir.). 1941 ss. Paris, Du Cerf.
SG	Staatsgalerie
SK	Städel Museum (Städelsches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie) (Frankfurt)
SLM	Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum (Aachen)
SMz	Szépművészeti Múzeum (Budapest)
TeyM	Teylers Museum (Haarlem)
WL	Württembergische Landesbibliothek (Stuttgart)

Notes

- ¹ Gn 21: 8–21. The study corresponds to the results of the project: “The iconographic types of Christian tradition”, funded by the Government of Spain (Ref.: PID2019-110557). More about this project: (García Mahiques 2021).
- ² Ga 4: 21–29: «Dicitur mihi, qui sub lege uultis esse: Legem non auditis? Scriptum est enim quoniam Abraham duos filios habuit, unum de ancilla et unum de libera. Sed qui de ancilla, secundum carnem natus est; qui autem de libera, per promissionem. Quae sunt per allegoriam

dicta; ipsae enim sunt duo Testamenta, unum quidem a monte Sinai, in servitum generans, quod est Agar. Illud vero Agar mons est Sinai in Arabia, respondet autem Ierusalem, quae nunc est; seroit enim cum filiis suis. Illa autem, quae sursum est Ierusalem, libera est, quae est mater nostra; scriptum est enim: 'Laetare, sterilis, quae non paris, erumpe et exclama, quae non parturis, quia multi filii desertae magis quam eius, quae habet virum'. Vos autem, fratres, secundum Isaac promissionis filii estis. Sed quomodo tunc, qui secundum carnem natus fuerat, persequatur eum, qui secundum spiritum, ita et nunc».

- 3 The concept of “iconographic type” is a term coined by E. Panofsky (Panofsky 1932). It is the specific way that a visual image of a topic or subject has come to be arranged. Panofsky understood *type* primarily to be a fusion or summary in which the *phenomenic sense*—the primary or pre-iconographic sense of the image, or simply a plain figure of something—becomes a vehicle for a topic or meaning, thus creating the sense of the meaning in a visual artwork. Its sphere of study is iconography. It should not be confused with a *compositional motif*, whose sphere of study is *style*. For greater detail, see (García Mahiques 2009, pp. 37–43).
- 4 Gn 2: 14: «Surrexit itaque Abraham mane et tollens panem et utrem aquae imposuit scapulae eius tradiditque puerum et dimisit eam».
- 5 IMA 82178.
- 6 In the same *Octateuch* (fol. 71r), the same type of farewell for Hagar and Ishmael is repeated within a cycle in which other types are also included. It is the following sequence: Hagar offered to Abraham by Sarah; the birth of Ishmael; Ishmael with Isaac; Hagar and Ishmael’s expulsion; and salvation by the angel. The latter cycle is best expressed in the disappeared *Smyrna Octateuch* (12th cent., Smyrna (Izmir), ES, A.1, fol. 29v).
- 7 IMA 104882. (Dodwell and Clemons 1974, p. 25).
- 8 By way of example, one can also recall that the *fleur-de-lis* appears in ancient maps indicating north amid the compass roses.
- 9 The images included in a Bible of Germanic origin (ca. 1375–1400, New York, MoL, M.268, f. 4r.) could serve to illustrate this point, as well as those images included in the *Welchronik* codex of the Carthusian Philipp (14th century, Stuttgart, WL, Invent-Nr. HB XIII 6, 51v).
- 10 Parshall (1978). From this engraving, a drawing attributed to Hendrick Hondius I (1583–1650, Amsterdam RijM, RP-T-00-165) is preserved.
- 11 This engraving subsequently inspired another by the printer Christoffel van Sichem (ca. 1640, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-2015-17-65-3 (R)). The print was made for the publications of P.J. Paets of Amsterdam, collected in (Bybels Lusthof 1740, p. 21). And it also appears in (Bibels Tresoor Ofte der Zielen Lusthof 1646; *Historien ende Prophetien* 1645).
- 12 The engraving features the following legend: *Siccine dure senex patriae pietatis amorem/Exuis, ac puerum cum matre extrudis egentem.*
- 13 Sellin (2006). This author maintains that writers and painters began to abandon the idea that Hagar and Ishmael are allegorical figures in the sense given by Saint Paul, developing themes related to contemporary Dutch life.
- 14 England (2018, p. 264). <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685292-02203001>. This author’s opinion is based on Richard Hamann, which is also shared by other authors, for whom Rembrandt’s frequent depiction of Hagar is explained by the loving relationship he had with his maid Hendrickje, with whom he “lived in sin” and for which he had to appear before the Council of the Church of Amsterdam.
- 15 The engraving was copied by Gabriel Perelle (1604–1677, Amsterdam RijM, RP-P-1884-A-7766), directly onto a plate, which explains its compositional inversion.
- 16 It is also worth highlighting other landscape engravings that incorporate the iconographic type in a more or less prominent way: Jacob Matham and Abraham Bloemaert (1603, Madrid BNE, Invent/2347); Pieter van der Borch I (1613, Amsterdam RijM, BI-1919-77-28); Jan van de Velde II (1616, Amsterdam RijM, RP-P-1880-A-4422); Moyses van Wtenbrouck (1620, Amsterdam RijM, RP-P-OB-24,967); Anthonie Waterloo (1625–1690, Madrid, BNE, Invent/29451); Gilles Neyts (1643–1681, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-1879-A-3121).
- 17 It is worth mentioning two drawings attributable to Nicolaes C. Moyaert (17th century, Paris, ML [Dep. Arts graphiques], INV 22769 recto/23382 recto). Other representations of a landscape nature in the art market: oil on panel attributed to Gillis van Coninxloo II (1600–1610, Aschaffenburg, SG, Johannsburg Castle); by the same artist, panel (1559–1606, Amsterdam, Sotheby Mak van Waay, 04-28-1976); panel by Willem van Nieulandt II on the landscape of ruins from the forum of Rome (1599–1635, Paris, Wilfrid Cazo, 6-26-2008); panel by Bartholomaeus Breenbergh (1613–1637, London, Christie’s, 04-17-1997); pen and ink drawing attributed to Tobias Verhaecht (1576–1631, Paris, Millon, 2-4-2012); canvas with urban landscape by Jacobus Cobrisse (1651–1702, Keulen, Van Ham Kunstauktionen, 11-5-2012).
- 18 A drawing by this artist is kept (Bremen, K [Kupferstichkabinett]), as well as two drawings: one by Salomon de Bray (Bremen, K [Kupferstichkabinett]) and another attributed to Rembrandt (Vienna, Albertina, cat.nr 8766). Both artists were disciples of Pieter Lastman.
- 19 Another composition is also attributed to him (Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-OB-57), with undoubted dramatic effect.
- 20 The engraving had several replicas, which reversed the composition: anonymous (Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-1957-252); Frans van Mieris II (1706, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-OB-12,294); James Bretherton (1760–1781, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-1957-253); engraving printed by Thomas Worlidge (1710–1766, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-1957-254-B) on a version that does not invert the compositional scheme and lacks the expressive magic of Rembrandt. Likewise, a composition was reproduced on a table that incorporates a landscape by an anonymous Flemish artist, and that was formerly attributed to Ferdinand Bol, and to Rembrandt

- himself (Châlons-en-Champagne, MBA, 861.1.109). Rembrandt's drawings, or those attributed to him: sketch with pen and wash (Paris, ML, [Dep. Arts graphiques], INV 22979, recto); pen and ink drawing (Paris, ML, [Dep. Arts graphiques], INV 22989, recto); a drawing very similar to the previous one (Dresden, KK); pen and ink drawing (Paris, ML, [Dep. Arts graphiques], INV 22941, recto); pen and ink drawing (Cadmen, Col. Eldridge R. Johnson); pen and ink drawing (Washington, NGA); nib (ca. 1642, Haarlem, TeyM); pen and ink drawing (ca. 1656, New York, MoL); pen and ink drawing (ca. 1650, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-T-1930-2); pen and ink drawing (ca. 1655, London, BMu); pen and ink drawing (Braunschweig, KK).
- 21 A replica of this work attributed to F. Kobelko (Bournemouth, RuCo) is preserved. There is another version by Govert Flink of this iconographic type (1640, Budapest, SMz).
- 22 Other works by Jan Victors on this iconographic type: 1644 oil on canvas missing (Sumowski 1983, vol. VI, n. 2455); canvas (Saint Petersburg, MEr); canvas from 1643 (Sumovski, W. 1983, vol. IV, n. 1731); canvas (1645–1648, Cardiff, NM).
- 23 A sketch (Berlin, KK) is attributed to Rembrandt, which if so would provide Maes with the compositional scheme. Another very different version of Nicolás Maes is preserved, which was in the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum in Berlin (Sumowski 1983, vol III, n. 1319).
- 24 Dietrich Wilhelm Lindau made a copy of this work (1814–1821). A photograph by Hanns Hanfstaengl (1854–1864, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-F-F25388-P) was reproduced in print. Adriaen van der Werf also has another version (1701, Munich, AP, L 2525) with a classical setting with Abraham dismissing Hagar and Ismael in tears.
- 25 Other Dutch works from the 17th and 18th centuries: Jan Symonsz Pynas's two versions (1603, Aachen, SLM/1614, Amsterdam, RH); canvas attributed to Leonaert Bramer (1611–1674, Hannover, LMH, nr PAM 765); panel by Jacob de Wet (Lille, MBA); etching by Roeland van Laer (Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-1882-A-5744); panel by Rombout van Troyen (1625–1655, Munich, Hampel Kunstauktionen, 03-27-2009); nib and sepia wash drawing by Philips Koninck (Paris, ML, RF 41370, recto); oil on panel by Johannes Urselincks (ca. 1630, Uden, MRKU); canvas by Ferdinand Bol (1616–1680, Saint Petersburg, MEr); oil on panel by Job Adriaensz (1630–1693, London, Christie's, 12-08-2017); by Gerbrandt van den Eeckhout, an oil on canvas (Raleigh, NCMA), a missing canvas (Sluijter 2015, fig. VII-50), and a drawing in pen and gouache attributed to this artist (Raleigh, NCMA); oil on canvas by Pieter Symonsz Potter (1643, Dessau, SG); etching attributed to Esaias Boursse (1645.1655, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-BI-4223); pen drawing by Aert de Gelder (1649–1650, Berlin, KK); Barend Fabritius in three versions (1658, New York, MMA/San Francisco, MHY/Hull-Yorkshire, FAG); pen sketch by Carel van der Pluym (1650–1675, Besançon, MAAB, D.568); canvas by Jan Steen (1655–1657, Dresden, GAM, Gal.-Nr. 172); Karel van der Pluym (ca. 1655, Kingston, AEAQ); canvas by Salomon de Bray (1662, Pasadena, NSM, M.1979.45.P); etching by Jan Luyken (1700, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-OB-44,888); etching by Caspar Luyken (1712, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-OB-45,777); drawing in pen and gouache by Jacob Folkema (1712, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-T-1990-5); etching by Louis Fabritius Dubourg (1713–1775, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-BI-7213X); canvas by Willem van Mieris (1724, Saint Petersburg, MEr, Γῶ-1854); engraving by Jonathan Spilisbury possibly after Rembrandt or Jan Victors (1752–1794, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-OB-33,773); etching of Reinier Vinkeles I from Gerbrand van den Eeckhout (1751–1816, Amsterdam, RijM, RP-P-1904-2911); two by the Flemish painter Pieter Jozef Verhaghen (1728–1811, Heverlee, Park Abbey/1781, Antwerp, KMSK, 491), of the latter a preparatory sketch in oil on paper is preserved.
- 26 From the Vittorio e Caterina di Capua collection. It is a copy from Francesco Ruschi, of whom two autograph versions are known (1630, Greenville, BJMG, 103.1/Treviso, MLB, P 153). Vid., For the Greenville version: (Pepper 1984, pp. 102–3, cat. 103.1, reproduced on p. 265, fig. 103.1). For Treviso's version: (Pallucchini 1981, vol. I, pp. 166–67, reproduced in vol. II, p. 649, fig. 489.3).
- 27 However, we must express our doubts about not adhering strictly to the literary source, nor fitting in with the tradition of iconographic types. See the Bildindex file online: <https://www.bildindex.de/document/obj00156178?medium=fmc650903>, accessed on 16 November 2020.
- 28 Private collection in Italy until 2019. Acquired by Lowell Libson Ltd.: https://www.libson-yarker.com/downloads/files/Lowell_Libson_Jonny_Yarker_Ltd_-_Recent_Acquisitions_2019.pdf, accessed on 13 November 2020.
- 29 Other European manifestations between the 17th and 18th centuries: anonymous French gouache drawing (1600–1699, Chantilly, MCo, DE 194); canvas by the German painter Gottfried Kneller (ca. 1670, Munich, AP, inv. 376); canvas attributed to Nicola Grassi (1682–1750, London, Christie's, 7-11-2008); drawing by Ciro Ferri (1634–1689, Paris, ML [Dep. Arts graphiques], inv. 3078, recto); the illustration corresponding to the collection printed by Benito Cano, by N. Besanzon and A. Martínez (1794, Madrid, BNE, U/6968 [P. 113]); canvas by Moritz Daniel Oppenheim (1826, Frankfurt, SK, inv. 1682); Sevres porcelain by Giovine Raffaele in the Royal Palace of Naples (ca. 1830, Room XVII, inv. 764); canvas of Johann Friedrich Overbeck (1841, Hamburg, AIMu), which Friederich August Ludy took to print (Harvard University, FM); engraving by P. Pelée illustrating (*Scio de San Miguel 1843*, t. I.); canvas by Raffaele Postiglione (1850–1899, Naples, RCa, inv. 188); drawing by Vicente Palmaroli (1854, Madrid, BNE, DIB/18/1/621).

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Article

Saint Agnes of Bohemia: A Thirteenth-Century Iconoclast and the Enduring Legacy of Her Convent as a Sacred Space for Religious Art

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Abstract: Refusing to accept her expected role of becoming an item of negotiation in an arranged marriage to strengthen a political alliance, Agnes of Bohemia (1211–1282), daughter of King Přemysl Otakar I of Bohemia and Queen Constance of Hungary, chose to use her royal dowry to finance construction of the first hospital, convent, monastery, and church in Prague committed to the teachings of Saint Francis. Her youth was influenced by nuns providing her education, by a strong familial precedent in the support of churches and convents, and by religious contemporaries. Joining the fledgling Franciscan movement, this remarkably well-educated and deeply committed woman entered as abbess of the convent in 1234, dedicating her life to poverty without endowment, devotion, and service to the sick and poor. Agnes was beatified by Pope Pius IX in 1874 and canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1989. Her legacy remains in Prague today with the Gothic convent she constructed now serving as a premiere museum devoted to the Medieval and Renaissance religious art of Prague and Central Europe. Thus, the original goal of building a sacred space for sisters in order to foster spiritual mediation has now been redirected to provide the public the opportunity to become immersed in ecclesiastical reflection viewing the works of artists such as Master Theodoric, the Master of Vyšší Brod, the Master of the Třeboň Altarpiece, and others.

Keywords: Saint Agnes of Bohemia; Convent of Saint Agnes; Přemyslid dynasty; Prague; Master Theodoric; the Master of Vyšší Brod; Master of the Třeboň Altarpiece; Medieval and Renaissance Art of Central Europe

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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview of the Přemyslid Dynasty in Bohemia

Thirteenth-century Central Europe was composed of a number of powerful kings and kingdoms, each vying with the others for territorial gain and political advantage. The Přemyslid Dynasty of Bohemia had humble beginnings as a tribe of Western Slavs around the area of Prague in the late ninth century. Dukes ruled with but two exceptions, one occurring in the eleventh century and the other in the twelfth century, when the Holy Roman Emperor appointed each as king. By conquering regions of Bohemia and controlling trade routes through and around Prague, the dynasty gradually expanded its hegemony over surrounding territories, increased its financial coffers, and gained in prestige and recognition.

The available historical documentation indicates that Bořivoj I (c. 852–c. 889), considered the progenitor of the Přemyslid dynasty, was the first Duke of Bohemia. It is noteworthy that, following their baptism by Bishop Methodius of Thessalonica (c. 815–c. 885), Agnes' ancestors, Duke Bořivoj I and his wife Saint Ludmila (c. 860–921), a patron saint of Bohemia, were responsible for the introduction of Christianity into Bohemia and the building of the first Christian church in the region. Their conversion occurred amid much opposition, and Christianity had, at most, a tenuous hold on the general population. Bořivoj and Ludmila had two sons, Spytihněv I (c. 875–915) and Vratislaus I (c. 888–921), who, respectively,

served as the second and third Dukes of Bohemia. Vratislaus I married Drahomíra of Stodor (c. 880s–c. 935) in about 906, and they had two sons, Wenceslaus I (c. 911–935) and Boleslaus I (c. 909–c. 967), and several daughters.

Following the death of Vratislaus I, Drahomíra became regent for her sons, but the Bohemian nobles stipulated that the government must be shared with Ludmila, who proceeded to instill Christianity into her two grandsons, particularly Wenceslaus I, the first of the brothers to rule. The pagan beliefs of Drahomíra and her opposition to Ludmila's religious influence over Wenceslaus I and Boleslaus I led Drahomíra to order the assassination of her mother-in-law by two noblemen. Ludmila was canonized shortly thereafter. After serving as Duke of Bohemia for fourteen years, in 935 Wenceslaus I was killed in a coup in which his brother, Boleslaus I, was complicit¹. Like his grandmother, Ludmila, Wenceslaus I, who became known as the Good King Wenceslaus, was canonized shortly after his death. The martyrdoms of Ludmila and Wenceslaus I were important in establishing strong ties between the Bohemian state and the Roman church (Thomas 1998, pp. 22–3; Klaniczay 2002, pp. 100–1).

After several centuries of rule by the Přemyslids, Otakar I (c. 1160–1230) became Duke of Bohemia in 1192. He was granted the title, King of Bohemia, by three kings of Germany². This kingship continued through Otakar I's son, grandson, great-grandson, and great-great-grandson, with the House of Přemysl ending its rule in 1306. A concise overview of the Přemyslid dynasty is available (Curta 2019).

1.2. Aims to Be Addressed

Medieval Bohemia was a strong patriarchal society that granted few, if any, concessions to the power of women, including princesses. Agnes (Figure 1) was in the vanguard of a small group of central European women, many of whom were related, who insisted on forging a life of their own choosing, using their royal funds for goals such as building and administering convents and hospitals. Moreover, these women were educated and contributed significantly to the arts and literature of central Europe. Specifically, the following questions will be addressed herein. (a) What were the motivating forces that led Agnes to refute her father, King Otakar I, King Frederick II of Germany, and other royal suitors to forego the life of a queen and instead use her royal dowry to construct a convent, hospital, church, and monastery, choosing a life of poverty without endowment, rather than one of relative comfort? (b) How did Agnes accomplish her goals, and what was the impact of her efforts on thirteenth-century Prague? (c) What serendipitous circumstances enabled the Saint Agnes Convent to survive the eight hundred years between the death of Saint Agnes and present? and (d) What relationship exists between the function of the original Saint Agnes Convent to its use in contemporary Prague as a sacred space for meditative Medieval and Renaissance religious art?



Figure 1. Bust of Agnes. Made in the 1220s by an unknown artist and located in Saint George Convent, Prague Castle. Downloaded from Wikimedia Commons: Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License. Author, Packare.

2. Birth and Education of a Bohemian Princess

The last of nine children born in Prague to Otakar I and his second wife Constance of Hungary (c. 1180–1240) was Princess Agnes (1211–1282). When only three years of age, Agnes was sent with her older sister Anna (1204–1265) to the court of Henry the Bearded (1165–1238), who was married to the Duchess Hedwig of Silesia (1174–1243) and future Saint Hedwig of Andechs. Agnes was betrothed to Boleslaw (c. 1191–1210), the oldest son of Henry and Hedwig. From there, Agnes was placed with the Cistercian nuns of Trebnitz in Silesia for her education. Upon Boleslaw's early and untimely death, Agnes returned to Prague and then went to the Bohemian Premonstratensian convent of Doxony to continue her education. This convent was founded in 1143 by her aunt, Queen Gertrude of Merania (1185–1213). Meanwhile, Anna, betrothed to the Henry and Hedwig's second son, Henry II the Pious (c. 1196–1241), whom she later married in 1216, remained in Silesia and thus strengthened the ties between the Přemyslid and the Piast dynasties (Klaniczay 2002, p. 204).

Like other daughters of royalty, Agnes was, if suitable arrangements could be made, destined for marriage to a member of a neighboring court in order to make, enhance, or solidify a political alliance. Another path for such daughters was to join a convent, either by choice because of their religious leanings or because marriage arrangements failed to materialize. For example, of Agnes' six sisters and half-sisters that reached adulthood, one married a king, another married a count, two married dukes, one became a nun, and another, Wilhelmina of Bohemia, also known as Guglielma (1210–1281), embraced an alternative form of Christianity³.

Most of the young women from affluent families who entered a life of religion did so in one of the established wealthier Orders. The Franciscan doctrines that were in their infancy did not enter Central Europe until the early 1220s, and few women of royal birth would have chosen the austere life dictated by the Poor Clares.

In 1219, Otakar I was asked by Frederick II for his permission to betroth Agnes to his son, the Hohenstaufen prince, Henry VII (1211–1242). Pleased with the arrangement to strengthen ties with the powerful king, one year later Otakar I sent his daughter to the court of Leopold VI (1176–1230), Austrian Babenberger Duke, to receive training and an education for her role as a future queen. Although Leopold VI agreed to receive Agnes, he, unknown to Otakar I, wanted to marry his own daughter, Margaret (1204–1266), to Henry VII, who was also in residence in Vienna. Receiving a dispensation from Pope Honorius III (1150–1227, papacy 1216–1227), Frederick II annulled the contract for his son to marry Agnes, and Henry VII instead was wed to Margaret in 1225. Following Leopold VI's betrayal, Agnes returned to Prague and Otakar I, in his fury, declared war on Austria the following year. Austria prevailed in the conflict, and an angered Otakar I was forced to withdraw and plan another offensive, one however that failed to materialize.

In 1230 Otakar I died, and his eldest surviving son with Constance, Wenceslaus I (c. 1205–1253), assumed the throne. Similar to his father, Wenceslaus I was approached by Frederick II, now a widower, who requested a marriage with Agnes, but this union was to be for himself. Earlier, Agnes had refused overtures of a marriage with King Henry III of England (1207–1272), and now, at twenty years of age, made the decision not to marry, but instead dedicate herself to the early Franciscan movement, choosing a life of poverty, devotion, and caring for the sick and poor (Figure 2). This was a major decision for a young woman to reject an offer to become queen of the powerful kingdom of Germany, where she would have lived in relative comfort and prosperity, with one overriding responsibility, namely that of producing male heirs. Upon learning of Pope Gregory IX's (1145–1241, papacy 1227–1241) approval to receive Agnes into the Church, the two kings, Wenceslaus I and Frederick II, reluctantly agreed to accept Agnes' refusal of a marriage contract. Indeed, always anxious to thwart the ambitious Frederick II whenever possible, as the two were often in conflict over territory, Gregory IX was pleased to approve Agnes' request to seek a life of devotion and charitable work.



Figure 2. *Saint Agnes of Bohemia Gives the Grandmaster a Model of the Church.* Located in Saint Vitus Cathedral in the Prague Castle and downloaded from Wikimedia Commons. In the public domain and from a scan of a Catalog of Exhibition (2011), Altarpiece of Mikulas Puchner. Artist and photographer unknown.

3. Contributors to Agnes' Sovereignty and Decision to Become a Nun

There is clearly an epistemological problem when seeking to explain the motivating factors underlying a decision made by someone else, particularly exacerbated by the attempt to do so nearly eight centuries after the event. It is nonetheless reasonable to claim, with but some degree of caution, that Agnes' heuristic childhood and youth in religious communities impacted greatly on her refusal to become a queen and instead dedicate her life to the Franciscan movement in the Clarissan model.

During the time leading up to her commitment to a pious life, Agnes had been influenced by a number of individuals. Her early years with Hedwig and the Cistercian nuns in Silesia and with the Premonstratensian nuns in Doxony, while not only providing the young and impressionable Agnes an education, introduced her to a spiritual lifestyle that she fully embraced. Additionally, Agnes' family members, particularly her mother, Constance; her cousin, Elisabeth of Hungary (1207–1231); Elisabeth's mother and Agnes' aunt, Queen Gertrude of Merania; her much earlier ancestors, Saint Ludmila and Duke Bořivoj I, and several other relatives, served as role models by demonstrating ways in which royal funds could be used to subsidize churches and convents. Moreover, in addition to providing financial support, many of her relatives entered convents, some as sisters, some as abbesses, and others simply to reside within the communities without taking vows. Agnes' mother was highly pious and a major donor to churches and nunneries, as well the founder of several hospitals. Following Otakar I's death in 1230, Constance founded the Cistercian abbey near Tišnov, Porta coeli Convent, in 1232/3, where she retired as a nun, living there until her death in 1240.

Agnes' cousin Elisabeth, whom Agnes emulated in many respects, was the daughter of Andreas II (c. 1177–1221), King of Hungary and Croatia and the brother of Agnes' mother Constance, and Queen Gertrude of Merania. Born in Pozsony, Hungary, when only four years of age Elisabeth was betrothed to Hermann (1202–1216), the oldest son of Landgrave Hermann I of Thuringia (c. 1185–1217) and taken to the family court of

Thuringia in central Germany⁴. After five years Elisabeth's future husband died, at which time she was affianced to Hermann's younger brother, who as Ludwig IV (1200–1227) ascended the throne and wedded Elisabeth at Wartburg Castle in 1221. From all accounts this was a happy marriage, and the union led to the birth of three children. Called to the Diet in Cremona in 1226, Ludwig IV agreed to join Emperor Frederick II on the Sixth Crusade, but tragically he died from the plague in 1227, leaving Elisabeth a young widow living with relatives who did not approve of her religious leanings and expenditure of royal funds in assisting the poverty-stricken and infirmed.

Earlier, Elisabeth had become supportive of the Franciscan ideology learned from followers of Saint Francis who had made their way to Germany in 1223 seeking converts for the newly established Order. After Ludwig IV's death and suffering persecution by his family, particularly his mother and a brother-in-law, Elisabeth joined the Third Order of Saint Francis in 1228, remaining committed to aid the sick and impoverished. Initially founding a twenty-eight-bed hospital for the poor in Eisenach, she then moved to Marburg and spent her residual funds to build another hospital to care for patients suffering from leprosy, the disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*, that had spread across Europe in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries. In this setting, the Hospital of Saint Francis, Elisabeth dedicated herself to caring for lepers until her early death.

Unfortunately for Elisabeth, she was treated harshly by Conrad of Marburg (c. 1180–1233), her confessor and a fanatical ascetic. Conrad was a priest, nobleman, and the first German Inquisitor, who was appointed by Pope Innocent III (1161–1216, papacy 1198–1216) and continued by Pope Gregory IX. Making heavy demands in terms of devotion and fasting, Elisabeth suffered beatings from Conrad⁵ when she failed to meet his unrealistic expectations. Such treatment, along with that of her husband's relatives, undoubtedly contributed to her death in 1231 at just twenty-four years of age. Complementing her charitable life, a number of miracles were attributed to Elisabeth, who was canonized by Pope Gregory IX in 1235. A number of sources discussing Elisabeth are available for further reading (Barratt 1991; Mueller 2006, pp. 54–55; Aaij 2007; Wolf 2010; Burke 2016).

Although never meeting in person, the contemporary Francis of Assisi (1181–1226) was another highly influential individual in Agnes' life. The son of a prosperous silk merchant, Francis renounced his patrimony and devoted his life to preaching in which he advocated the importance of living in total poverty and aiding the poor. Responding favorably to the teachings of Francis, Innocent III approved the first Rule submitted in 1209⁶, believed to be little more than some passages of the Gospel, possibly from Matthew and Luke, and the vows honoring poverty, obedience, and chastity. This approval, however, sufficed to found the Franciscan Order, although other Rules with expanded text were later accepted by Honorius III in 1221 and 1223, including in the latter the fundamental Rule of the Order dictating the lifestyle of the brothers of the Friars Minors: '*... to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without property and in chastity.*' While the wording differs slightly depending upon the translation, the intent and meaning of the Rule remains clear. Much has been written on the life of Francis (cf. Robson 1997; Wolf 2003; Le Goff 2004).

Another contemporary was Clare of Assisi (1194–1253), with whom Agnes corresponded but never met. Additionally, from a prosperous family, Clare was deeply moved upon hearing the sermons and teachings of Francis in San Rufino in 1211. Meeting Francis in 1212 at Santa Maria degli Angeli, Clare renounced her social status to devote her life to poverty and to caring for the sick and indigent. In the same year, along with Francis, Clare founded the Second Order of the Poor Ladies, the Poor Clares, and joined Francis and his followers at the Portiuncula, about four kilometers from Assisi, before being transferred to the Benedictine convents of Bastia and then Sant' Angelo di Panzo. Her last move was instigated by Francis who had rebuilt the church of San Damiano and adjacent convent in Assisi. Clare became abbess of the abbey in 1216 and in 1255 was canonized by Pope Alexander IV (late twelfth century–1261, papacy 1254–1261).

Clare was highly supportive of the younger Agnes and served as a distant mentor and advisor as Agnes navigated the path to join the Second Order of the Poor Ladies in 1234. At times Clare's correspondence took the form of a spiritual mother writing to her daughter, the penultimate paragraph of her last letter being as follows. '*Farewell dearest daughter, together with your own daughters, until we meet at the throne of glory of the great God, and pray for us.*' (Monagle 2015).

Unfortunately, although the letters of Agnes are no longer extant, the writings of Clare to Agnes are available and have been extensively studied and contextually analyzed (Van den Goorbergh and Zweerman 2000; Mueller 2003, 2010; Hahn 2014; Monagle 2015). Like much of Middle Age correspondence, the letters are rhetorically and metaphorically expressive. Interestingly, in several instances Clare paraphrased from *The Legend of S. Agnes of Rome* (Fleming 2010) in her letters to Agnes (Mueller 2010, pp. 169–98). Many additional sources are available describing the life of Saint Clare (cf. Mueller 2006; Pattenden 2008; Debby 2014; Hahn 2014).

4. Expending a Royal Dowry and Becoming a Resolute Abbess

In the early 1230s on land donated by her brother King Wenceslaus I, a site known as Na Františku along the banks of the Vitava River in Prague, Agnes used her royal dowry to begin the first phase of construction of a complex consisting of a hospital for the poor, begun in 1233 and dedicated to Francis; a convent for Poor Clares (Figure 3); the Church of Saint Francis, consecrated in 1234; and later a monastery for brothers who would attend patients and administer the hospital, this being located in a portion of the former hospital space. The complex was the first Gothic building in Prague (see Figure 4 for a contemporary view of the Saint Agnes Convent). Thus, Agnes was responsible for the first Clarissan house and the first double cloister north of the Alps (Felskau 2017).



Figure 3. *Agnes Tending the Sick*. Located in the National Gallery, Prague and painted by Bohemia Master of the Year 1482. Downloaded from Wikimedia Commons and in the public domain. Photograph by Adrian Siemieniak.



Figure 4. Convent of Saint Agnes of Bohemia. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution, downloaded from Wikimedia Commons, and in the public domain. Photograph by Jerzy Strzelecki.

In addition to providing property, Wenceslaus I also gave royal support, thus relieving the complex of all taxation on the buildings and land. In strong backing of Agnes, her mother Queen Constance gave estates to ensure the hospital's sustainability. Wenceslaus I and another brother, Přemysl (1209–1239), Margrave of Moravia, also donated an estate to enhance the financial security of the hospital. Agnes, having committed herself to live a life of poverty with no possessions, generously bequeathed the endowments to the hospital and specified that the combined income could not be used in any context for support of the convent. Instead, the sisters would depend upon the citizens of Prague and the Franciscan brothers for their needs. Further construction continued through the 1260s, including the addition of a kitchen and culminating in the Church of the Holy Savior, which would also serve as a mausoleum for the royal family.

Arriving in Prague in c. 1232, brothers of the Friars Minor identified a number of pious lay brothers, the Crusaders of the Red Star (Rüther 1999), who were commissioned by Agnes to staff the hospital and administer support from the endowment. Having heard of Agnes' commitment to the teachings of Francis, Clare requested in 1233 that Gregory IX allow five nuns from Trent to relocate to the fledgling priory, a request that Gregory approved. Shortly thereafter seven noble Bohemian women joined the original five nuns. On Pentecost Sunday, 1234, Agnes appeared in the newly constructed convent of Poor Clares in her finest clothing, which she proceeded to remove, revealing the coarse habit she would wear the remainder of her life; moreover, her renunciation of a secular life was accompanied by the cutting of her lovely long hair, an event witnessed by her sister Anna (Klaniczay 2002, pp. 238–41). Entering the convent as abbess, Agnes remained there throughout her life.

The complex erected by Agnes serves as testament to her unwavering commitment to the teachings of Saint Francis, as well as the tenaciousness and fortitude of this thirteenth century woman, born into royalty, to use hers and her family's influence and financial resources to further the teachings of the nascent Franciscan movement. To Agnes, sharing the same commitment as did Clare, poverty and a life without endowment was an essential element of her religion that was required to attain coalescence with Christ. In recognition of her northern sister's profound steadfastness and dedication, Clare wrote her first letter to Agnes in 1234 commending Agnes for choosing a life of poverty as proscribed by Francis⁷.

Pope Gregory IX, while supporting the Franciscan movement, was concerned about the number of convents that were emerging with the concomitant increase in the number of Franciscan nuns living in abject poverty. The image of destitute women of the Church begging for food or depending upon brothers to feed them was abhorrent to him. Moreover, he was also concerned that in time the papacy would be under pressure to support them. In short, he was desirous that the sisters have some form of financial support, and in Prague

the solution seemed obvious since ample funds were available. In 1235 Gregory IX wrote Agnes and unequivocally decreed that the generous endowments of the hospital would also be available for the support of the convent⁸, thus undermining Agnes' desire that the convent not be subsidized.

Seeking advice from Clare, as is apparent from Clare's second letter to Agnes, she was advised in no uncertain terms to disregard the pope's command⁹. Further, Clare suggested that Agnes seek support from Brother Elias (c. 1180–1253), who in 1232, following the death of Francis, had been elected the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor. Taking her recommendation, Agnes approached Elias and also her brother King Wenceslaus I, both of whom agreed to intervene on her behalf, writing to Gregory IX in 1237 (Mueller and Felsk 2011, p. 141). Not wishing to offend Wenceslaus I and needing his support to buffer the aggressiveness of Frederick II, Gregory IX was also influenced by the support offered by Brother Elias. He notified Agnes by letter in 1237 negating his previous stand and accepted that the convent would not be required to share the endowments of the hospital. While making this concession, however, Gregory IX placed the convent under the Rule of Saint Benedict, rather than the Franciscan Rule.

In a separate letter to the hospital master, Gregory IX recognized the Order of the Crosiers of the Red Star, the first religious order originating in Bohemia. The brothers were to observe the Rule of Saint Augustine and practice charitable works. Further, Gregory IX granted the medical facility to these Augustinian monks as they, unlike the Franciscans, could accept and continue to receive the assets required to maintain and meet operational costs. He also assigned the local Dominican province as visitators to the hospital, thus involving several Orders of the Church within this complex. In 1238 Gregory IX conceded the '*privilege of poverty*' to the convent, although qualifying this by saying that the nunnery could receive support, but such was not required.

Unhappy with Agnes' continued refusal to accept independent financial support for the convent, Gregory IX hoped to entice the nuns living in the convent to agree to use the generous endowments. As part of his inducement, he informed them that he was relaxing their dietary and fasting requirements. Agnes evidently sought Clare's advice again, as ascertained from Clare's third letter to Agnes in which she reminded her that the fasting requirements were voluntarily for each sister and admonished Agnes for her own overly strict diet¹⁰. It is doubtful that Agnes adhered to Clare's recommendation regarding fasting and, determined to maintain her convent's original mission, persisted in her request that the convent be placed under the Franciscan Rule. Refusing to grant this entreaty, Gregory IX admonished Agnes for failing to accept his decisions, particularly that of adhering to the Benedictine Rule.

Gregory IX's resolution was based on his insistence that the Ugolinian Rule be adopted. Before becoming Pope, Gregory IX, then Ugolino di Conti, was named Cardinal by Pope Innocent III in 1198. Knowing of Ugolino's strong support of women choosing a life of devotion within the Church, Innocent III's successor, Pope Honorius III, asked Ugolino to develop a uniform rule that would apply to all female religious Orders. He was also instructed to formulate a plan for implementing the decree of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 stipulating that new religious Orders were prohibited and that new adherents to a life of religion must do so in one of the existing Orders. As applied to nuns, Ugolino recommended that they be under the dominion of the Apostolic See and follow the Rule of Saint Benedict (Mueller 2006, p. 19). Following this Ugolinian Rule, Gregory IX felt thoroughly justified in his exhortation that Agnes and the nuns in the Prague convent follow the Rule of Saint Benedict and not the Rule of Saint Francis, which he believed too restrictive for women. In further correspondence with Clare and then the Pope, Agnes was able to obtain Gregory IX's permission for her convent to have fasting regulations consistent with those of the convent of Saint Damiano. Gregory IX would not, however, offer Agnes the Rule of Saint Francis that she so ardently desired.

Realizing Gregory IX's inflexibility in this matter, Agnes decided to wait and begin negotiations with his successor. Following Gregory IX's death in 1241, the newly elected

pope, Celestine IV (birthdate unknown, death in 1241), served in office only three weeks before dying himself. His successor was Innocent IV (1195–1254, papacy 1243–1254) whom Agnes approached in 1243 requesting recognition of the sisters as Franciscan. In responding, Innocent IV refers to Agnes as a ‘*sister of the Order of Saint Damian*,’ however, he supported Gregory IX’s decision that Agnes’ convent must follow the Rule of Saint Benedict.

Additional correspondence transpired between Agnes, Clare, and Innocent IV. In summary, the pope accepted Agnes’ and Clare’s desire that, upon their discretion, Franciscan brothers could enter the convents and attend the spiritual needs of the sisters, but he refused to capitulate and place them under the Rule of Saint Francis. Ever persistent and fully committed to her goals, Agnes engaged in further communications with the Pope. In 1247, Innocent IV finally yielded and proclaimed that the sisters were to be under the Order of Friars Minor of their region and, moreover, that the Rule of Blessed Francis replace that of the Rule of Blessed Benedict. On the other hand, he introduced the caveat that the convent could have financial support and own possessions. It was a partial victory for Agnes, but it firmly established her position as a powerful voice in the Church, able to push for theological, ecclesiastical, and political matters (Klaniczay 2016, pp. 130–31). Regardless of the Pope’s decision, she was committed to adhere to the principle for which she had so valiantly struggled, namely that the convent have no endowment.

In time, as Clare was nearing death, with the support of Cardinal Rainaldo dei Conti di Segni (papacy as Alexander IV) she wrote what came to be known as the Rule of Saint Clare outlining her perspective on the ‘*privilege of poverty*’ and its intent to the sisters of San Damiano (Mueller 2000, p. 284)¹¹. This Rule was approved by Innocent IV in 1253, and it is believed that Clare sent a copy to Agnes who was also able to achieve its acceptance by Alexander IV for the convent in Prague¹². In her last letter to Agnes, written in 1253 as Clare lay dying, she gave lavish praise to Agnes as her spiritual daughter¹³.

In 1279 and 1280, the depredations of wars, rebellions, epidemics, famine, and floods led to severe starvation and disease that were ravaging the citizens of Prague, including the sisters of the Convent who were suffering badly as well. Anarchy was setting in with royal holdings being taken. Consuming even less food than normal in order to provide more nourishment for the other sisters, Agnes’ health deteriorated, and her physical condition was very poor when she passed away in 1282. Her body, placed behind the grating of the sister’s chapel, lay in state for two weeks, during which period many of Prague’s poor came to pay their final respects. After a life of prayer and service, Agnes was buried in her beloved convent.

Following in the path of two women contemporaries who had greatly influenced her, Saint Elisabeth of Hungary and Saint Clare of Assisi, Agnes was unwavering in her vision for her destiny, and her accomplishments in thirteenth-century Prague and environs were many. She served as a role model to other daughters of royalty, including her sister Anna, who was also influenced by her cousin Elisabeth and her mother-in-law Hedwig, the latter of whom she honored with the construction of a church¹⁴.

Over the years this long-lasting royal lineage had generously supported the Church financially and provided numerous sisters to various Orders. Living over seven decades, Agnes witnessed four of her relatives as Bohemian kings, her father, Otakar I; her brother, Wenceslaus I; her nephew, Otakar II; and her grandnephew, Wenceslaus II. For an overview of the political events occurring between 1248–1306 involving the House of Přemysl, the reader is referred to the Appendix A for a summary of the kingships of Wenceslaus I, Otakar II, Wenceslaus II, and Wenceslaus III. The death of Agnes in 1282 preceded by just over two decades the inglorious ending of the Přemyslid Dynasty when her great-grandnephew, Wenceslaus III, was stabbed to death by an unknown assassin in 1306.

Centuries after her death, the Church accepted that Agnes exhibited resolute Christian values and was blessed with the gift of miracles, including her purported healing abilities and visions. She was beatified in 1874 by Pope Pius IX (1792–1878, papacy 1846–1878) and canonized in 1989 by Pope John Paul II (1920–2005, papacy 1978–2005). For a description of the early canonization efforts on behalf of Agnes, the reader is referred to Felskau

(2017, pp. 130–43). Several excellent hagiographies on the remarkable life of Agnes are recommended for the interested reader (Mueller 2000; Mueller 2006, pp. 53–56; Seton 2010; Mueller and Felsk 2011; Felskau 2017).

5. The Post-Agnes Era

Lady Kunigunde of Bohemia (1265–1321), the daughter of Otakar II and his second wife, Queen Kunigunda of Slavonia/Halych, joined the Order of Poor Clares and entered Agnes’s Convent in 1276, becoming the new abbess upon Agnes’ death. However, in 1291, Kunigunde’s brother, Wenceslaus II, ordered a marriage with Boleslaus II of Masovia (c. 1253/58–1313), forcing her to leave the convent. The union produced two children and lasted until 1302 when Boleslaus II divorced Kunigunde, at which time she returned to Prague and joined the Benedictine Convent of Saint George, Prague castle, where she served as abbess until her death. As a book collector and patron of the arts, Kunigunde, like her great-aunt Agnes and later Anne of Bohemia (1366–1394), Queen of England and the first wife of King Richard II (1367–1400), made significant contributions to medieval Bohemian literature, an unusual role for most women of the period (Thomas 1998, p. 15).

With the number of sisters gradually declining over the ensuing years, the nuns moved out of the convent in 1419/20 at the outbreak of the Hussite Wars as their spiritual haven was redirected to the war effort. Before leaving, however, they exhumed Agnes’ remains and placed them in a wooden coffin that was buried at an undisclosed location for protection.

Later, Dominican sisters occupied the convent, but in the seventeenth century the Franciscan sisters returned, remaining there until the late eighteenth century when the building was sold under the reign of the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II (1741–1790), who was abolishing numerous churches, monasteries, and convents. The new owners rented space for workshops, storage facilities, and small apartments for the poor. The hospital and monastery housing the friars were eventually demolished¹⁵ as a neighborhood developed in the vicinity of the convent and churches (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Convent of Saint Agnes viewed from the site of the former monastery. The foundations are visible in the lower front of the picture, and the view is looking toward the Church and the Chancel of Saint Francis (to the left) and the Church of the Holy Savior (to the right). The former hospital, no longer extant in this location, would have been toward the right quadrant of the photograph where the large tree is now standing, and from there extending beyond into what is now a neighborhood. Photograph by the author.

Realizing the architectural and historical importance of the convent, chapels, and the Churches of Saint Francis and of the Holy Savior, renovation was begun in the nineteenth century. Yet, it was not until the twentieth century that the refurbished edifice visible today was completed, and in 1963 the convent was placed under the sponsorship of the National Gallery of Prague. It presently continues as a contemplative and meditative space through the use of religious art.

6. The Enduring Legacy of the Saint Agnes Convent

Today the interior Gothic rooms and hallways (Figure 6) form a glorious setting for the splendid collection of over two-hundred works of Medieval and Renaissance art of Prague and Central Europe from the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries. Excellent examples of religious art created during Czech's Golden Age are on view in these galleries, as are some earlier and later works.



Figure 6. Internal view of the Saint Agnes Convent showing Gothic arches in one of the hallways. Photograph by the author.

Paintings by three of the leading fourteenth-century artists working in and around Prague adorn the walls and are discussed herein. Included in this group are: (a) Master Theodoric of Prague (c. 1328–1381) and two anonymous artists and their workshops referred to as (b) the Master of Vyšší Brod (also denoted as the Master of the Hohenfurth Cycle), whose better-known paintings were done in about 1345–1350, and (c) the Master of the Třeboň Altarpiece, paintings that were completed in about 1380–1390.

Master Theodoric of Prague (c. 1328–1381) was commissioned by Charles IV (1316–1378), Holy Roman Emperor and King of Bohemia, to execute one hundred and thirty panel paintings and frescoes of saints, prophets, patriarchs, angels, church officials, and popes for the Chapel of the Holy Cross in the Karlštejn castle. These works, most of which have survived, were done by the Master and his assistants between about 1360–1365 and have been discussed and analyzed in depth by [Friedl \(1956\)](#) and [Frinta \(Frinta 1975–1976\)](#). Considered one of the originators of the 'Soft Style', several of Master Theodoric's paintings are shown in Figures 7–10. It is believed that Master Theodoric visited Venice, where he was influenced by much of the Byzantine art he admired, particularly that in the Basilica of Saint Mark. Indeed, his use of pastiglia or relief decoration to cover backgrounds and frames, as well as his use of silver coverings or hammered gold of icons, reflects a Byzantine effect. As apparent in the figures below, his paintings are bold, offer three-dimensionality, and demonstrate a most effective use of light. The figures fill the frames, giving them an

oversize monumentality. The convergence of these effects is readily appreciated in Master Theodorik's paintings of *Saint Jerome* (Figure 7) and *Saint Gregory* (Figure 10).



Figure 7. Painting of *Saint Jerome* by Master Theodorik of Prague. Downloaded from Wikimedia Commons and in the public domain. Photographer unknown.



Figure 8. Painting of *Saint Catherine* by Master Theodorik of Prague. Downloaded from Wikimedia Commons (in Creative Commons) Attr. Bation-Share, Alike 4.0 International license. Photographer unknown.

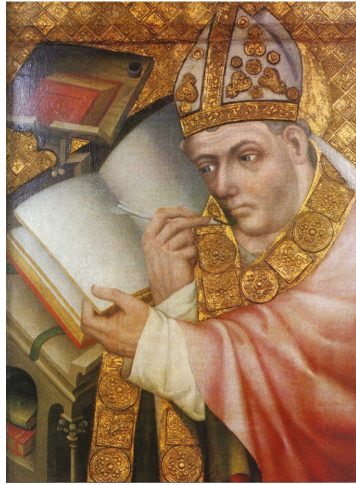


Figure 9. Painting of a *Saint* by Master Theodorik of Prague. Downloaded from Wikimedia Commons, Web Gallery of Art, Public Domain. Photographer unknown.



Figure 10. Painting of *Saint Gregory* by Master Theodorik of Prague. Downloaded from Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain. Photographer unknown.

The Master of Vyšší Brod derives its name from the nine panel paintings done in about 1345–1350 for the Cistercian Abbey of Vyšší Brod that depict scenes from the life of Christ. Peter I of Rosenberg (d. 1347) was a patron of the monastery who commissioned the paintings (Gersdorfova 2015). Figure 11 shows one of the panels, *Virgin Mary Teaching the Apostles* (also known as *Descent of the Holy Spirit*) in which the Virgin Mary, holding a book, is surrounded by the twelve apostles who are, from the descent of the Holy Spirit, to learn communication in all languages in order to spread the gospel. A form of the Byzantine painting tradition was employed by the use of layers, while the apostle holding a finger to his mouth, denoting obedience, reflects an Italian influence. The net result was, without question, Central European in nature. The use of brilliant and bold colors, the individuality of the figures, and a hint of perspective, renders this a magnificent work of art.



Figure 11. Painting of *Virgin Mary Teaching the Apostles* by the Master of Vyšší Brod (anonymous artist). Downloaded from Wikimedia Commons and made available under the GNU Free Documentation license. Photograph by Wolfgang Sauber.

Another highly accomplished anonymous artist of the period was the Master of the Třeboň Altarpiece whose major work was done between about 1380–1390 (Royt 2015). Commissioned by Archbishop Jan of Jenštejn for the Augustinian Church of Saint Giles in Třeboň, the remaining altarpiece consists of three wings, painted on both sides, depicting *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, *The Tomb of Christ*, and the *Resurrection*. Figure 12 shows a painting of *Saint James, Saint Bartholomew, and Saint Phillip*, located on the reverse side of the *Resurrection*, and Figure 13 depicts *Saint Giles, Saint Augustine, and Saint Jerome*, painted on the reverse side of the *Entombment*. Credited with creating what became known as the ‘Beautiful Style’, the artist used chiaroscuro in some of his works, and the bold use of colors and light, with some semblance of three-dimensionality, adds to the quality of these paintings.



Figure 12. Painting of *Saint James, Saint Bartholomew, and Saint Phillip* by the Master of the Třeboň Altarpiece. Downloaded from Wikimedia Commons and in the public domain. Photograph by Claire H.



Figure 13. Painting of *Saint Giles, Saint Augustine, and Saint Jerome* by the Master of the Třeboň Altarpiece. Downloaded from Wikimedia Commons and in the public domain. Photograph by Magnolia Box.

A brief discussion on the technical aspects of these early artists is in order. The magisterial paintings discussed were executed on canvas attached to wooden boards made of sycamore, linden, beech, or spruce. The paintings of Master Theodorik have been studied in detail and can be briefly summarized. Two layers of priming formed the ground, the lower one being a siliceous layer bound with glue, starch, and oil and the upper one composed of chalk, which contains coccolites or fossil shells. Preparatory drawings were made with bold black brush strokes and often reflected the work of one or more artists. This was followed by a layer of oil-based lead white that serves to reflect diffuse light striking it through the added translucent layers of tempera and oil. A wide variety of pigments were used to achieve the desired colors in the paintings (Hradil et al. 2020). Lastly, relief decorations were applied to the frame and background (cf. Hamsík 1992 for a succinct overview). Analytical studies of the pigments used by the Master of Vyšší Brod in the green cloak in Figure 11 demonstrated that a lead-tin (Pb-Sn) yellow was Type II (PbSnO₃) mixed with yellow ochre (hydrated iron oxide), lead white, and copper green pigment (Šefců et al. 2015). Another investigation showed that the blue in the robes was from a high-quality lapis lazuli backed by a white imprimatur that was executed in lead (Šefců et al. 2016). In contrast to the use of a type II lead-tin yellow, another painting from the Master of Vyšší Brod was found to contain Pb-Sn Type I (Hradil et al. 2007). To be determined is whether these two paintings were executed by the Master or by another artist in the workshop.

The fourteenth-century artwork in Prague and environs, with its vivid colors and striking compositions, parallels that being produced by the Florentine artist, Giotto (c. 1267–1337), whose works in the late thirteenth century and early fourteenth century can be found in Assisi (San Francesco), Florence (Santa Croce, Santa Maria Novella, and the Uffizi), and Padua (Arena Chapel), when a hint of perspective was being introduced a number of years before Brunelleschi (1377–1446) and Masaccio (1401–1428) added accurate mathematically based depth to two-dimensional compositions, defining a new era in Florentine painting (Puett and Puett 2016, pp. 80–104).

7. Conclusions

In closing, suffice it to say that Agnes was in the central European avant-garde of a small number of women who, centuries before women's rights and education were recognized, contributed significantly to religious goals, societal needs, literature, and arts.

She was strongly influenced and motivated by family members and non-related religious contemporaries to forego her expected role and, rather, dedicate herself to the teachings and lifestyle championed by Saint Francis and Saint Clare. Tenacious in meetings her objectives, she chose her own path in the Franciscan model. Agnes showed, along with others, that a powerful father, kings, and popes could be confronted and overruled, and that dowries could be used to benefit the glory of God. Agnes' firm resolve to lead a life dedicated to poverty and without endowment for her convent, while providing Prague a hospital for the poor, a convent for sisters, a monastery for brothers, a church, and a royal mausoleum, assured her of recognition as a major contributor to the Franciscan movement, particularly that of the Poor Clares, in thirteenth-century Prague. Although the hospital and monastery were eventually demolished, the convent was sold to house the poor and create workshops, thus preserving it until its architectural importance was recognized in the twentieth century when it was repurposed as a museum for a Medieval and Renaissance religious art collection. All works of art in the Saint Agnes Convent, including both paintings and statuary in such a glorious and historical setting, invite thoughtful contemplation, thus speaking to the appropriateness of transforming this original convent, founded to foster spiritual meditation, into a museum that enriches the viewer and can once more render ecclesiastical reflection. Whereas the functions of the original structures have changed, in an interesting twist of irony, the convent, originally built to seclude the sisters, now welcomes all comers to enjoy the premiere art collection. Agnes' legacy remains strong and intact.

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Appendix A. Overview of the House of Přemysl 1248–1306

In 1248, Agnes' nephew, Otakar II (c. 1233–1278), son of Wenceslaus I and Kunigunde of Swabia (1202–1248), led a rebellion against his father and declared himself King of Bohemia. Wenceslaus I, however, defeated his son and then imprisoned him. In time they reconciled and Wenceslaus I proclaimed his son as Margrave of Austria. Agnes was instrumental in mediating this peace negotiation, which occurred in her convent (Klaniczay 2002, p. 278). Following Wenceslaus I's death in 1253, Otakar II replaced him and served as king from 1253–1278. Otakar II's first marriage was to Margaret of Austria (1204–1266) who, being twenty-six years his senior, failed to produce children, leading to an annulment of the union. He then married Kunigunda of Slavonia/Halych (1245–1285) who bore the couple three children that survived infancy. The one legitimate son was Wenceslaus II (1271–1305). In recognition of Otakar II's military prowess in achieving victories for the short-lived empire he was building, he became known as the Iron and Golden King.

Believing that he had the support of Pope Gregory X (c. 1210–1276, papacy 1271–1276) for his anticipated appointment to the imperial throne of Germany, Otakar II was infuriated when Gregory instead backed Rudolf I of Habsburg (1218–1291), Count of Habsburg from c. 1240 and King of Germany 1273–1291. The new emperor forced Otakar II to relinquish many of the lands he had conquered and retain only Bohemia and Moravia. Refusing to recognize Rudolf I as King of Germany, Otakar II raised an army, composed of his own Bavarian troops allied with many from Brandenburg, Poland, and Bavaria, to fight him. Rudolf I, in turn, enlisted King Ladislaus IV of Hungary (1262–1290) and his soldiery to join in the upcoming engagement. In a large conflict that involved over fifteen thousand cavalymen, the allied armies of Otakar II and Rudolf I met in the Battle on the Marchfeld

at Dürnkrot and Jedenspeigen in 1278. Rudolf I was the victor, and Otakar II was killed on the battlefield. After Otakar II's death, his widow, Queen Kunigunda, began an affair with a Czech nobleman, Závís of Falkenštejn (1250–1290), whom she later married.

Upon his father's death, Wenceslaus II inherited the throne and served as King of Bohemia (1278–1305), King of Poland (1300–1305), and Duke of Cracow (1291–1305). However, being only seven years of age when the throne became his, he was incapable of effectively ruling for a number of years. During this period several regents oversaw the affairs of the kingdom. His cousin, Otto V, Margrave of Brandenburg (1246–1298), with whom he lived, served until 1283. Then, dowager Queen Kunigunda and Závís of Falkenštejn were regents until Wenceslaus II assumed control. Upon taking the crown, Wenceslaus II ordered that Závís be arrested for high treason in 1289 and then had him executed in 1290. The territory of Bohemia was greatly expanded under Wenceslaus II, and the discovery of silver in central Bohemia near the end of the thirteenth century added immensely to the royal funds.

Following the death of Wenceslaus II in 1305, his son with Judith of Habsburg (1271–1297), Wenceslaus III (1289–1306), became King of Bohemia and King of Poland. Having served just one year on the throne, Wenceslaus III was assassinated in 1306.

Notes

- 1 Following this fratricide, Boleslaus I then served some thirty-five years as Duke of Bohemia, during which time he amassed a commendable record of territorial and economic development. Moreover, he was sympathetic to the growing acceptance of Christianity in Bohemia, perhaps attributable to the influence of his grandmother Ludmila.
- 2 The three kings of Germany conferring kingship to Otakar I were Philip of Swabia (1177–1208) in 1198, a member of the Hohenstaufen dynasty; the rival Otto IV of Brunswick (1175–1218) in 1203, a member of the Welf dynasty; and by Frederick II (1194–1250) in 1212, a member of the Hohenstaufen dynasty. Frederick II was an aggressive, powerful, cultured, and erudite ruler who, over the years, would also acquire the titles King of Sicily, King of Italy, King of Jerusalem, and Holy Roman Emperor. In recognition of Otakar I as one of the electors who supported his kingship, Frederick II issued the Golden Bull of Sicily in 1212 confirming Otakar I's title as king of Bohemia in 1212, as well as assuring hereditary rights to his offspring and granting autonomy to Bohemia.
- 3 Emigrating to Milan, Guglielma practiced a feminist Christianity and preached that the end of time was approaching. Moreover, upon resurrection she would return as the Holy Spirit incarnate to a religion led by women. Not tolerating such behavior, even after her death, the Church accused her of heresy, and her remains were exhumed and burned, with three of her followers dying at the stake. Tumultuous times these were.
- 4 When Elisabeth was in Thuringia and during an absence by her father, Elisabeth's mother was killed during a hunt by Hungarian nobles in 1213, who were displeased with Gertrude's dispensation of land grants and court positions to her German relatives.
- 5 Having a reputation for severe cruelty in his rout of heresy, Conrad was assassinated by knights while on a trip from Mainz to Marburg. Ironically, Agnes had saved Conrad's life in the late 1220s when he was in Bohemia inspiring nobles to join the Sixth Crusade. His efforts interfered with Otakar I's attempt to recruit the same group of men to join him in another war against Austria to avenge the duplicitous actions of Leopold VI. With his own plans for the Bohemian noblemen so undermined, an angered Otakar I ordered Conrad to be captured and beheaded. Just before the order was executed, Agnes escorted Conrad to a chapel to confess and receive communion. Afterwards, at Agnes' request, her father withdrew his death order of Conrad.
- 6 The timing of the 1209 approval by Innocent III was certainly auspicious for Francis, as it had been executed six years prior to the acceptance of canon 13 of the 1215 Fourth Council of the Lateran that prohibited the establishment of new religious Orders. Francis was canonized by Gregory IX in 1228.
- 7 '... Hearing the account, one that brings you the highest honor, of your holy conversion and manner of life, an account that has been reputedly disseminated not only to me but to nearly every region of the world, I rejoice and exalt exceedingly in the Lord. ... I rejoice because you, more than others, could have enjoyed public ostentation, honors, and worldly status having had the opportunity to become, with eminent glory, legitimately married to the illustrious emperor, as would befit your and his pre-eminence. Spurning all these things with your whole heart and mind, you have chosen instead holiest poverty and physical want, accepting a nobler spouse, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will keep your virginity always immaculate and inviolate. ...' (Mueller 2010, p. 261).
- 8 '... we have decided that the Hospital of Saint Francis situated next to your monastery, which you, daughter and abbess, built on land of the Roman church, is to be conceded to that monastery with its appurtenances forever. Also, we order that the same hospital with all its goods can not be separated from the monastery by any means or plans. Moreover, let the income of its possessions fall to the use of yourselves and those who succeed you and remain safe forever through the authority of the apostolic see. ...' (Mueller 2000, p. 271).
- 9 '... Clare, useless and unworthy handmaid of the Poor Ladies, sends her greetings and the prayer that Agnes may always live in the utmost poverty. ... What you hold, continue to hold. What you do, keep doing and do not stop. But with swift pace, nimble step, and feet that do not

stumble so that even your walking does not raise any dust, go forward tranquilly, joyfully, briskly, and cautiously along the path of happiness, trusting in no one and agreeing with no one insofar as he might want to dissuade you from pursuing your founding purpose or might place a stumbling block in your way, preventing you, in that perfection with which the Spirit of the Lord has called you, from fulfilling your vows to the Most High. . . . Indeed, if someone tells you something else or suggests anything to you that may hinder your perfection or seems contrary to your divine vocation, even though you must respect him, still do not follow his advice. Instead, poor virgin, embrace the Poor Christ. . . . (Mueller 2010, pp. 265–66)

10 ' . . . I am filled with such great joy about your well-being, your happiness, and your favorable successes through which, I understand, you are thriving on the journey you have begun to obtain the reward of heaven. . . . our most glorious father, Saint Francis, urged us to celebrate in a special way with different types of food. Indeed, your prudence knows that, with the exception of the weak and the sick, for whom he advised and authorized us to use every possible discretion with respect to any foods whatsoever, none of us who are healthy and strong ought to eat anything other than Lenten fare, on both ordinary days and feast days, fasting every day except on Sundays and on the lord's Nativity, when we ought to eat twice a day. And on Thursdays in Ordinary Time, fasting should reflect the personal decision of each sister, so that whoever might not wish to fast would not be obligated to do so. All the same, those of us who are healthy fast every day except Sundays and Christmas. . . . But because neither is our flesh the flesh of bronze, nor our strength the strength of stone, but instead, we are frail and prone to every bodily weakness, I am asking and begging in the Lord that you be restrained wisely and discreetly, dearest one, from the indiscreet and impossibly severe fasting that I know you have imposed upon yourself, so that living, you might profess the Lord, and might return to the Lord your reasonable worship and your sacrifice always seasoned with salt. . . . ' (Mueller 2010, pp. 267–69).

11 ' . . . that is, by not receiving or having possession or ownership either for themselves or through an intermediary, or even anything that might necessarily be called property, except as much land as necessity requires for the integrity and proper seclusion of the monastery, and this land may not be cultivated except as a garden for the needs of the sisters.' (Mueller 2000, p. 284)

12 Unfortunately, the documentation for this has not been located. Clare was able to achieve her lifelong desire for the convent.

13 ' . . . I rejoice and exult for you in the joy of the Spirit, spouse of Christ, because like that other most holy virgin, Saint Agnes, you have been in an astonishing way espoused to the immaculate Lamb, who, having assumed responsibility for all the vanities of this world, takes away the sins of the world. . . . Therefore, seeing this, O queen of the heavenly King, you must burn ever more strongly with the fervor of charity! . . . O blessed daughter, since my bodily tongue cannot in any way express more fully the love that I have for you, that which I have written is certainly inadequate. I beg you to receive these words with kindness and devotion, seeing in them at least the motherly affection, by which every day I am stirred by the fire of love for you and your daughters. . . . ' (Mueller 2010, pp. 271–73).

14 Emulating her younger sister Agnes and cousin Elizabeth, Anna established a hospital in Wrocław, dedicated to Elisabeth, and, like Agnes, arranged for its operation to be under the Crusaders of the Red Star. With the assistance of Agnes in negotiating with Pope Alexander IV, Anna also founded a convent for Poor Clares in 1257 in Breslau, where she spent her remaining years as abbess (Klaniczay 2002, p. 241).

15 Although the original Franciscan hospital no longer stands, modern Prague has an extant St. Francis Hospital, begun in the fourteenth century and built near the Church of Saint Simon and Juda, and sited close to the one built by Agnes. Following the tradition of Agnes, the newer hospital was founded as one to provide health care to the poor. It has been greatly enlarged over the centuries and currently is under the management of the city of Prague.

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Article

Humility: Virgin or Virtue?

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Abstract: This paper considers Marian iconography in which the Virgin is depicted sitting on the ground, known as the Virgin of Humility. The creation of this Marian type coincides with Saint Thomas's systematization of the virtues, which resulted in a decline in the importance of the virtue of Humility. The combination of both cultural traditions has led to a correspondence between the virtue of Humility and the images of the Virgin of Humility. The genesis of this latter type is based on the textual sources and part of the visual representation of Humility, which was replaced during the 14th and 15th centuries.

Keywords: humility; virtue; virgin; allegory; iconography

1. Introduction

Research on the visual representation of Humility has framed by the context of virtues as an object of study. Most studies on images of the virtues—including [Katzenellenbogen \(1939\)](#), [Houlet \(1969\)](#), and [Norman \(1998\)](#)—begin with *Psychomachia* depictions (battle between virtues and vices)¹. Additionally, there are a few studies about the tree of virtues, but they are less abundant studies.

Images of Humility are usually approached generally in studies about virtues and vices, e.g., [Barbier \(1898\)](#) and [Mâle \(1925, 1986\)](#). Mâle explains the visual representation of Humility briefly and descriptively, exemplifying it with French works, but without explaining the origin and meaning of its image. [Van Marle's \(1971\)](#) contribution is similar, because he describes some attributes of Humility, but he does not explain their meaning nor the literary sources. In the mid 20th century, Louis Réau (1955–1959) proposed the first classification of the visual representation of the virtues, including Humility, but explained it briefly and generally, and [Sebastián \(1988, 1994\)](#) continued this trend. Likewise, [Tucker \(2015\)](#) focused on the visual representation of the virtues as a set, while [Tuve \(1963, 1977\)](#) focused on the 15th and 16th centuries, [O'Reilly \(1988\)](#) on the medieval, [Bonardi \(2010\)](#) on French baroque, [Cosnet \(2015\)](#) on Italian art of the 14th century and [Montesinos Castañeda \(2019\)](#) on the visual representation of the Cardinal Virtues.

Although we find numerous studies of this kind, images of Humility are usually approached descriptively or in circumscribed examples. In explaining the attributes' meaning, authors usually turn to *Iconologia* by Cesare Ripa, but this not contribute to the origin or meaning of the depictions. Thus, we do not find specific studies about the visual representation of Humility, the origin of its image, or its continuity and variation over time.

This is not the case for the Virgin of Humility, which putatively has a close relationship with the virtue of Humility and its sources. In the last hundred years, several published studies have attempted to locate the geographic and temporal origin of the Virgin of Humility type ([King 1935](#); [Meiss 1936](#); [Trens 1946](#); [Van Os 1969](#); [Kirschbaum 1971](#); [García Mahiques 1995](#); [Réau 1996](#); [Polzer 2000](#)) or have treated specific works, such the earliest-known image of the Virgin of Humility, made in Avignon by Simone Martini ([Sallay 2012](#)). Beth Williamson alone has carried out a more exhaustive study of the topic, determining the origin of the iconographic type more specifically than the other authors with her book of

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2007 titled *The Madonna of Humility. Development, Dissemination and Reception, c. 1340–1400*, in addition to articles about images such as that of the Avignon work (Williamson 2007).

Nevertheless, none of her previous works has considered a particularity of this iconographic type: the Virgin Mary is seated on the covered grass ground in a considerable number of images (Mocholí Martínez 2019). Likewise, many above-cited authors have tried to explain the reasons for the title given to the Virgin of Humility, but only a few of them have focused on the relation of this virtue with the seated position of the Virgin Mary. Moreover, almost none of these authors has placed the sources and/or the visual representation of the virtue in relation to the Virgin of Humility.

Thus, the objective of the present study was to establish the origins, continuity and variation of the depiction of Humility, making connections between the written sources on the virtue on one hand, and the Virgin of Humility on the other, whose visualities intersect.

2. The Virtue of Humility

The importance of Humility among the virtues was shown in different ways. Humility was depicted as the “Queen of Virtues” in the battle for the soul and the “Root of Virtues” in the tree of virtues. These depictions of personifications, as female figures with attributes, are the visual translations of written sources.

Since late Antiquity, Humility has appeared alongside the virtues in the famous battle of the soul, the *Psychomachia*. In the 2nd century, when Tertullian (c. 160–c. 220) decried the shows of the Roman arena, he argued that the veritable Christian fights were between vices and virtues (O’Reilly 1988, p. 13): “*Adspice impudicitiam dejectam a castitate, perfidiam caesam a fide, saevitiam a misericordia contusam, petulantiam a modestia obumbratam, et tales sunt apud nos agones, in quibus ipsi coronatur*” (TERT. spect. 29)². At the end of the 4th century, the Christian poet Aurelius Prudentius (348–410) developed Tertullian’s idea in an epic poem entitled *Psychomachia*. This poem presents a personified battle between vices and virtues, in which Humility appears: “*et ad omne patens sine tegmine uulnus/et prostrata in unum nec libera iudice sese/Mens Humilis*” (PRVD. psych. 246–8; PL LX, 611)³. However, characterizations of Humility in that battle do not correspond with Prudentius’ description of this virtue. Humility is personified as a woman and armed, and she does not have any distinctive sign identifying her beyond an inscription such as one that appears in the *Speculum Virginum* by Conradus Hirshauensis (c. 1140, London, British Library, MS. Arundel 44, fo. 34v) and in the façade of Saint-Pierre d’Aulnay (12th century).

Besides her relationship with the ground, Prudentius proposed Humility as the “Queen of Virtues”. This idea was taken up by Hildegard of Bingen (1151) in her *Ordo virtutum*: “*Ego, Humilitas, /regina Virtutum, dico: /uenite ad me, Virtutes, /et enutriam uos ad requirendam perditam dragmam/et ad coronandum in perseuerantia felicem*”⁴ (vv. 116–20). The relevance of Humility in the *Ordo virtutum* is evident in her actions. She opens and closes the lengthy second scene and she organizes the devil’s defeat, being the only one who speaks directly to the soul (Santos Paz 1999, pp. 49–50). Augustine of Hippo’s rhetoric, based on stylistic humility (*sermo humilis*), explains the preeminence of Humility. Additionally, Benedict of Nursia praised this virtue in his monastic rule, where she is considered “*Regina virtutum*” (Santos Paz 1999, p. 48).

It is unsurprising that Humility was highlighted among the virtues given that Hugh of Saint Victor (c. 1096–1141) considered it the “*radix virtutum*” in *De fructibus carnis et spiritus*⁵ (Figure 1), where he presents two trees. The first one is the old tree of Adam, whose root and stem is Pride and whose seven branches are the vices, with each branch diversifying into related vices (Sebastián 1988, p. 290). The second is the new tree of Adam, whose trunk is Humility, and its seven main branches are the cardinal and theological virtues (Mále 1986, p. 119). The organization of the virtues into a tree diagram was reproduced in different works, such as the *Speculum theologiae* (s. XV, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 3473, fo. 82) or the *Psychomachia* by Prudentius (s. IX–X, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 8318, fo. 62v). All of these works have in common that “*humilitas est radix omnium virtutum*”. Thus, just as each virtue is represented as a branch of the tree whose

leaves are the parts that compose it, the branches, in turn, form the parts that compose Humility (Cames 1971, p. 56).

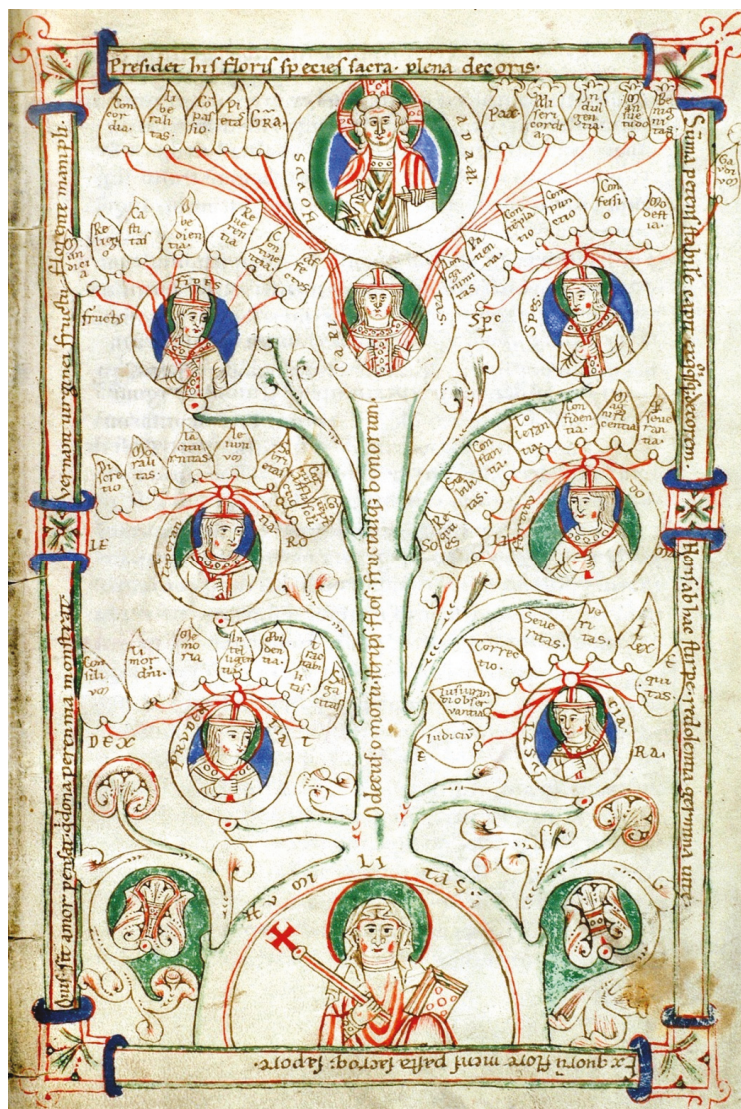


Figure 1. Tree of Virtues, *De fructibus carnis et spiritus*, Hugh of Saint Victor, 12th century, Salzburg, Studienbibliothek, MS. Sign. V. I. H. 162, fo. 76.

In the same sense, Augustine of Hippo conceived Humility as the foundation of any building in *Sermones de verbis Domini et apostoli*⁶. Later, Thomas Aquinas, inspired by Augustine of Hippo’s characterization of this virtue, explained: “humility is said to be the foundation of the spiritual edifice” (Aquinas 1225)⁷. Consequently, the idea of Humility as the queen and the root of all virtues was translated visually as the root of the tree of virtues. For example, Humility appears as the origin of the virtues in Notre Dame Cathedral in

Paris (Katzenellenbogen 1939, p. 75). This thought persisted throughout the Middle Ages, and appears for example in Chapter XXXIV of the *Flor de virtudes* (1488–1491):

“E de la humildad descien den e proceden estas virtudes: la primera es fazer honra a todo hombre; la segunda es reverencia, conviene saber, catar honra al mayor de sí; la tercera es obediencia, conviene saber, obedecer a quien tiene poder de mandar; la quarta es agradecimiento, conviene saber, reconoscer e agradecer el servicio o plazer que se recibe e fazerles d’ello agradecimiento”. (Mateo Palacios 2013, pp. 117–8)

2.1. The Allegory of the Virtue of Humility

Even though written sources describe Humility as the queen, root, and foundations of the virtues, its first depictions did not visually translate these ideas. In Paris Cathedral (c. 1210–1215), Amiens (1220–1235) (Figure 2) and Chartres (c. 1230–1240), Humility carries a shield with a dove as a motto, such as in an *Apocalypse* manuscript of the 13th century (the tree of virtues, c. 1290–1299, Herefordshire, Wormsley Library, lot 32b no. 5, fo. 6r). It was in the 14th century that Humility began to be depicted in connection with the ground. We find Humility in a kneeling position in a panel attributed to Giotto depicting the Virgin and Child surrounded by saints and virtues (c. 1315–1320) (Figure 3a), while in *Santa Felicità polyptych* painted by Taddeo Gaddi (c. 1355) (Figure 3b) Humility carries a flower and a lamb⁸. However, Humility personified is not associated with the ground in *Somme le roi* (1295, Frère Laurent, Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS. 870–1, fo. 89v) where she wears a crown, highlighting her role as *Regina virtutum*. This idea remained until the 15th century, as seen in the *Speculum humanae salvationis* (c. 1440–1466, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 3974, fo. 78r). In this work, Humility also carries flowers, whose explanation is *Flor de Virtudes* (1488–1491): “Sant Isidoro dize: ‘Assí como la sobervia es rahíz e simiente de todos los vicios, assí la homildad es reina de todas las virtudes’” (Mateo Palacios 2013, p. 122).



Figure 2. Humility, 1220–1235, Amiens Cathedral.

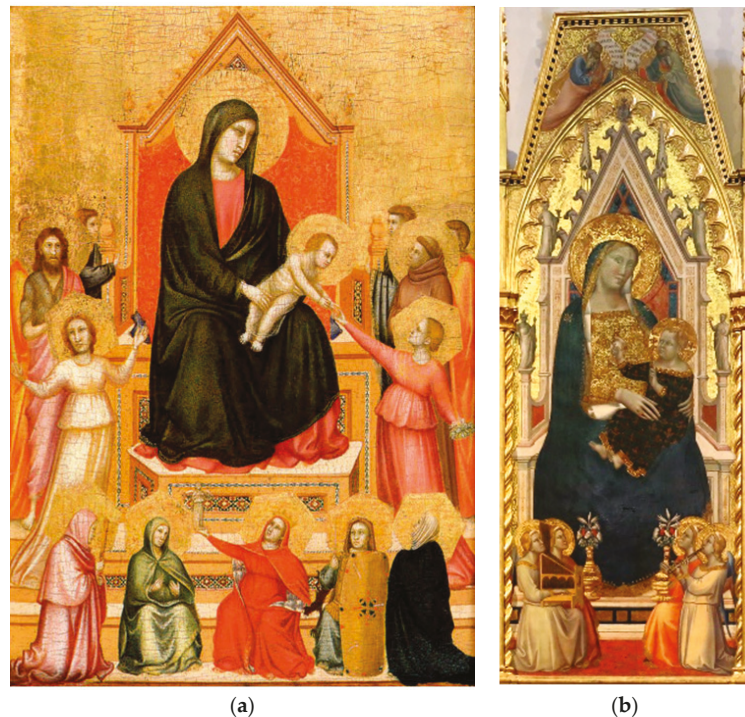


Figure 3. (a) *Virgin with the Child surrounded by saints and virtues*, c. 1315–1320, attributed to Giotto, private collection; (b) *Santa Felicità polyptych*, c. 1355, Taddeo Gaddi, Florence, Santa Felicità.

Despite the fact that the Scriptures highlight the importance of Humility⁹, it was not considered one of the seven cardinal—prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance—and theological virtues—faith, hope and charity—. Although its presence was essential in the first classifications of virtues as tree diagrams, Thomas Aquinas’ systematization considered it one of Temperance’s virtues¹⁰, losing its preeminence among the other virtues. In the 14th century, Thomas Aquinas’ moral treatises had many repercussions on the representation of the virtues. The cardinal and theological virtues as a group of seven (sometimes including Humility), were conventionalized (North 1979, p. 214). Thereby, Humility went from being the root and the Queen of the Virtues to becoming the eighth virtue that completed the group (McGuire 1990, p. 191). Sometimes, Humility even disappeared from depictions of the virtues, as in the Giotto’s series in Scrovegni Chapel (1305–1306, Padua) or *The Allegory of Good Government* by Ambrogio Lorenzetti (1338–1339, Siena, Palazzo Publico, Sala della Pace), where only Aquinas’ virtues are depicted.

Curiously, while the depiction of Humility as a virtue was in decay, the Virgin of Humility’s iconographic type had begun to develop. This relationship was not accidental, since Saint Thomas had already considered Humility to be one of Temperance’s virtues, next to Virginity and Chastity (S.Th. II^a-IIae, q. 151–2). Moreover, this author directly related Humility to Chastity: “[...] Isidorus dicit, in libro de summo bono, quod sicut per superbiam mentis itur in prostitutionem libidinis, ita per humilitatem mentis salva fit castitas carnis”¹¹ (S.Th. (45114) II^a-IIae q. 153 a. 4 arg. 2). Robert Grosseteste in *Chateau d’amour* (c. 1230–1240) presents a similar idea, placing the Virgin Mary in relation to Humility: “C’est le cuer la duce Marie, /ki onkes en mal ne mollist, /Me a Deu servir se prist, /E sa seinte virginité /Gardat en humilité” (Grosseteste 1918, p. 107; vv. 672–6)¹². This author explains that the *Chateau d’amour* is built on a rock (vv. 588–9) which means the Virgin’s heart

(Snow 2012, p. 36), the faith of which is the foundation of the other virtues (Snow 2012, p. 37; vv. 681–90). Thus, the Virgin of Humility is crowned as the Queen of the Virtues, being the foundation or the root upon which they rise.

Therefore, written sources related Humility with the ground, but the earliest depictions of Humility did not show that. When the depiction of Humility was in decline, the Virgin of Humility's iconographic type began to develop.

2.2. Origin of the Virgin of Humility

We will see the main characteristics of the iconographic type of the Virgin of Humility when it emerges: the Virgin's relationship with the Annunciation and the breastfeeding of Christ. In the next sections, we will interrogate their connection with the virtue of Humility.

This type emerged in a fairly well-defined period of time. Although we do not know which images were first, the oldest surviving ones date to the 1340s. The place of their creation is also uncertain, as the first known image is the work of an Italian painter, Simone Martini, although it was made for the cathedral of Notre-Dame-des-Doms in Avignon (Figure 4). In fact, the manuscripts of the Apocalypse, which would have been at the origin of this type, were made in France (Williamson 2009, pp. 29–51) as some attributes of the Woman of the Apocalypse (the sun, the moon and/or the stars) highlight, especially, in the earliest images. In a miniature of the *Queen Isabella's Apocalypse* (1313, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS. Fr. 13096, fo. 35), the *Mulier amicta sole* is seated on the ground with the Child in her arms, while in the previous *Apocalypses*, Mary sits alone after having fled into the desert with wings (Apoc 12,6). In any case, the Virgin of Humility had great popularity in much of Europe (especially in Italy and in the Crown of Aragon, but also in France, Germany, and Bohemia) between the late 14th and early 15th centuries. Like its formation, its disappearance was equally rapid, since it had practically ceased to be represented at the beginning of the 16th century, although there are some examples in the Modern Era.



Figure 4. *Virgin of Humility*, Simone Martini, 1341, from Notre-Dame-des-Doms, papal palace of Avignon.

We can recognize the type of the Virgin of Humility because Mary always appears seated on the ground. In fact, this is the only constant feature in these images, as others are not consistent, such as the apocalyptic elements. The Virgin tends to bow her head and, sometimes, to lower her gaze, and she almost always carries the Child, although there are examples in which she is still pregnant (*Madonna del Parto*, Antonio Veneziano, second half of the 14th century, Parrocchia San Lorenzo a Montefiesole, Pontassieve, Florence). Two of these particularities deserve to be highlighted, to further our understanding of this type and its relationship with Humility, which we will discuss below.

In many images, mainly belonging to the first decades of the existence of this type, there are visual or written references to the Annunciation, or rather the Incarnation of

Christ. Although the latter event happens immediately after the former, the iconic representation of both episodes tend to show them as simultaneous: the archangel Gabriel greets Mary at the same time as the Holy Spirit enters towards her. There are two kinds of visual references to this other type. On the one hand, we find the complete scene of the Annunciation/Incarnation, where Gabriel and the Virgin Mary (usually located in the upper corners of the work) are considerably smaller than the Virgin of Humility (Figure 5a). Alternatively, some attributes of the Annunciation may appear next to the Virgin of Humility: the lily, the book that Mary would have been reading before being interrupted by the archangel or even the Holy Spirit that would have enabled the Incarnation of the Son of God (Figure 5b)¹³.



Figure 5. (a) *Madonna of Humility with saint Dominic and a donor*, Maestro delle Tempere francescane, 1350–1355, Naples, Museo di Capodimonte; (b) *Madonna of Humility with the Eternal Father, the Holy Spirit and the Twelve Apostles*, Francesco di Cenni, 1375–1380, Thyssen-Bornemisza collection, Barcelona, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya, 212805-000.

Lastly, in most of the images where the Child appears, his mother is breastfeeding him or she presents an attitude that refers to the *Virgo Lactans*, which is often confused with the Virgin of Humility type (Mocholí Martínez 2017). In any case, whether the Child is suckling or is simply being held by his mother, as long as Mary is directly seated on the ground, it is invariably an image of the Virgin of Humility.

Thus, in Mary’s connection with the ground lies the key to her relationship with the virtue of Humility. And, far from being anecdotal, the rest of its features contribute to it.

3. The Humility of the Virgin

One of the hypotheses that attempts to explain the formation of this type considers that this would have been preceded by a progressive descent of the Virgin to the ground in images depicting various episodes of her life (Polzer 2000, p. 2; Sallay 2012, pp. 104–5; Williamson 2009, p. 121). However, none of them satisfactorily explains the presence of all the elements mentioned above, especially the apocalyptic ones. These would come, as we have advanced, from the adaptation of images of the *Mulier amicta sole* sitting on the ground, as in *Queen Isabella’s Apocalypse* (1313, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France,

MS. Fr. 13096, fo. 35). Following the devotional use of the Apocalypse, such imagery was developed in France (in or around Metz) in the first half of the 14th century; the breastfeeding was subsequently added to it. Williamson considers that the new type refers to the Incarnation of Christ, so that it would end up replacing, or assimilating, images of the Annunciation in certain manuscripts (Williamson 2009, pp. 55–57).

However, it is not only a matter of assimilation of one type by another; we also consider that the Annunciation/Incarnation of Christ plays a more important role in the genesis of the Virgin of Humility. In the next sections, we will discuss the importance that the references to the Incarnation acquire in the characterization of the iconographic type of the Virgin of Humility and its relation with representations of Humility, specifically, the tree of virtues. From there, we will discuss how the association between humility and chastity is visually manifested. In this sense, the representation of Mary as *Virgo Lactans* and her location in a wild environment plays an important role. Lastly, the visual representation of this Marian type, especially in the 15th century, tries to palliate the humility of the Virgin with the addition of a crown and other luxury items.

3.1. Humility and Incarnation of Christ

One of the first images of the Virgin of Humility was painted by Roberto d'Oderisio (c. 1345, Naples, Museo di Capodimonte) and shows a vase with lilies. This also appears in the image of Avignon (Figure 4), but in addition the Neapolitan one also presents a written reference to the Annunciation in the halo of Mary: AVE MARIA, GRATIA PLENA. On both sides, one can also read MAT[ER] OMNIUM, which alludes to the mercy of the Virgin, rather than to her humility. The same duplicity exists in the allusions to the Incarnation in an image of Silvestro dei Gherarducci (*Madonna of Humility*, after 1350, Florence, Accademia). The attributes are the closed book on the ground, next to Mary and a Christomorph Father at the top who sends the Holy Spirit. However, in addition, at the bottom edge of the work, a phrase from the Magnificat relates the Incarnation of Christ to the humility of the Virgin, by accepting her to be the Mother of God: RESPEXIT HUMILITATEM ANCILLE SUE ECCE E[NIM] EX HOC B[EA]TA[M] ME [DICENT] (For he has had pity on his servant, though she is poor and lowly placed: and from this house will all generations give witness to the blessing which has come to me; Lk. 1,48).

A few years earlier, Bartolomeo Perellano, or da Camogli had made a Virgin of Humility (1346, Palermo, Galleria Regionale della Sicilia) in which the two figures of the Annunciation are present, as explained above. In addition, on each side of the Virgin, the first known inscription that identifies Mary as N[OST]RA D[ON]NA DE HUMILITATE appears¹⁴. More than two decades later, Paolo da Modena's image of the same subject (1370, Modena, Galleria Estense) includes an inscription with the title LA NOSTRA DONNA DUMILITA [...]. Likewise, a painting by Caterino Veneziano (late 1370s, Cleveland Museum of Art) includes a similar inscription: S[AN]TA MARIA DE UM[I]LITATE¹⁵.

At this point, the union between type and title is already consolidated. This occurs almost three decades after the work of Avignon. The delay may be due to the fact that, at the beginning, the title Virgin of Humility would not be associated with the iconographic type, nor was *Mater Omnium*, but only an epithet in memory of one of the qualities of Mary (Mocholí Martínez 2019, pp. 117–9). However, the relation of the ground with the virtue of Humility, prior to the appearance of the Marian type, suggests another possibility: both the sources and the earlier representations of the allegory of Humility would have allowed the association to be established from the beginning, although it was not always reflected in the inscriptions.

Based on these works, the acceptance of Mary after the Annunciation, present in one way or another in many of these images, would end up associating this type with the humility of the Virgin. However, we argue that opposite could have occurred: Humility, as a virtue, could have been the cause of the association of the Annunciation with the iconographic type. One reason for this is that Saint Thomas recovered the etymological relationship that had been established by Saint Isidore between *humus* and *humilitas*¹⁶,

whose first meaning is proximity to the ground: “[. . .] sicut Isidorus dicit, in libro etymol., humilis dicitur quasi humi acclinis, idest, imis inhaerens”¹⁷ (S.Th. (45461) II^a-IIae, q. 161 a. 1 ad 1). The Virgin of Humility, consequently, not only sits on the floor where the virtue of Humility was also located, but in relatively early images of the type, she also sits directly on the ground covered with grass and wildflowers, like the *Madonna of Vyšehrad* (Figure 6a), the *Virgin of Humility* by Giovanni da Bologna (Figure 6b), or the final one by Lippo di Damasio (Figure 6c). The relation of these works to the type of the tree of virtues that we have already mentioned is evident, in which the virtue of Humility is the root from which the tree grows, whose branches are the rest of the Virtues.

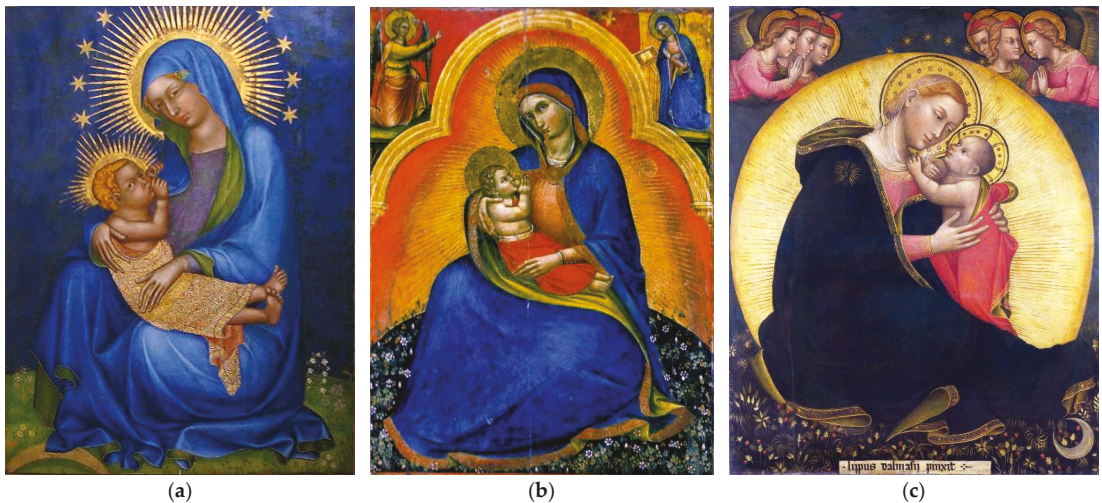


Figure 6. (a) *Madonna of Vyšehrad*, Bohemian painter, c. 1360, Praga, National Gallery; (b) *Madonna dell'Umiltà, santi e confratelli della Scuola di san Giovanni Evangelista*, Giovanni da Bologna, c. 1370, Venice, Accademia di Belle Arti, 17; (c) *Madonna of Humility*, Lippo di Dalmasio, c. 1390, London, National Gallery, NG752.

From the 13th century, the relationship between humility and the land became closer, especially in the Franciscan context. According to Saint Bonaventure, *terra* was a symbol of the humility of Mary, which “*prius tamen germinando herbam sanctarum cogitationum, affectionum, locutionum et operationum*”¹⁸. Furthermore, she is identified with “*terra fertilissima fecunditate*”¹⁹ (*De Annuntiatione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo III*), which was opened to let the Saviour sprout (Is. 45,8). These sources concur that the virtue of Humility was closely associated with Mary. At the same time, the popularity of the tree of virtues grew throughout Europe, some of whose images have a significant particularity: the allegory of the virtue of Humility was replaced by an image of the Annunciation.

An example appears in an illuminated manuscript of the *Speculum theologiae* (Figure 7) from the 13th century. Gabriel kneels before Mary and raises one hand while holding a phylactery bearing the traditional salutation. Through another phylactery, the future Mother of God answers: ECCE ANCILLA D[OMI]NI F[IA]T M[HI] (I am the servant of the Lord; may it be to me as you say; Lk. 1,38). The inscription that flanks both figures affirms, as had been made clear in previous trees of virtues, that HUMILITAS EST RADIX OMNIUM VIRTUTUM (Humility is the root of all virtues). Behind the Virgin, the trunk of the tree emerges, but what is striking is that two of the branches are born from her breasts, on which she lays her hands, in anticipation of breastfeeding, a consequence of the Divine Incarnation of her Son.

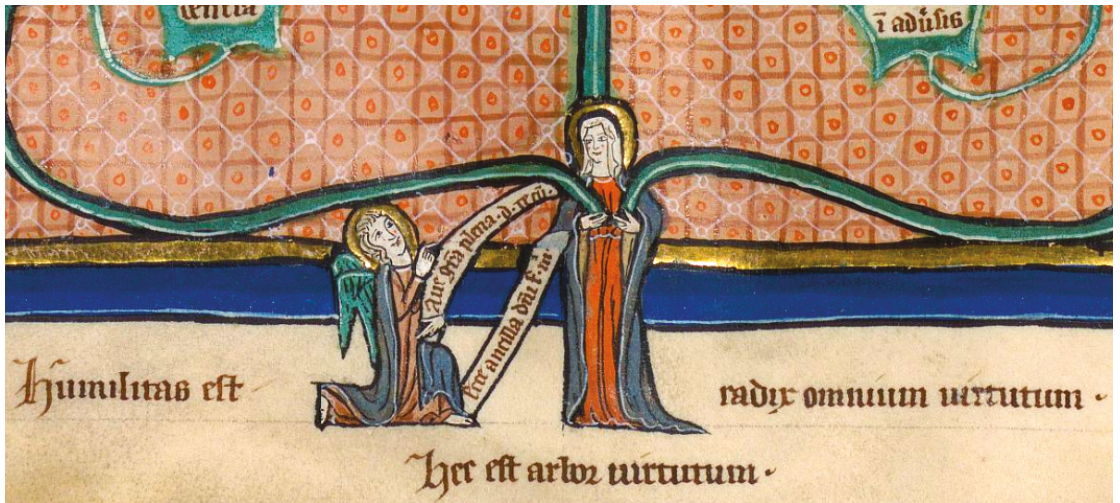


Figure 7. Tree of Virtues, *Speculum theologiae*, 13th century, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS. fr. 9220, fo. 5v (detail).

It should be emphasized that most of the images of the Virgin of Humility are, in addition, lactating Virgins, which would have mainly stressed the divine motherhood of Mary. This would be linked, as we have seen, to her humility, in relation to the Incarnation which, especially in the first representations of the type, has been repeatedly manifested, both visually and textually. Thus, the episode of the Annunciation in which Mary humbly accepts to be the mother of the Son of God would have had a greater relevance in this type that would have been granted at first.

The *De Lisle Psalter* (Figure 8), dated between 1308 and 1340, immediately before the first known images of the Virgin of Humility, also has at its base an image of the Annunciation, under which an inscription reads RADIX VIRTUTUM HUMILITAS (Humility is the root of virtues). The four cardinal virtues are represented, by their respective allegories, on both sides of Humility/Annunciation. The archangel greets Mary in the same way as in the previous image, although unlike that one, he does not kneel. She does not answer either, but raises a hand in surprise. Between them is a vase where there should be a lily staff, but instead, it holds the tree of virtues, whose leaves resemble wine branches.

The place from which the tree grows is also significant in this case. If it did emanate from the breast of Mary in the image of the *Speculum theologiae*, here it rises from the pot. In other words, the stem replaces the attribute that should allude to the perpetual virginity of the Mother of God, the lily, despite her motherhood and subsequent lactation. In this sense, it is worth mentioning that virginity and humility are closely linked, so the virtue of Humility also refers to the virtue of Chastity. As we have seen, this relationship was previously established by Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225; S.Th. (45114) II^a-IIae q. 153 a. 4 arg. 2).

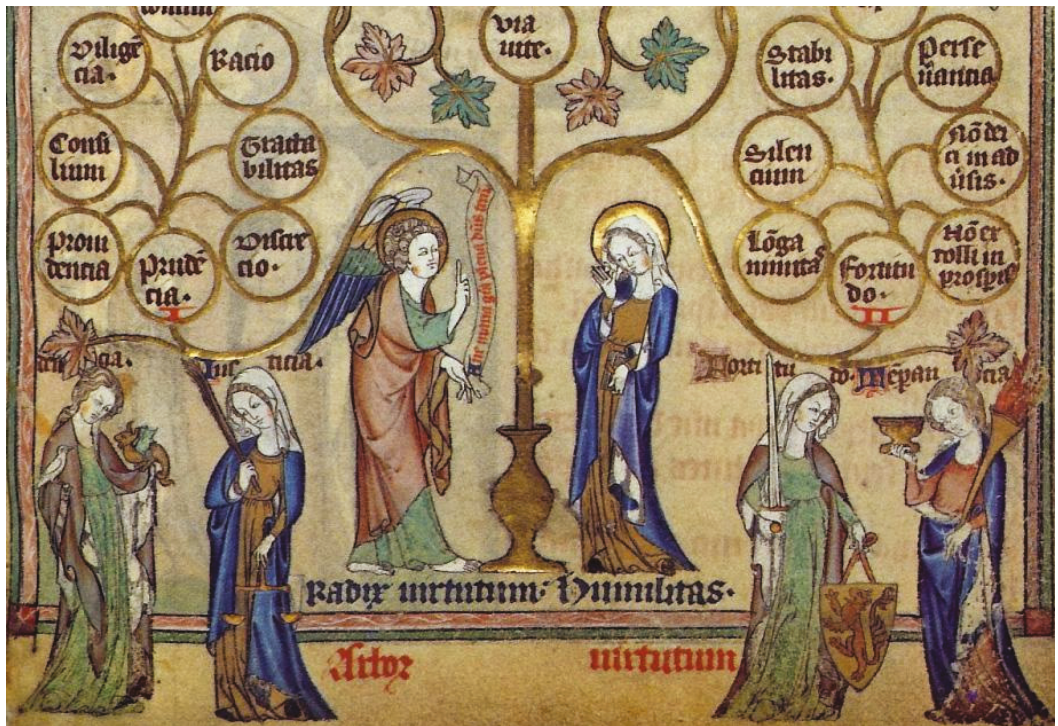


Figure 8. Tree of Virtues, *De Lisle Psalter*, London, British Museum, Arundel MS. 83 II, fo. 129r (detail).

3.2. Humility and Chastity

We can also appreciate this relationship between humility and chastity in the images of the type that concerns us, and not only by the presence of the vase of lilies. As we have already analyzed, the etymological root of the word *humilitas* refers to the location of the virtue of Humility in the root from which the rest of the virtues emanate, as well as with the location of the Virgin of Humility on the ground (Figure 9a). The ground is strewn with grass, small flowers, and wild plants. It should be remembered that the references to Mary's virginity, when compared with wild vegetation, go back several centuries before the creation of this type. Saint Bernard, in his commentary on the prophecy of Isaiah, says of Christ, paraphrasing the Song of Songs, that

[...] flos campi est (Cant II, 1), et non horti. Campus enim sine omni humano floret adminiculo, non seminatus ab aliquo, non defossus sarculo, non impinguatus fimo. Sic omnino, sic Virginis alvus floruit, sic inviolata, integra et casta Mariae viscera, tanquam pascua aeterni viroris florem protulere; cuius pulchritudo non videat corruptionem, cuius gloria in perpetuum non marcescat (Saint Bernard, *Sermones de Tempore. In Adventu Domini. Sermo II, 4. PL 183, 42*)²⁰.

Likewise, Saint Bonaventure defines Mary as “*terra ista, in qua homo non est operatus*” (Saint Bonaventure, *De Annuntiatione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo III*)²¹.

Although this dates from 1442, a small image of the Virgin of Humility (Figure 9b) could be interpreted in this sense, more clearly than in other works due to the disposition of Mary in a circle formed by fruit trees. In the center, the Mother of God sits on a cushion placed on a fertile meadow full of wild plants with flowers and fruits. On this occasion, the Child does not breastfeed, but caresses his mother's chin, as in the Virgin of Tenderness, and turns his gaze to the spectator. At a certain distance from both figures, judging by their

small size, a belt of fruit trees of different species is arranged in a semicircle. Beyond the trees, a vast expanse of farmland dotted with mountains and some walled cities can be seen. The anthropized environment that serves as a backdrop to Mary is a variation, with respect to the images above, on the Virgin of Humility type. Its presence emphasizes the uncultivated character of the place where the Mother of God sits.



(a)



(b)

Figure 9. (a) *Madonna of Humility*, Giovanni di Paolo, c. 1442, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 30.772; (b) *La Vierge d'Humilité adorée par un prince de la maison d'Este*, attrib. Jacopo di Niccolò Bellini, second quarter of the 15th century, Paris, Musée du Louvre, RF 41.

On the contrary, although they may seem similar to this one, the images of Mary in a landscape, closed or not, belong to another type, because the human intervention, which characterizes the orchard or the garden, is opposed to the ultimate meaning of the Virgin of Humility. We would be facing the formation of the type known as Virgin of the Rose Garden, which originates in Paris, at the beginning of the 15th century, and then spreads through Germany and even northern Italy (Mocholí Martínez 2019, p. 134). A variation of this type presents Mary inside a *hortus conclusus*, alluding to her virginity. This virtue, as explained, could also be implicit in the images of the Virgin of Humility, in contact with the earth. A study that we intend to undertake is to check to what extent there is an equivalence between the plants and flowers of both types, beyond the lilies and, in some cases, the roses. Thus, the presence of violets is frequent in the oldest type since this flower is associated with humility in general and the Virgin in particular (Levi d'Ancona 1977, pp. 398–9).

3.3. Humility and Exaltation

From the end of the 14th century, the Virgin of Humility presents a series of variants that agree with some sources on the virtue of Humility, more so than the few allegorical images of it of that century. Saint Thomas Aquinas said: “*Et eodem modo humilitati promittitur spiritualis exaltatio, non quia ipsa sola eam mereatur, sed quia eius est proprium contemnere*

sublimitatem terrenam. Unde Augustinus dicit, in libro de poenitentia, ne putes eum qui se humiliat, semper iacere, cum dictum sit, exaltabitur” (In the same way spiritual uplifting is promised to humility, not that humility alone merits it, but because it is proper to it to despise earthly uplifting. Wherefore Augustine says (De Poenit. (Serm. cccli)): “Think not that he who humbles himself remains for ever abased, for it is written: ‘He shall be exalted’); (Aquinas 1225; S.Th. (45500) II^a-IIae, q. 161 a. 5 ad 3), as “He has put down kings from their seats, lifting up on high the men of low degree” (Lk. 1,52). Juan de Mena in the first half of the 15th century repeated the same idea through a metaphor that alludes to the connection of Humility with the earth and recalls its root condition: “*el humilde que se enclina/ es planta que se traspone, / quanto mas fondo se pone/ tanto cresce mas ayna*” (Mena 1912, p. 126).

These statements find a correlation in the 15th century images of the type. The humility of Mary is still significant, with her seated position on the ground, but her sublimity is also alluded to because, as Mother of God, she deserves the title of *Regina Coeli* and, as such, she is exalted. Thus, the humility of the Virgin, for which, precisely, she deserves to be exalted, is alleviated with several means. In some cases, the Virgin sits in front of the back of a throne with arms, but without a seat; in others, what stands behind Mary is a rich brocade cloth. Finally, especially among the images of the Crown of Aragon, it is common for the Virgin of Humility to wear a crown (Figure 10).



Figure 10. *Madonna of Humility and musician angels*, Jaume Cabrera, last quarter of the 14th century and first quarter of the 15th century, Museu episcopal de Vic, MEV 1948.

The Virgin shares this last attribute with the allegory of Humility at the end of the Middle Ages. When the Marian type practically disappears, the allegory of Humility again gains an important presence and even becomes diversified in its representations.

Far from distorting the type by the introduction of these luxury items, the crowned representation of the Virgin is in keeping with part of the allegorical representation of the virtue of Humility.

4. Continuity and Variation of Humility’s Iconographic Type

Beyond theoretical considerations, Humility has been depicted through different iconographic types since the 14th century. Medieval sources explained that Humility is the “Queen of Virtues” and the “root of Virtues”. In Early Modern Era, medieval theoretical considerations were translated visually in different iconographic types.

In *Le chemin de Vaillance* de Jean de Courcy (c. 1483, London, British Library, Royal 14 E II, fo. 123), Humility personified with the left hand on her chest and raising the right hand. According to Ripa (2007, p. 499), “*la mano al petto, mostra, ch’il core pe la vera stanza d’humiltà*”²², while “*la destra aperta è segno che l’humiltà, debe essere reale, & patiente*” (Ripa 1603, p. 214)²³. However, although Ripa explains these features, he also explains further attributes for this iconographic type that are not usually depicted²⁴. Ripa’s next characterizations are more common; Humility is dressed in white²⁵, carries a lamb²⁶, and tilts her gaze, as in the frontispiece of *A Fourme of Prayer with Thankesgiving* (c. 1600–1603, London, British Museum). Such depictions, in which the virtue gazes downward, originate in Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas’ texts. However, the Virgin of Humility has only tilted her gaze in images since the 14th century.

In the third statement, Ripa explains that Humility is dressed in a sack²⁷, carries a bread basket²⁸ and a pouch²⁹, and steps on luxurious clothes³⁰. Nonetheless, we don’t find Marian works that depict these attributes. However, his last statement is more often found: Humility is described as a “*Donna vestita di colore bertino, con le braccia in croce al petto, teniendone con l’una delle mani una palla, una cinta al collo, la testa china, & sotto il piè destro haverà una corona d’oro*” (Ripa 1603, pp. 214–5)³¹ (Figure 11a). Similarly, in the *Allegory of Pride and Humility* (c. 1612–1633) (Figure 11b) there is a crown at Humility’s feet as a sign of contempt for richness³². Moreover, behind Humility, the Annunciation is depicted, showing the continuity of the representation of this episode concerning this virtue. Additionally, above Pride, the apocalyptic episode of Saint Michael battling the dragon is depicted, which connects to the apocalyptic origin of the Virgin of Humility. Thus, the crown constitutes an attribute with an ambiguous meaning within representations of Humility. This is because sometimes this virtue is crowned according to the medieval idea of *Regina virtutum*, as appears in an engraving of the British Museum (c. 1535–1590) (Figure 12a).

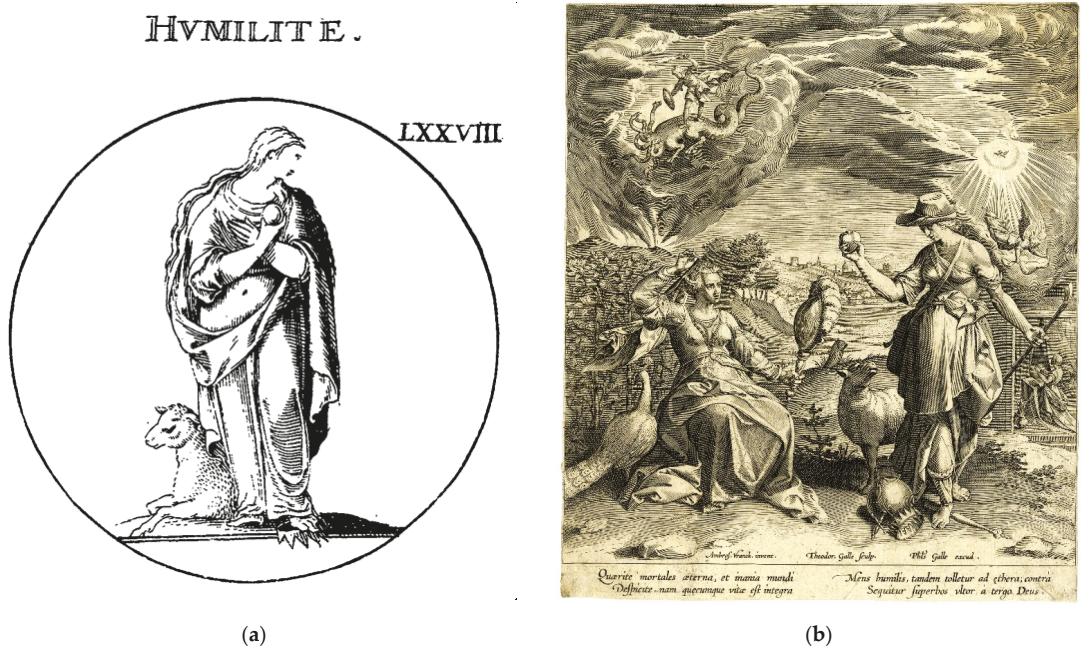


Figure 11. (a) Humility, *Iconologia*, 1643, Cesare Ripa, Paris; (b) *Allegory of Pride and Humility*, c. 1612–1633, London, British Museum, 1875.0710.2768.



(a)



(b)

Figure 12. (a) *Virtue against Vice and Humility*, c. 1535–1590, London, British Museum; (b) *Allegory of Humility*, Marcantonio Franceschini, 1715, Heiligenkreuz, Stift Heiligenkreuz.

The *Allegory of Humility* by Marcantonio Franceschini (1715, Heiligenkreuz, Stift Heiligenkreuz) (Figure 12b) shows the crown's ambiguity as an attribute of this virtue. Apart from tilting her gaze, carrying a sphere, and being accompanied by a lamb, at Humility's feet, there is a crown, while a *putto* is crowning her at the same time. In addition, Humility is kneeling on the ground, as in the frontispiece of *Devout contemplations* (1629, Cristóbal de Fonseca, Pitts Theology Library), in an engraving by Rubens (c. 1632, London, British Museum) or in the *Allegory of Humility* by Jacopo Amigoni (1728, Ottobeuren, Benediktinerabtei). Therefore, medieval thinkers' considerations about Humility concerning the ground, mainly since its conception as *radix virtutum*, were translated into the visual representation of this virtue during the Early Modern Era. An example of this is a French manuscript of the 16th century (c. 1516, Gabrielle de Bourbon, Paris, Bibl. Mazarine, MS. 0978, fo. 31v) where Humility is barefoot on a grassy ground. Thus, the Virgin of Humility visually showed her relation to the ground long before the virtue, which gives name to her advocacy. Although in the 14th century, there are some examples of Humility in contact with the ground, it was not until the Early Modern Era that this aspect began to be more frequent in its depictions. This aspect shows continuity until the 18th century, as can be seen in Sebastian Troger's work (c. 1765–1769, Birkenstein, Saint Mariae Verkündigung)

In the Early Modern Era, images of Humility personified depict medieval features. Her contact with the ground and coronation were aspects depicted in many works. However, such medieval features also resulted in ambiguous attributes, namely the crown.

5. Conclusions

In short, we have revealed the relationship between the sources and the visual representation of Humility personified as a woman and the Virgin of Humility type. The Marian type appears shortly after the virtue loses its relevance that it had had during the Early and High Middle Ages; this was largely due to the systematization carried out by Saint Thomas Aquinas. Due to the loss of importance of this virtue and its reduced artistic visualization (in comparison with other periods of art history), during the centuries in which the Virgin of Humility was predominant, it is possible to affirm that the latter replaced the allegory of Humility, which was subsequently personified by the figure of Mary. The connection between the ground, Humility, and the Virgin is clearly manifested in images of the tree of virtues, contributing to this substitution.

The growing devotion to the Mother of God, since the 12th and 13th centuries could contribute to this. The theologians highlighted the humility of the Virgin when she accepted the divine will, that was manifested in her womb and her breasts. Hence the references

to the Annunciation in the type of the Virgin of Humility and her main representation as *Virgo Lactans*. However, there are still many aspects to study that would shed light on this question, such as the function of those images, in relation to the wide use of the visual representation of virtues.

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Notes

- 1 Other authors who have dedicated extensive studies to the representations of *Psychomachia* are: Woodruff (1930), Hinks (1939), Martin (1954), Cames (1971), McGuire (1990), Hourihane (2000), Willeke (2003), Parker (2009), Marchese (2013), Aavistland (2014). In addition, there are numerous articles on specific works that depict this type.
- 2 “Look at impurity knocked down by chastity, perfidy killed by good faith, cruelty defeated by mercy, pride defeated by humility: such are the contests in which we, Christians, receive crowns” (translated by the authors).
- 3 “and Humility prostrate on the ground and not fee herself to judge”. (Prudentius 1939, p. 19). Regarding the connection with the earth, the etymological relationship between *humilitas* (humility) and *humus* (earth), established later by Isidore in his *Etymologies* (c. 634), should be highlighted: “*Humilis, quasi humo acclinis*” (isid. orig. 10, 116; PL 82, 379).
- 4 “I, Humility, queen of the Virtues, say: come to me, you Virtues, and I’ll give you the skill to seek and find the drachma that is lost and to crown her who perseveres blissfully”. Translation: <https://www.healthyhildegard.com/ordo-virtutum-text-translation> (accessed on 14 June 2021).
- 5 “*Humilitas est ex intuitu propriae conditionis vel conditoris, voluntaria mentis inclinatio. Ejus autem hi sunt comitatus principales: Prudentia, justitia, fortitudo, temperantia, fides, spes et caritas*”. (Humility is the view of ones own qualification or its founder, by willing predisposition. And these are accompanied by: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance, Faith, Hope and Charity) (Hugh of Saint Victor, *De fructibus carnis et spiritus*, cap. XI; PL 176, 1001) (translated by the authors).
- 6 “*Tollite jugum meum super vos, et discite a me: non mundum fabricare, non cumcta visibilia et invisibilia creare, non in ipso mundo miracula facere, et mortuos suscitare; sed quoniam mitis sum et humilis corde. Magnus esse vis, a minimo incipe. Cogitas magnam fabricam construere celsitudinis, de fundamento prius cogita humilitatis. Et quantam quisque vult et disponit superimponere molem aedificii, quanto erit majus aedificium, tanto altius fodit fundamentum. Et fabrica quidem cum construitur, in superna consurgit: qui autem fodit fundamentum, ad ima deprimitur. Ergo et fabrica ante celsitudinem humiliatur, et fastigium post humiliationem erigitur*” (Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, not to build the world, not to create the visible and invisible, not to do miracles in the world nor to raise the dead; rather, learn that I am gentle and humble at heart. Do you want to be great? Start with the smallest. Do you pretend to build a big and high building? First think about the foundation of humility. And the desired size of the building determines what someone wants to impose on the building; the higher it is, the deeper the foundations must be dug. When the building is built, it rises higher and higher; but the foundations must be dug deeper and deeper. Then, the building also humiliates itself before rising and after the humiliation, it rises.) (AVG. Sermon. Ad Popul. Sermon. 69, 2; PL 38,441) (translated by the authors).
- 7 “*Ad secundum dicendum quod, sicut ordinate virtutum congregation per quondam similitudinem aedificio comparator, ita etiam illud quod est primum in acquisitione virtutum, fundamento comparator, quod primum in aedificio iacitur. Virtutes autem verae infunduntur a Deo. Unde primum in acquisitione virtutum potest accipi dupliciter. Uno modo, per modum removentis prohibens. Et sic humilitas primum locum tenet, in quantum scilicet expellit superbiam, cui Deus resistit, et praebet hominem subditum et semper patulum ad suscipiendum influxum divinae gratiae, in quantum evacuat inflationem superbiae; ut dicitur Iac. IV, quod Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam. Et secundum hoc, humilitas dicitur spiritalis aedificii fundamentum*” (Just as the orderly assembly of virtues is, by reason of a certain likeness, compared to a building, so again that which is the first step in the acquisition of virtue is likened to the foundation, which is first laid before he rest of the building. Now the virtues are in truth infused by God. Wherefore the first step in the acquisition of virtue may be understood in two ways. First by way of removing obstacles: and thus humility holds the first place, inasmuch as it expels pride, which “God resisteth”, and makes man submissive and ever open to receive the influx of Divine grace Hence it is written

(James 4:6): “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grade to the humble”. In this sense humility is said to be the foundation of the spiritual edifice) (Aquinas 1225; S.Th. (45499) II^a-IIae, q. 161 a. 5 ad 2.). Translation: https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/04z/z_1225-1274_Thomas_Aquinas_Summa_Theologiae-Secunda_Secundae_EN.pdf.html (accessed on 15 June 2021).

8 “*Puedese comparar la virtud de la humildad al cordero, que es el más humilde animal que sea en el mundo e sufre qualquiera cosa que le acaese sometiéndose a cada uno. E por esso es comparado en la Sagrada Scriptura al fiyo de Dios, diciendo: ‘Agnus Dei qui tollis’*”. (Jn. 1, 29). (The virtue of Humility is compared to a lamb, which is the humblest animal in the world, and it suffers anything that happens to it, submitting itself to each one. For these reasons, it is compared in the Holy Scripture to the son of God, as in the saying: ‘Agnus Dei qui tollis’) (Mateo Palacios 2013, p. 118) (translated by the authors).

9 “*Omnes autem invicem humilitatem induite, quia Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam*” (All wrap yourselves in humility to be servants of each other, because God refuses the proud and will always favor the humble) (1 P 5,5).

10 “*Ita etiam humilitas reprimit motum spei, qui est motus spiritus in magna tendentis. Et ideo, sicut mansuetudo ponitur pars temperantiae, ita etiam humilitas*” (so does humility suppress the movement of hope, which is the movement of a spirit aiming at great things. Wherefore, like meekness, humility is accounted a part of temperance) (Aquinas 1225; S.Th. (45488) II^a-IIae, q. 161 a. 4 co.). Translation: https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/04z/z_1225-1274_Thomas_Aquinas_Summa_Theologiae-Secunda_Secundae_EN.pdf.html (accessed on 15 June 2021).

11 “*Isidore says (De Summo Bono ii, 39) that ‘as pride of mind leads to the depravity of lust, so does humility of mind safeguard the chastity of the flesh’*”. (Aquinas 1225) Translation: https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/04z/z_1225-1274_Thomas_Aquinas_Summa_Theologiae-Secunda_Secundae_EN.pdf.html (accessed on 21 June 2021).

12 “*Mary’s heart never submitted itself to evil, but put itself in the service of God and kept humbly its saintly virginity*” (translated by the authors).

13 Although the presence of the twelve apostles at both sides refers to Pentecost.

14 Under it there is an image of a confraternity with *disciplinanti* on both sides of the *arma Christi*, as in the work of Giovanni da Bologna, venerated by the *confratelli* of the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista of Venezia (Figure 6b). The first one comes from a Franciscan church, San Francesco d’Assisi in Palermo, like others works with the Virgin of Humility. However, there are perhaps more images coming from the Dominican sphere, such as that by the Maestro delle Tempere francescane (Figure 5a) or that by Roberto d’Oderisio, both from the Neapolitan church of San Domenico Maggiore. The latter was originally associated with a tomb. Also the fresco of Avignon (Figure 4) had a funerary character, because the cardinal Jacopo Stefaneschi, recently deceased, has been depicted next to Mary. We can assume that this type was mostly associated with a funerary context and the mendicant orders, but this question requires a further investigation. However, if we consider the Virgin of Humility as an allegory of this virtue, it would be logical for this type to have a wide variety of uses, like the visual representation of the rest of the virtues.

15 It has been mistranslated on the museum website as “Holy Mary, the milk of God”. <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1963.500> (accessed on 22 September 2021).

16 See note 3.

17 “*As Isidore observes (Etym. x), ‘a humble man is so called because he is, as it were, humo acclinis’, i.e., inclined to the lowest place*” (Aquinas 1225) Translation: https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/04z/z_1225-1274_Thomas_Aquinas_Summa_Theologiae-Secunda_Secundae_EN.pdf.html (accessed on 21 June 2021).

18 “*having produced in advance the herb of holy thoughts, affections, words and actions*” (translated by the authors).

19 “*land of fertile fecundity*” (translated by the authors).

20 “*is a flower of the field, not of the garden (Ct 2,1). The field blooms without human intervention. No one sows it, no one digs it, no one fertilizes it. In the same way the Virgin’s womb flourished. The womb of Mary, without blemish, whole and pure, like meadows of eternal greenness, illuminated that flower, whose beauty does not feel corruption, nor does its glory ever fades*” (translated by the authors).

21 “*land not worked by man*” (translated by the authors).

22 “*the hand on the breast shows that the heart is the place where true humility resides*” (translated by the authors).

23 “*the opened right hand is a sign that humility should be true and patient*” (translated by the authors).

24 “*Donna con la sinistra mano al petto, e con la destra distesa, & aperta; sarà la faccia volta verso il Cielo, & con un piede calchi una vipera mesa morta, avuitchiata intorno à un specchio tutto rotto, e spezzato, & con una testa di leone ferito pur sotto à piedi*” (Woman with her left hand on her breast and with her right hand opened. She turns her face to the sky, while one of her feet steps on a snake, almost dead and coiled around a broken mirror. At her feet will be the head of an injured lion) (Ripa 1603, p. 214) (translated by the authors).

25 “*Si dipinge donna vestita di bianco, perche si conozca che la candidezza, & purità della mente partorisce nell’uomo ben disposto, & ordinato allà ragione, quella humiltà che è bastevole à rendere l’attioni sue pipacevoli à Dio, che da la sua à gl’humili, & fa resistenza allà volontà de’superbi*” (A woman wearing white is painted, which means candor and purity of mind. It makes man good and orderly according to reason, the kind of humility which is enough to make actions most deserving and pleasing to God because it gives grace to the humble and it resists to proud’s will.) (Ripa 1603, p. 214) (translated by the authors).

- 26 “L’agnello è il vero ritratto dell’uomo mansueto, & humile, per questa ragione Christo Signor nostro è detto agnello in molti luoghi, e dello Evangelio, & de Profeti” (The lamb is the symbol and true portrait of the gentle and humble man. For this reason, Christ was named the Lamb in many places, both in the Gospels and in the Books of the Prophets.) (Ripa 1603, p. 214) (translated by the authors).
- 27 “Ciò si mostra con la presente figura, che potendosi vestiré ricamente s’ellege il sacco” (This presents a figure that can wear rich clothes, but chooses a sack.) (Ripa 1603, p. 214) (translated by the authors).
- 28 “il pane è indicio che si procura miseramente il vitto, senza esquisitezza di molte delicature, per riputarsi indegna de i commodi di questa vita” (Bread is an indication that their food is poorly procured, without falling into delicacies, because they consider themselves unworthy of the luxuries and comforts that this life provides.) (Ripa 1603, p. 214) (translated by the authors).
- 29 “Il sacchetto che aggrava è la memoria de’ peccati, ch’abbassa lo spirito de gl’humili” (The sack that manifestly weighs on her indicates the memory of her own sins, which oppress the spirit of humble persons.) (Ripa 1603, p. 214) (translated by the authors).
- 30 “L’humiltà debe esser una volontaria bassezza di pensieri di se stesso per amor di Dio, dispregiando l’utili, e l’honori” (Humility consists of the willingness to lower one’s self-esteem for the love of God and despising Fortune’s honors and goods.) (Ripa 1603, p. 214) (translated by the authors).
- 31 “Woman wearing brown with her arms crossed on her breast, holding a ball in one hand and a headband on her neck, looking under her right foot a golden crown.” (translated by the authors).
- 32 “Il tener la corona d’oro sotto il piede, dimostra, che l’humiltà non pregia le grandezze, e ricchezze, anzi è dispregio d’esse” (The crown underfoot shows that true humility places no value on the greatness of this world or on its exterior signs.) (Ripa 1603, pp. 215–6).

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Article

Nursing Enlightenment and a Grudge—Reinventing the Medieval Virgin’s Benevolent Breasts

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Abstract: This article expands upon the function of an adulterous episode in Chapter X, Book II of Alfonso Martínez’s *Corbacho*. The tale of adulterous deception may use, paradoxically, *Madonna lactans* imagery to reveal women’s sinful nature, the extent to which may be understood through an expression of inverted forces. That is to say, the import of Marian lactation in artistic and literary representations helps to fully address women’s particularly evil ways. A final consideration will be given to a particular image of Marian lactation, which represents the hagiographic legend of St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153).

Keywords: *Madonna lactans*; misogyny; *Corbacho*; breastfeeding; Bernard of Clairvaux

1. Introduction

The work of Alfonso de Martínez de Toledo, the *Libro del Arcipreste* (better known as the *Corbacho*), was specifically written to inform of the sins of man. Its author, Alfonso Martínez de Toledo, points to women as a sole source of that sin, even while the outrageous and obscene behavior exhibited by the women of this tractate prompts the reader (or listener) to laughter. One example of such laughable and lustful behavior is found in Book II, chapter ten: “De cómo la muger miente jurando e perjurando” [How a woman lies and perjures when she swears the truth].¹ It is the first and longest of four *enxiemplos* within the *Corbacho* chapter, each of which describe how an adulterous wife eludes punishment for her infidelity. This first story is neatly described as follows: “Wife shows husband how full her breasts are of milk. She squirts milk in his eyes and lets lover escape (K1516.9/T481.1).”² The salacious and deceptive use of breasts underscores the Archpriest’s arguments exposing women’s vice. These arguments are made all the more clear through their implicit juxtaposition with Marian representations of maternal devotion, represented both in the text, in the literature of the Castilian Middle Ages, and in *Madonna lactans* iconography.

Adulterous deceptions, of course, are not the sole purview of Martínez’s invective, nor is Martínez’s *Libro* their only literary course. These deceptions figure largely in medieval and folkloric literature, and they may be found in indexes compiled by Thompson and Goldberg. In the tales catalogued by these scholars, cheating wives fool their witless husbands and go unpunished for their infidelities. Goldberg has discussed the sexual humor of these tales, and has noted that

jocular tales . . . are perplexing if we choose to consider them as tales aimed at attacking women. Even a casual reading suggests that the real target is either the complaisant husband, who is so expertly cuckolded, or the naïvely unaware ascetic, who is tempted sexually by the supposedly wicked woman. (Goldberg 1983, p. 69)

Goldberg leans on contemporary theorists and the conviction of fourteenth-century Castilian poet, Juan Ruiz, with the understanding that the “introduction to humor . . . would impart wisdom to his readers” (Goldberg 1983, p. 71). Whether in the *Libro de buen amor* or in collections of *exempla*, these stories serve as moral examples for those who read or

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listened to them. In the four stories in the tale, as well as in stories found in French *fabliaux*, Italian *novella*, or other tales of adulterous deception, paramours are hidden by cloth or by darkness, and husbands are tricked through misdirection or by their own gullibility. In most of these examples, something is placed in the way of the husband's sight that interferes with his perception. It is something tangible such as a bedsheet or a frying pan, or intangible such as darkness or a lie. In all cases, truth is obfuscated. In all cases, mundane infidelities between husband and wife are retold in ways that seem to explain women's wickedness. The closest resemblance to the Archpriest's story is the following variation: "The husband's good eye is treated. The wife pretends to treat his one good eye, so that he cannot see the paramour" (K1516.1/T481.12). This summary describes tales told in the *Libro de los enxemplos*, the *Esopete historiado*, and in the *Disciplina clericalis*. These cases of infidelity give the author many examples upon which to base his tale.

What sets the archpriest's advisement apart from the others lies, in part, on the implicitly hostile exchange between husband and wife. In the Archpriest's story, the wife effectively blinds her husband's eyes with her breastmilk. He reacts with displeasure and pain: "¡O fija de puta, cómo me escuece la leche!" (Gerli 1992, p. 188) [Oh, you hussy, how the milk stings!].³ The verb, *escocer*, appears twice in the *Corpus del Nuevo Diccionario Histórico del Español* before making its appearance in the *Corbacho*. The first is a reference to the properties of the radish; the second, circa 1411, comes from an analogy in one of St. Vincent of Ferrer's sermons, which claims that falling prey to vice is like picking a scabrous itch: one is relieved during the picking, but the sting reappears and is accompanied by regret. The breast milk's sting can be similarly read. The husband's temporary blindness may be understood as a commentary on the quality of the wife's milk, but it may also be a critique on the quality of her morals. Studies on wetnurses in the Middle Ages put forth the idea that the quality of a woman's breastmilk was related to her virtue; the shot to the eyes may then be seen as a commentary on his wife's loose ways.⁴ It bears mention that this woman is not only a wife, but also a mother. Her tryst informs how we read her, her behavior, and its outcome. It allows us to see how her actions may be subversive within a patriarchal community. That the wife is also a mother of a young child suggests, logically, that the child may be illegitimate. The moral objective of this medieval treatise implies something far more than the evil of a wife's adulterous lie. The *desordenado amor* provoked by this woman condemns the lover's soul, subverts the husband's authority, and calls into question the legitimacy of her offspring. If this example was meant to show how the Archpriest viewed all women, then his claim that women are the root of all evil would be understandable. Martínez concludes by insisting that the chapter must be read without ulterior motive:

E aunque seré de algunos reprehendido por non saber ellos mi entinción—la qual solo Dios sabe en este paso non ser a mala parte—porque algunas cosas pongo en práctica dirán que más es avisar en mal que corregir en bien. Diga cada qual su voluntad, que yo non lo digo por que lo así fagan, mas porque sepan que por mucho que ellos nin ellas encobierto lo fagan e fazen, que se sabe, e algunos sabiéndolo, a sus mugeres, fija e parientas castigarán. (Gerli 1992, p. 190)

And some people will scold me (since they don't understand my intention, which in this instance God only knows is not wicked) because I show how some things are done, saying that I'm more interested in giving lessons in how to put wickedness into practice than in giving good examples to follow. Let everyone say what he thinks best. But I'm not relating this so that they'll do things that way but so they they'll know that, no matter how much they (either men or women) do or might do in secret, that their tricks are known and that some men, because they know it, will be able to give proper lessons to their wives, daughters, and female relatives. (Naylor and Rank 2011, p. 134)

The chapter should not be misunderstood, and so the Archpriest makes his intentions clear: the chapter should not enable the wicked to sin.⁵ It is as if the Archpriest was fearful that his message would be lost in the interplay between the text and its context. The

Archpriest explains that his writing needs to be used to reprimand the wicked with “proper lessons” to improve behavior.

The *Corbacho* story is one of many medieval exempla on adulterous deception that appear in various works, times, and contexts. But it is the only one involving breastmilk. The singularity of this breastmilk deception makes it likely that the Archpriest chose it specifically. Lactation is a biological phenomenon associated with motherhood; the act of breastfeeding is often associated with idealized nurturing and maternal care. For example, lactation is central to several miracle tales extolling the virtues of the Virgin Mary. Stories about Mary the Mother of God tell how her milk was used to heal the penitent, restore faith, and reveal Christian truth. Within the context of our Archpriest’s story, the oppositional nature of human and divine mother’s milk establishes an ironic doubling. The uniqueness of the detail in the Archpriest’s sinful “Eve” stands in contrast to the presence and sacred power of Mary—and her breasts. In this Ave/Eva dichotomy, the Archpriest’s “Eve” underscores the problematic nature of female sexuality while the implied Mary elides this nature through her immaculate maternity. References to Mary appear throughout the four books that make up Archpriest’s book. She appears repeatedly as an advocate for humankind, as a humble virgin, and as the mother of humankind’s redeemer. But at the same time, the Archpriest insists on women’s evil character. This figural inversion of Mary and Eve forms the underpinning of studies such as James Burke’s *Desire Against the Law*, wherein the natural correspondences between what is sacred and barbarous provides a way to fully explore meaning in works in medieval literature. Ryan Giles uses this idea as a foundation for explaining saintly parodies in his *Laughter of the Saints*. This author explains how a saint’s image may be understood through an exchange between oral and written traditions, which focus (although perhaps not exclusively) on the saint’s name, life, attributes, and characteristics of the community in which he or she is revered. Giles furthers this understanding by noting that medieval texts contain registers, which point to different communities of learning. The learned and clerical elite might have renegotiated meaning “through ecclesiastical practices, texts, and institutions” (Giles 2009, p. 12), but also through popular registers. This is the case for works such as the *Libro de buen amor*, in which popular verse forms, vernacular language, as well as “proverbs, extra-liturgical rituals, legends, and superstitions” are mixed with classical and ecclesiastic authority to provoke humor (Giles 2009, p. 12). This imitative interplay between popular and learned is evident in many works from the late medieval and early modern periods, and the *Corbacho* is no exception. Michael Gerli explores the style and structure of the Archpriest’s work, which resembles a frank and familiar preaching style used by the Dominican order (Gerli 1969, p. 107). This affective use of dialogue, Gerli adds, can overwhelm the work’s purpose, resulting in characters whose language seems to take control of the work. Their language, still today, produces humor that confuses the moral message.

A similar example may be found in the sermons of preachers such as Bernardino de Sienna [1390–1444]. Bernardino, whipped up by the zealous frenzy of his oratory, occasionally over-powered his religious message when addressing popular concerns.

“O, o, del latte della Vergine Maria; o donne, dove siete voi? E anco voi, valenti uomini, vedestene mai? Sapete che si va mostrando per reliquie: non v’aviate fede, ché elli non è vero: elli se ne truova in tanti luoghi! Tenete che non è vero. Forse che ella fu una vacca la Vergine Maria, che ella avesse lassato il latte suo, come si lassa delle bestie, che si lassano mugnare?” (Mormando 1999, p. 283)

And, oh, oh, by the way, the milk of the Virgin Mary! Ladies, where are your heads? And you, fine sirs, have you seen any of it? You know, they’re passing it off as a relic. It’s all over the place. Don’t you believe in it for a moment. It’s not real. Don’t you believe it! Do you think the Virgin Mary was a cow, that she would give away her milk in this way—just like an animal that lets itself be milked? (qtd. in Rubin 2009, p. 300)

The rough language used by the Siense Franciscan to describe the Mother of God is far from reverent. Equating Mary with a cow might produce a shameful laugh, overwhelming the Christian goals of the sermon, which served to reinforce Mary's ideal qualities. By likening her through a negative example to a cow, Bernardino offers a rational argument for casting doubt upon the many reliquaries containing her breastmilk. Bernardino's words attest to a widespread image of a nurturing, lactating Mother of God, even while his suspicion of the holy milk reliquaries casts doubt on the validity of these religious objects. Bernardino's speech allows for the degradation of these objects, even while the source of these items remains pure and intact.

This juxtaposition of contrary objects may form a way of explaining or understanding what Burke (1998) calls the "middle mode" of understanding; through the presentation of things scandalous, a deeper understanding of the moral or doctrinal message could be realized (5–6). This view explains the complementary nature of an adulterous wife here representing, parodically, a lactating Mary. While the former is a mother of a newborn child of questionable parentage, the latter is the Mother of God, whose virgin birth has offered humankind the possibility of Christian redemption. The extent of the wife's sinfulness is revealed through Mary's idealized behavior. It is reasonable to suggest that these contrasting images were used by Martínez as a means to convey his book's misogynist objectives. The remainder of this article will address the importance of Marian lactation in artistic and literary representations, furthering the idea that Marian imagery could have been easily understood as a counterpoint to the folkloric motif of the second book. The widespread use of this image and the development of the artistic representation of the *Madonna lactans*, especially the representations that include the hagiographic legend of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, reveal the truth of Mary's redemptive role for humanity at the same time that its expression in the Archpriest's story exposes the sinfulness of female nature.

2. The Virgin Mother of God: Mary's Cultural Importance

Images, statues, and stories from the ancient Mediterranean address the importance of maternity through representations of birth and lactation. In stories of ancient Egypt, statues of the divine Egyptian goddess Isis show her nursing her son Horus. Early Greek pottery shows the suckling demigod Heracles, whose bite caused Zeus's wife, Hera, to produce the Milky Way.⁶ Lauren Rodríguez Peinado (2013) notes the incorporation of these images and stories into Christian doctrine, which eventually allowed for an analogous female mode of divinity. While the Virgin Mary was not always considered divine, her rise in standing within the Church may have begun with the circulated stories collected in early Christian Apocrypha (especially the Protoevangelium of St. James). These stories told about her life, representing her in ways that will be further developed in the centuries that follow. She is a chaste and holy child, a docile vehicle for God's will, and a nurturing young mother. Miri Rubin notes that between the first and fifth centuries of the Common Era, Mary emerged from her more modest role in the Gospels to hold a more important role as Bearer of God (Rubin 2009, p. 88). In subsequent centuries, early Christian bishops occasionally wrote about the Mary's virginal nature and her role within the Church. Of particular interest is Ildefonsus, archbishop of Toledo (607–667), whose treatise *De Virginitate Sanctae Mariae (On the Perpetual Virginity of Saint Mary)* was considered by Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo to be the "primer monumento literario exclusivamente consagrado entre nosotros a la devoción de Nuestra Señora" (Menéndez y Pelayo 2012, p. 225) [The first literary monument exclusively consecrated among us to the devotion of Our Lady]. The life of this peninsular bishop would be told again and again, indirectly propagating Marian ideology. Julio Vélez-Sainz lists the Latin literary diffusion of this Iberian saint. *A Vita Beati Ildefonsi Archiepiscopi Toletani* within the *De viri illustribus* (690), a *Vita vel gesta S. Ildefonsi Toletanae Sedis Metropolitanæ Episcopi* (ca. 774–783), Rodrigo Manuel el Cerratense's *Vita Beati Ildefonsi, Archiepiscopi* (thirteenth century), and the *Legenda Beati Ildefonsi, Archiepiscopi Toletani secundum regulam Asturicensis Ecclesiae* (late thirteenth century) are the predominant works in Latin to have been written about Ildefonsus in the Middle Ages. In Castilian, there are also the *Istoria*

de Sant Alifonso, Arçobispo de Toledo and the *Vida de San Alifonso por metros* (Vélez Sainz 2008, p. 142). In addition, three vernacular versions of Ildephonsus's miracles appear in the royal codices of Alfonso X the Wise.⁷ Ildephonsus's life also appears in the first miracle of Berceo's *Milagros de nuestra señora*. Most importantly, the Archpriest of Toledo, Alfonso Martínez, compiled a hagiography for Ildephonsus and translated the treatise that won him saintly fame.⁸

Mary's role within the Church slowly expanded. In addition to the biblical writings and hagiographic tales, Christian liturgical calendars also included days devoted to the Virgin Mary. Mary was observed throughout the year, especially in relation to Christ's life. Rubin specifies that the Mozarab liturgical calendar included no fewer than six days throughout the year during which Mary served as a focal point or an indirect object of religious reflection (Rubin 2009, p. 94).⁹ All these feast days either directly or indirectly deal with the contradictory nature of maternity and virginity, which are also elements taken up in the artistic representations of Mary. Quoting from Groen, Rubin takes the words of a seventh-century pope:

When I enter a church, I contemplate images of Jesus Christ's miracles and his mother suckling Our Lord, and Our Lord in her arms, while angels around them sing a hymn *sanctus, sanctus, sanctus* (Rubin 2009, p. 98)

Mary's ideological development between the fifth and fifteenth centuries responds to two concerns within Christian dogma. The first focuses on her status as Mother of God (*Theotokos*), which was promoted at the Council of Ephesus (431); the second focused on the conditions regarding Mary's incarnation, conditions that were still being debated in the fifteenth century. Both developments, in a sense, addressed Mary's worthiness as a maternal vessel for God. By the close of the Middle Ages, Christian liturgy within the Iberian peninsula promoted Mary's maternal importance by emphasizing her purity, beauty, and unblemished nature (Twomey 2008, p. 22).

Mary's idealized, maternal role for humanity, fostered within medieval Christian doctrine, correlates to the rise of literary representations of the Virgin Mother. While these representations may have originated from apocryphal gospels or tales representing the Holy Family's flight into Egypt, it is safe to add that the cult of the Virgin also grew from writings of later theologians and spiritual writers, who would have used Eve and others as figures meant to reveal Mary's finer qualities.¹⁰ Certainly, the writings of monastic houses and the preaching of mendicant orders in the latter centuries of the Middle Ages promoted the role and importance of the Virgin Mary within Christian communities of faith. The earliest collection of Marian miracle tales compiled by both Cistercians and Dominicans included lactational miracles (Warner 1976, p. 198).

A maternal Mary was instrumental in the development of dogma that espoused man's salvation through the Virgin's intercession.¹¹ Within the Iberian peninsula, Gonzalo de Berceo developed Marian theology through his devotional miracle poems. Mary's motherhood is central to understanding Berceo; his writings showcase Mary's relationship to Christ in a way that explains Christian dogma. Berceo's inclusion of Marian miracle "*La casulla de San Ildefonso*" ("Saint Ildephonsus's Vestment) indirectly affirms the aforementioned seventh-century Archbishop's writings on Mary's virginity (and, therefore, her aptness for her role as Mother of God).¹² As Gregory Andrachuk explains, the use of the word "*adonado*" was rare for its day; he suggests that Berceo's usage was a deliberate choice that explains the divine favor bestowed upon Mary (Andrachuk 2017, p. 537).¹³ Motherhood is an essential figuration of the Virgin Mary, and her ability to heal through nurturing sustenance a natural derivation of that figure. In Berceo's Marian miracle "*El clérigo y la flor*" (The Cleric and the Flower"), Mary identifies herself by her maternal qualities:

Demandóli el clérigo que yazié dormitado,
 "¿Qué eres tú que fablas? Dime de ti mandado,
 ca cuando lo dissiero seráme demandado

quí es el querelloso o quí el soterrado.”
 Díssoli la Gloriosa: “Yo so Sancta María
 madre de Jesu Christo que mamó leche mía;
 el que vos desechastes de vuestra compaña,
 por cancellario mío yo a éssi tenía. (Gerli 1988, p. 90)

The cleric, who had been sleeping, asked Her: “Who are you who speaks? Tell me, whom you command/for when I say this I will be asked/who the aggrieved one is or who the buried one is.”/The Glorious One responded: “I am Holy Mary,/Mother of Jesus Christ, who suckled My milk./The one you excluded from your company,/I held as a chancellor of Mine.” (Grant Cash and Mount 1997, p. 37)

Mary justifies her command that the cleric bury the sinner on hallowed ground because she is the mother of the Christ child. Her authority rests on the very maternal power of nursing. This identifying feature of Mary’s lactational power may also be seen in the *Cantigas de Santa María*. These songs were written in Galician-Portuguese during the reign of Alfonso the Learned (1221–1284) and are often attributed to the wise Castilian king. Cantiga 422 clearly explains the importance of mother’s milk for humanity. The song “*Madre de Deus, óra pro nós teu Fill’essa hóra*” [Mother of God, pray to your son on our behalf at that hour] prefigures the wrath of God on Judgment Day. In it, Mary is beseeched repeatedly to intervene and save man from eternal damnation.

E u el a todos parecerá mui sannudo
 entôn fas-ll’ enmente de como foi concebudo...
 E en aquel día, quand’ ele for mais irado,
 fais-lle tu emente com’ en ti foi enserrado...
 U verás dos santos as compannas espantadas,
 móstra-ll’ as tas tetas santas que houv’ el mamadas...
 E u mostrar ele tod’ estes grandes pavores,
 fas com’ avogada, ten vóz de nós pecadores
 que polos téus rógos nos lév’ ao paraíso
 séu, u alegría hajamos por sempr’ e riso. (Casson 2022, stanzas 2–4, 19–20)

And when he appears to all in great wrath,/then make him remember how he was conceived . . . /And on that day when he is most wrathful,/make him remember how he was enveloped by you . . . /When you see the frightened hosts of saints,/show him your holy breasts which he sucked . . . /And when he reveals all these terrible things,/take on the role of Advocate and plead for us sinners,/so that, because of your prayers, He take us to His paradise/where we may have joy and laughter forevermore. (Kulp-Hill 2000, pp. 508–9)

In addition to this prayer-like Cantiga, no fewer than five other songs touch upon Mary’s breasts as a source of miracle and salvation.¹⁴ These are *cantigas* 46, 54, 138 and 404 and may be found summarized in the *Oxford Cantigas de Santa María Database* (2005):

Cantiga 46: The Moor who Venerated an Image of the Virgin Mary

Cantiga 54: The Monk who was Healed by the Virgin’s Milk

Cantiga 93: The Leper who was Healed by the Virgin’s Milk

Cantiga 138: John Chrysostom’s Vision

Cantiga 404: The Priest who was Healed by the Virgin’s Milk

(Oxford Cantigas de Santa María Database, accessed on 21 March 2022)¹⁵

In Cantiga 138, Mary's breastmilk is noted for its nourishment and the pleasure the baby Jesus derives from it (Vaz Leão 2007, p. 122). While John Chrysostom does not receive the milk, it is his awareness of its power to feed and to please that leads to the miraculous recuperation of his eyesight. The milk serves as a poetic motif connecting human to divine sustenance, projecting upon the former the redemptive powers of the latter. While this instance does not reveal breastmilk as instrumental to the production of the miracle, other *cantigas* identify the breastmilk as the catalyst that promotes spiritual (faith) or physical healing. The Muslim man in Cantiga 46 is at first unable to accept Christianity, since he cannot accept the dogma of a God made man. The Muslim, moreover, is incredulous that God would have accepted being born of a woman: "*que non podia creer/que Deus quisess'encarnar/nen tomar/carn' en moller*" (vv. 38–41) [Because he could not believe/that God would wish to become incarnate/nor been born of a woman]. The two disbeliefs are intertwined, since the disbelief of Mary as *Theotokos* predicates the Moor's initial rejection of the Christian faith. It is, therefore, telling that acceptance of Jesus's divinity is proved by Mary's ability to nurse. As the statue's breasts flow with milk, the Moor is converted. Mary's maternal projections, those life-giving mounds of nutrition, are again the key to divine salvation.

The three remaining *cantigas* more specifically highlight Marian mammary miracles. In Cantigas 54, a devout Cistercian (*monge branco*) lies dying of a throat ulcer. Mary cleanses the wound and then she "... *deitou-lle na boca e na cara/do seu leite*" (vv. 60–61) [poured milk upon his mouth and face], after which the monk was healed. In Cantiga 93, a burgher's son repents from a life of debauchery through prayer. The son's daily recitation of 1000 Hail Marys motivates for the Virgin's pity. The *cantiga* uses the verb "anoint" "*seu santo leite o corpo li'ongiu*" [her holy milk anointed his body] (v. 38) to describe how the Virgin delivers the son from his physical affliction. Cantiga 404 has, perhaps, the most questionable of miracles. Like Berceo's fornicating monk, the monk of Cantiga 404 deserves Mary's aid only because of his constant worship. While our modern sensibilities disdain the oral and performative mechanics of ritual prayer, privileging an association of interior thought with sincere devotion, outward, public manifestations of devotion were the norm at least until the close of the Middle Ages. This outward devotion is what saves the monk; Mary comes to his rescue, anointing his mouth with healing, miraculous breast milk.

It is safe to say that Mary's nurturing, maternal role for humanity, fostered within medieval Christian doctrine and amplified by literary narrative, was readily understood by medieval Christian laypersons. This identification of Mary as a nurturing mother was also furthered in the artistic productions of the late Middle Ages. Cecelia Dorger has argued that both Dominicans and Franciscans "increased their efforts to teach visual meditative practices to the laity that, in effect, resulted in spiritual communion" (Dorger 2012, p. 128). Dorger's thesis, in part, focuses on the combined impact of the mass and *Madonna lactans* altarpiece paintings, which allowed for a coalescing of physical and spiritual communion for the churchgoer. Dorger's thesis focuses on Italian images of the *Virgo lactans*, which were introduced in eastern parts of the Iberian peninsula and painted in the International Gothic style during the latter half of the fourteenth century. Icons of this Virgin depict her seated on a cushion and in the intimate act of breastfeeding the Christ child. Nuria Blaya Estrada notes that these paintings of the Virgin gave the viewer a means to understand their religious significance ...

y esto hace que las pinturas, no solamente narrativas, sino también las puramente rituales o devocionales, se hagan ahora más humanas, más realistas, más accesibles a la devoción personal". (Blaya Estrada 1995, p. 163)

And this allows painting, not merely the narrative ones, but also those purely ritualistic and devotional, become more humane, more realistic, more accessible to personal devotion.

Blaya Estrada points out that the comfortable seating position and intimate act of the nursing *Madonna* connected the faithful Christian to the divine through personal analogy

(Blaya Estrada 1995, p. 163). The Virgin Mary is on a cushion and not a throne; her dress is simple and not adorned in regal splendor. She is more like a commoner than a queen. This unassuming, human depiction of Mary is the focal point of the artistic representation. Even while a panoply of angels or stars depict Mary's holiness, her domesticity (all the more apparent in her act of nursing) broke with strict medieval hierarchies representing Mary as divine Mother of God. This made her relatable, more comparable to all mothers.

There is some debate as to the earliest Iberian production of the *Madonna lactans* painting, but it is certainly true that this style of painting was in the Iberian peninsula during the Archbishop's life. The earliest production of the *Madonna lactans* painting is attributed either to Ramon Destorrents or Jaume Serra. The *Virgen del Tobed* is a panel painting currently housed at the Prado Museum in Madrid (Figure 1). It can be dated with relative certainty to between 1359 and 1362 due to the identity of the patron and his family. Enrique II of Castile (1378–1404), his wife and two children appear in the lower corners of the painting.¹⁶ At least four different artists had workshops that produced versions of the lactating Madonna. The aforementioned artists, Jaume Serra (who belonged to a family of artists working during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries) and Ramon Destorrent, were presumably eclipsed in quality by Ramón de Mur and Lorenzo Zaragoza. This last painter was also known as the Master of Villahermosa. Pere IV of Aragón (1319–1387) was known to have described Zaragoza as “lo millor pintor que en aquest çiutat sia” [perhaps the best painter in this city] (Arciniega García 1995, p. 32; Miquel Juan 2015, p. 503). These four artists were active during the latter half of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and at least five different tempera panels of the *Madonna lactans* can be attributed to these artists and their workshops.¹⁷



Figure 1. Jaume Serra. The Virgin of Tobed with the Donors Henry II of Castile, his Wife Juana Manuel, and two of their Children, Juan and Juana. (Lembrí, Pere Museo del Prado 2022) © Museo Nacional del Prado.

Given the spiritual possibilities afforded by the *Madonna lactans*, through which analogies with Christ's life and with the Church's objective of spiritual redemption may be found, it is unsurprising to see churches consecrated to the Virgin Mary. It goes without saying

that the more churches were consecrated to the Virgin Mary, the more the associations of Mary (and her redemptive, maternal qualities) are present in that community's life. Some of these churches predate the above-mentioned panel paintings, such as the carved wood statue of the *Virgen del Rebollet*, which represents a nursing Madonna and is found in Oliva (Valencia), and dates from the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. A polychromatic granite statue of the *Virgen de Oseira*, also a lactating Madonna, dates from the thirteenth century, and may be found the eponymous monastery in Cea (Galicia). In the shrine of Our Lady of Miravalles (Asturias), the *Virgen de Miravelles* is a carved and painted granite stature of a nursing Madonna dating somewhere between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. A *Madonna lactans* image appears on a frieze in the Iglesia de Tarrega (Lérida) circa 1269, in a relief adorning the Puerta de Platerías in the Cathedral of Santiago, and as a miniature on parchment belonging to Jaume I of Aragón (1213–1276).¹⁸ All of these artistic works attest to the growing popularity of the Virgin Mary, whose role within the Church and in the culture of the late Middle Ages was still evolving. The numerous examples of this religious icon, and the particular use of the panel painting, both in the Iberian peninsula and throughout the continent, confirm the prevalence of the Virgin as a visual devotional object.

Images of a nursing Mary adorned many churches and monasteries in the Iberian peninsula, but they were also images actively and contemporaneously being produced during the lifetime of the Archpriest of Toledo. The pervasiveness of *Madonna lactans* imagery is further demonstrated through the work of Giovanni Dominici (1355–1419). In his *Regola del governo di cura familiare*, an instruction manual on the care and management of the family, he advises using the following religious images for the education of children:

La prima si è d'avere dipinture in casa di santi fanciulli o vergine giovanette, nelle quali il tuo figliuolo, ancor nelle fascie, si diletta come simile e dal simile rapito, con atti e segni grati alla infanzia. E come dico di pinture, così dico di sculture. Bene sta la Vergine Maria col fanciullo in braccio, e l'uccellino o la melagrana in pugno. Sarà buona figura Iesu che poppa, Iesu che dorme in grambo della Madre; Iesu le sta cortese innanzi, Iesu profila ed essa Madre tal profilo cuce. (Dominici 1860, p. 131)

The first rule is to have pictures of saintly children or young virgins in the home, in which your children, still in swaddling clothes, may take delight and thereby be gladdened by acts and signs pleasing to childhood. And what I say of pictures applies also to statues. It is well to have a Virgin Mary with the Child in arms, with a little bird or apple in His hand. There should be a good representation of Jesus nursing, sleeping in His Mother's lap or standing courteously before Her while they look at each other. (Dominici 1927, p. 34)

Dominici calls for an educational role of the *Madonna lactans* image, and in doing so he brings the icon into the home. It is hard to avoid seeing now the ready connection between Mary and all mothers. The Mother of God functions as a role model for all medieval women; the nurturing, nursing qualities of the Virgin have extended into the home to idealize what a mother should be and how a mother should act. The pervasiveness of the *Madonna lactans* image is apparent throughout Christian society, extended to a populace through religious sermon, Church reliquary, and domestic iconography. It stands to reason that this image of the *Madonna lactans*, in either word or picture, could easily have informed the story described by Alfonso Martínez in Book II, chapter ten of the *Corbacho*, and served as the implicit counterpoint to the negative example of the adulterous young wife and mother.

3. A Strange Hypothesis: The Lactation of St. Bernard

The previous section explored the prevalence of *Madonna lactans* imagery within Christian communities, thereby suggesting that the image would have been readily understood as a counterpoint to the negative medieval example narrated in the Archpriest's second

Book. The variety and quality of *Madonna lactans* tales and icons notwithstanding, no one tale or icon shares as many parallels with the Archpriest's story as the Lactation of St. Bernard. The story was first putatively told in Conrad of Eberbach's *Exordium magnum* (d. 1221).¹⁹ This thirteenth-century tale of Cistercian miracles includes the life of St. Bernard of Clairvaux and may recount a legend in which St. Bernard prayed for revelation before a statue of the Virgin and Child. The statue responded to that prayer by coming to life and nourishing the Cistercian monk with her milk. Variations of this legend describe different locations of anointment. Mary's milk falling onto Bernard's mouth has been interpreted as the miraculous catalyst enabling the monk to speak the true word of God. Other legends depict Mary's milk falling upon Bernard's eyes, allowing him to see Mary's divine nature. In either of these cases, breastmilk reveals divine truth and allows for the spreading of God's Word.

The St. Bernard narrative must have circulated during the late Middle Ages in the Iberian peninsula, even if no extant hagiographic tale of the saint may be found that dates from the Archpriest's life. St. Bernard's influence in these geographic realms may be seen with a cursory view of Rafael Durán's *Iconografía española de San Bernardo*. Durán includes 100 plates of more than 80 images, 27 of which are from the late Middle Ages. Most of these were painted or sculpted in the cities and towns of the Crown of Aragón (e.g., Tarragona, Mallorca, Barcelona, and Castellón), and many refer to hagiographic episodes of the monk's life. Discoveries are still being made. As recently as 2004, Manuel Sánchez Mariana brought to light the existence of a manuscript containing Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons; these he dated to the first quarter of the thirteenth century and located to the Leonese monastery of Santa María de Sandoval (Sánchez Mariana 2004, pp. 1361–74). St. Bernard appears as the interlocutor with the Virgin in the *El duelo que hizo la Virgen María el día de la pasión de su hijo Jesucristo*.²⁰ It is certainly curious that the monk from Cantiga 54 in Alfonso the Learned's Marian miracles tales is identified as a white, or Cistercian, monk. It is equally curious that hagiographic narratives relate Bernard's frequent illnesses, again like the monk in the 54th cantiga. A fifteenth-century Book of Hours, the *Horas de Philippes Bigota*, housed in Madrid's Biblioteca Nacional (BNM RES/281), shows an illumination of the Cistercian St. Bernard. Although he is not accompanied by a statue of the Virgin Mary, the text that wraps around the illuminated letter is taken from Psalm 12: "*Illumina oculos meos, ne unquam obdormiam in morte; ne quando dicat inimicus meus, praevalui adversus eum*" (*Libro de Horas 1490–1500*, fol. 180r) [Enlighten my eyes that I never sleep in death: lest at any time my enemy say, "I have prevailed against him"]. These words highlight Bernard's sight, representationally important for the miracle that distinguishes him. A fifteenth-century *santoral* presumed to have been owned by the Counts of Haro also contains the life of Saint Bernard. Although devoid of the Marian miracle, the importance of breastmilk is paramount to the story. In the hagiographic tale, Bernard's mother Alech (or Alicia)

... pario siete hijos & los seys varones & la vna fembra & los varones fueron monjes & la fembra monja Et luego que pario el fijo lo tomava en las manos & lo ofrescia a jhesu christo & criualos a sus tetas dandoles con la leche las costumbres que auia ella mesma e creciendo en quanto estauan sso su poderio & rregimiento mas los criaua para monjes que para seglares (*Leyenda Aurea 1400–1499*, fol. 35r)

... gave birth to seven children, six sons and one daughter. The sons were all monks and the daughter a nun. After [giving] birth to a child she would take him in her hands and offer him to Jesus Christ. And she suckled them at her breast, transferring her virtues through her milk. And while they were raised under her authority and tutelage, she raised them to become monks rather than laypersons.

Here, Bernard's mother functions in a manner similar to the statue from Eberbach's tale, gifting the child the nourishment of Christian virtue through the intimate process of breastfeeding.

While the lactational legend of St. Bernard has not surfaced in fifteenth-century Iberian narratives, there are numerous artistic representations of this legend.²¹ The earliest

appearance is a Mallorcan altarpiece dedicated to St. Bernard, dated circa 1290, and attributed to the Master of Palma (Figure 2). The altarpiece is said to have been part of a reconsecrated oratory within a conquered Muslim fortress called the Almudaina de Gumara (Salvadó 2006, p. 50). It belonged to the Knights Templars, for whom the Cistercian monk was instrumental.²² The altar is divided into five panels: the central panel houses a painting of the saint, while four flanking panels recount hagiographic episodes of his life. The scene found on the upper left post of the altarpiece depicts the lactation vision granted to St. Bernard.



Figure 2. Retaule de Sant Bernat de Claraval. © Museu de Mallorca.

The altar panels' French style may suggest the legend originated north of the Pyrenees; the style bears no resemblance to the Italian paintings of the *Madonna lactans* (Bauer 2015, p. 79). Durán notes two other retable representations of the *lactatio* miracle from the 1300s; the first, circa 1348, from the church of Santa María de Montblanch (Tarragona) and the second, probably from the monastery of Benifassá (Castellón) (Durán 1990, pp. 43–46; plates XII–XIV). The first is a polychrome stone retable dedicated to Saints Bernard and Barnabus and is attributed to Guillermo Timor. The central relief displays the two saints. Both sides of the central relief are divided into four equal quadrants, which include episodes from each saint's life. Even though it is badly damaged, the bottom left quadrant to the left of the central relief still displays the *lactatio*. The last retable is catalogued by the Museo del Prado as *La Virgen de la Leche con el Niño entre san Bernardo de Claraval y san Benito* (Figure 3).

While it is thought to come from the Cistercian monastery of Nuestra Señora de Benifazá in Castellón, it was later moved to the Iglesia del Priorato de Santa Ana de Mosqueruela in Teruel.²³ Mary appears as the central figure in a position similar to the *Madonna lactans* panel paintings earlier discussed. Angels flank either side of her. St. Bernard appears with an open book on Mary's right and receives Mary's lactational nourishment. St. Benedict is placed on Mary's left and holds another open book. Durán suggests that these three *lactatio* images provide the origins of the Bernardine tradition. Salvadó echoes Durán when he notes that, other than the Palma Master altarpiece, "[n]o other surviving Spanish artworks from the late 12th to 13th centuries depict St. Bernard" (Durán 1990, p. 52). Salvadó also notes for the Crown of Aragón that Saint Bernard paintings were found only in Cistercian monasteries during the fourteenth century (Salvadó 2006, p. 52).

By the early fifteenth century, there is one retable that can be traced to a convent not associated with the Cistercians. The Sivera Retable (ca. 1415) comes from the Santo Domingo de Valencia convent. The Bellas Artes Museum in Valencia, where this retable now is housed, confirms that the work was created to adorn the Dominican monastery, and further identifies the artist to be Antoni Peris, who was active in Valencia between 1404 and

1423 (Figure 4). While the retable is incomplete, the central panel still shows a *Madonna lactans* figure. The right *calle* divides into three sections; the uppermost depicts the Bernard *lactatio*.



Figure 3. Pere Lembrí. *The Virgin nursing the Child between Saints Bernard of Clairvaux and Benedict.* ©Museo Nacional del Prado Virgen del Tobed, Museo del Prado.

The stone retable from Santa María de Montblanch, the Sivera Retable and the Prado Museum's *Virgen de la Leche con el Niño* are suggestive of the incorporation of the Bernard miracle into the *Madonna lactans* iconography. By the first quarter of the fifteenth century, one may see this diffusion within various churches, monasteries, and convents in the Crown of Aragón, where it was possible for Alfonso Martínez to have come upon it. Alfonso Martínez lived in several cities in the Crown of Aragón between 1420 and 1430, while in search of greater benefices from the Church. Naylor and Rank note Valencia, Tortosa, Barcelona, and Gerona as places that the archpriest may have visited (Naylor and Rank 2011, p. 3). Many of these towns and cities were centers of development for *Madonna lactans* paintings. The Sivera Retable is perhaps the most likely of candidates. Although Alfonso Martínez did not make profession to the Dominicans, his association with the Order may be seen in his preaching style or in the relationship with his Dominican patron, the Cardinal San Sixtus. These are indicators of a relationship that may have afforded him a stay within the Valencian monastery where the retable was located.



Figure 4. Antoni Peris. *Retaule de la Mare de Déu de la Llet*. © Museu de Belles Arts de València.

Whether or not the Sivera Retable or St. Bernard's lactational miracle lies at the heart of the *Corbacho* story cannot be conclusively proven. But it is certainly true that Saint Bernard is well represented in Iberian art of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. It is equally true that Bernard's life and lactational miracle do not disappear from the record.²⁴ In the *Cancionero de Úbeda* (1588), following the romance dedicated to Saint Ildephonsus, Don Justo de Sancha includes another dedicated to Saint Bernard. The first twelve verses are as follows:

Por su virtud y limpieza
El melifluo san Bernardo,
Por su devoción tan alta
La Virgen un don le ha dado.
Hizole su capellán
Muy querido y regalado,
Y estando ante él un día
En oración transportado,
Puso la Virgen la mano
En su pecho consagrado,

Y con divina leche

Los labios le ha rociado. ([Biblioteca de Autores Españoles 1855](#), ll. 1–12; p. 120)

The Virgin has given the mellifluous Saint Bernard a gift on account of his virtue and integrity and his supreme devotion. She made him her beloved and prized chaplain. While he was transported through prayer one day, appearing before him the Virgin placed her hand on her consecrated breast and moistened his lips with divine milk.

Bernard's breastmilk miracle must have been so well known that by 1605, the Spanish *Vida de san Bernardo* alludes to it as commonplace knowledge:

Todo esto fue efecto de aquel tan supremo regalo con que la Sacrasantissima Virgen y sin mancilla Maria endulço su voz, su pluma, y su lengua, siendo para todos atractivo suauue su doctrina. Y aunque es dulcissimo en todas sus Obras, Y Escritos este Docto Melifluo; pero donde incomparablemente vierten suauidad sus Sermones y Platicas, es en los Mysterios Inefables, y Sacrosantos del Hijo de Dios, como son, su Encarnación y Glorioso Nacimiento; y en las alabanças de la Sanctissima Virgen Maria, todo es suauidad, agudeza, y dulçura. Mamólo todo de los Pechos desta Reyna Virgen, Y Madre, para que suauemente atraxesse al seruicio de su Hijo, y suyo a los hombres: y desterrasse con su predicacion las amarguras, y azedias de la culpa, con lo sazonado, y meloso de sus palabras. ([Almonacid 1682](#), pp. 446–47)

All of this was the effect of the supreme gift with which the most sacred and pure Virgin Mary sweetened his [Bernard's] voice, his pen, and his tongue, making his teaching tender and attractive. Even though this mellifluous doctor is very sweet in all his works and writing, where his Sermons and Letters pour the most tenderness is in the discussion of ineffable and sacrosanct mysteries of the Son of God, which are, his incarnation and glorious birth. Additionally, in the praises of the most holy Virgin Mary, he is all tenderness, insight[fulness], and sweetness. He suckled this all at the breasts of our Virgin Queen and Mother, so that he might gently be drawn to the service of her Son, and so that men be drawn to his service, and so that he might banish with his preaching all sorrow and remorse over blame, with his sweetly expressive words.

Returning to the Archpriest's story, one may see inverted structural elements between Saint Bernard's story and that of the cuckolded husband. The wife and husband reflect, as would an inverted mirror, the relationship between Virgin and Saint Bernard. The Virgin's breastmilk nourishes this saintly figure who reveals God's truth. In artistic representations of the *Madonna lactans*, the Virgin's milk provides nourishment for the Son of God. As the maternal advocate for all of humanity, her milk is spiritual nourishment for all of humankind. As the inversion of this spiritual food, the wife's breastmilk stings or burns. The wife uses it not to promote well-being but to keep her husband from seeing. The Archpriest's story can be read as a figural example revealing the woes of human vice. The adulterous wife, unchaste, un-nurturing, un-Christian, holds no redeeming qualities. Unlike the Virgin Mary, she advocates sinfulness instead of salvation. The adulterous wife pours breastmilk onto her husband's eyes not to "sweeten" his sight but to effectively blind him. Unlike Bernard, the husband cannot see the truth of his wife's infidelity.

One can reach similar interpretative revelations in all the men represented in the lactational stories identified in this article. The men in all these stories, be they sinners, cuckold, or Saint Bernard, are all living their lives, well or poorly, according to Christian norms. Even the Moor, whose deeds overseas suggest his involvement in the Crusades, takes for himself a statue of the Virgin, and so suggests his openness to conversion. By straight or twisted means, all these stories suggest a model of Christian life. To return to Burke's understanding of contrasting images—not as binary, oppositional images, but as images meant to fully reveal an idea through explorations of its inverse—one may see

the gravity of the sin of adultery through the redemptive virtue of Mary's motherhood. The Virgin Mary, and particularly her breastmilk, allows for sinners in the *Cantigas* to understand and accept the truth, the Christian way of life. Symbolically, the milk serves as a form of nourishment for man, an idea attested to in both Old and New Testament (Isaiah 60:16: 1 Peter 2:1–3). For the Cistercian monk in the *Cantigas*, Mary heals his throat and mouth, the parts of his body needed to proclaim the Good Word. In the many representations of the *Madonna lactans*, we see that what nurtured the baby Jesus in physical form serves to nourish all men spiritually. Through Saint Bernard's *lactatio*, we see the import of material intercession for divine revelation.

It is plausible to assume that Martínez's story parodically used Bernard's legend as its backdrop. In both tales, the lactating mother allows her breastmilk to fall upon the eyes of a man seeking truth. In the case of the adulterous wife, a physical truth is denied; for the Cistercian monk, spiritual truth is revealed. The sacrosanct, healing nature of Mary's milk is understood more fully through the noxious sting of the wife who betrays her husband. The Archpriest comically emphasizes the sinful nature of woman in order to expose the frailties of men's souls in the work he has finished "*aviendo por medianera, intercesora, e abogada a la humill sin manzilla virgen Sancta Maria*" (Gerli 1992, p. 61) [having as intermediary, intercessor, and advocate the humble and immaculate Virgin Holy Mary] (Naylor and Rank 2011, p. 25).

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Notes

- ¹ Michael Gerli's edition of the *Arzobispo de Talavera o Corbacho* has been used in this article. English translations are based on Eric Naylor and Jerry Rank's translation, albeit in some cases slightly modified. All other translations, unless noted, are mine.
- ² Tales of adulterous deception play largely in the catalogue of folklore motifs identified by Stith Thompson (1955–1958) and Harriet Goldberg (1998), but this one is unique to the Archpriest's story. The complete episode is as follows: "Contarte he un enxemplo, e mill te contaría: una muger tenía un ombre en su casa, e sobrevino su marido e óvole de esconder tras la cortina. E quando el marido entró dixo: "¿Qué fazes, muger?" Respondió: "Marido, siéntome enojada." E asentóse el marido en el banco delante la cama, e dixo: "Dame a cenar." E el otro que estava escondido, non podía nin osava salir. E fizo la muger que entrava tras la cortina a sacar los manteles, e dixo al ombre: "Quando yo los pechos pusiere a mi marido delante, sal, amigo, e vete." E así lo fizo. Dixo: "Marido, non sabes cómo se ha finchado mi teta, e ravio con la mucha leche." Dixo: "Muestra, veamos." Sacó la teta e dióle un rayo de leche por los ojos que lo cegó del todo, e en tanto el otro salió. E dixo: "¿O fija de puta, cómo me escuece la leche!" Respondió el otro que se iba: "¿Qué debe fazer el cuerno?" E el marido, como que sintió ruido al pasar e como non veía, dixo: "¿Quién pasó agora por aquí? Parescióme que ombre sentí." Dixo ella: "El gato, cuitada, es que me lieva la carne." E dio a correr tras el otro que salía, faziendo ruido que iba tras el gato, e cerró bien su puerta e tornóse, corrió e falló su marido, que ya bien veía, mas non el duelo que tenía" (Gerli 1992, p. 188). [I'll tell you a tale, and I could tell you a thousand. A woman had a man in her house and her husband came back unexpectedly, and she had to hide him behind the curtain. And when her husband came in he asked: "What are you up to, wife?" She answered: "Husband, I feel a little indisposed." And her husband sat down on the bench in front of the bed and said: "Give me some supper." And the other man who was hidden [neither could] nor dared to leave. And the woman pretended that she was going behind the curtain to get out the tablecloths and said to the man: "When I stick my tits in front of my husband, scam, sweetheart, and get yourself out of here." And this is what she did. She said: "Husband, you don't realize how my breast has swelled, and I'm dying because there's so much milk." He said: "Let's see: show me." And she took out her breast and gave him a squirt of milk in the eye and completely blinded him, and in the meanwhile the other man started out. And the husband said, "O son of a bitch, how the milk smarts." The other man who was going out answered: "I bet horns hurt more!" And the husband, since he heard noise as the other man passed by and since he couldn't see, said: "Who just passed by? I thought I heard a man." She said: "It's the cat, woe is me, and he's carrying my meat off." And she started running after the other man who was leaving, making noise like she was going after the cat, and she shut the door tight and went back and found her husband who could see fine now but who couldn't manage to see his own grief" (Naylor and Rank 2011, p. 133).
- ³ This translation does not follow Naylor and Rank in order to preserve the gendered insult.

- 4 See Emilie Bergmann (2002) and Caroline Castiglione (2013) for the cultural significance and social practices regarding breastfeeding, and the use of wetnurses. Much of our understanding about breastfeeding in the Middle Ages comes from studies that point out how wetnurses were chosen and for how long they were employed. Curiously, one of the first literary mentions to wetnurses exemplifies the before mentioned need to select the proper woman. The *Libro de Alexandre* notes that the ancient Macedonian king “nunca quiso mamar leche de mugier rafez, / si non fue de linaje o de grant gentilez” (7cd) [never wanted to suckle the milk of a common woman, only a noble or a woman of good manners] (Casas Rigall 2014, p. 6).
- 5 It is not unusual to see in medieval Castilian narratives an insisting that one be understood correctly. In the Archpriest of Talavera, Juan Ruiz cautions against the deliberate mishandling of his work. Sin is an intrinsic part of human nature. The negative examples in the *Libro de buen amor* are not intended to promote sin, even though those who want to sin will find in the reading a way to do it.
- 6 An ambivalent connection between mother and suckling child may be seen in *The Libation-Bearers*. In Aeschylus’s tragedy, Clytemnestra futilely begs her son Orestes for mercy. Clytemnestra leans on the bond established between mother and suckling child. It is not enough.
- 7 Anthony Cárdenas notes these versions (chapter 510 of the *Estoria de España*, *cantiga 2* from the *Cantigas de Nuestra Señora*, and a marginal gloss in mss. T.1.1), although only two are considered to belong to the wise king (Cárdenas 1983, pp. 339–40). These versions refer to one or both of the Virgin Mary’s miraculous appearances to the sainted bishop. In the first, she appears with his book in her hands, gratified by his literary defense of her virginity before the heretics who questioned it. In the second, she appears with a fine vestment, a chasuble, also as recompense for his defense.
- 8 José Madoz y Molerés notes few adaptations in the Archpriest’s translation of Ildephonsus’s life from the sources used by the fifteenth-century writer. Nevertheless, in the Archpriest’s translation of *filius hominis* for hijo de la Virgen, one might understand Martínez’s veneration for the Mother of God.
- 9 These are the celebration of the Nativity (December 25), the Purification (February 2), the Incarnation of the Word in Mary (March 21), the Assumption (August 15), the Nativity of Mary (September 8), and the Annunciation of Mary’s Birth (December 18).
- 10 Lesley Twomey notes that early examples of literature from the Iberian peninsula were marked by devotion to the Virgin and her appearance within the *Protoevangelicum*. Art historians have leaned on this and other apocryphal gospels, as well as on the saintly tales that brought out much of the humanity represented in the figures of the Virgin.
- 11 Geographical and familial ties lie at the heart of many hagiographic narratives. Saints are often associated with a particular place and are configured as a symbolic father or mother for that village, town, or city. The work of Jacobus da Voragine (1230–1298) expanded the importance of saints beyond the local, tribal level. His *Golden Legend* included the lives of many saints and martyrs; it also included stories that told the life of Mary. The *Golden Legend* extended Mary’s profile throughout the European continent and created numerous opportunities to see Mary in the role of divine mother.
- 12 Martínez de Toledo and de Talavera (2010) composes the hagiographic tale *Vida de San Ildefonso*, in which he emphasizes the virginal purity of Mary. Martínez disabuses those who believed “un omne sabidor . . . Elbidio,” whose teachings proclaimed that Mary had not remained a virgin after Jesus’s birth. He refutes this idea with a direct appeal to the Virgin on behalf of all humankind, claiming that the righteous know that Mary was sanctified in her mother’s womb by the Holy Spirit, and that after having conceived through the Holy Spirit she had a virgin birth of Jesus Christ (Madoz y Molerés 1962, p. 86).
- 13 Andrachuk’s article deals specifically with the definition of the word “*adonado*.” For him, the word cannot simply be translated as “full of grace” but rather “full of the gift that is Jesus Christ”.
- 14 Angela Vaz Leão attributes the many references to breastmilk within the *Cantigas de Santa María*, a collection of over four hundred Marian miracle tales, to fecund pagan divinities. She notes, “[a] força e a extensão do culto mariano se explicam, entre outras causas, pela sua associação ao mito feminino, presente em religiões pré-históricas e atestado por estatuetas de mulhiere nuas, muitas vezes estilizadas e com seus órgãos sexuais exagerados, tais como se entraram em várias escavações, sobretudo no Oriente Médio. Eram imagens da Grande-Mãe, cujo culto a identificava às vezes com a Terra e que assim se espalhou pelo Mediterrâneo” (Vaz Leão 2007, p. 118). [The strength and wide-spread circulation of the Marian cult may be explained, among other reasons, by her association with the feminine myth, present in prehistoric religions and represented by small statues of female nudes, many of them stylized and with exaggerated sexual organs, as have been found in multiple excavations, especially in the Middle East. These were images of the “Great Mother,” whose cult sometimes identified her with the Earth Mother and in this form spread throughout the Mediterranean.]
- 15 These are the summarized titles given in the Oxford Database. In Portuguese, they are as follows: Cantiga 46: “Esta é como a omagen de Santa Maria, que un mouro guardava en sa casa onrradamente, deitou leite das tetas.” 54: “Esta é como Santa Maria guaryu com seu leite o monge doente que cuidavan que era morto.” Cantiga 93: “Como Santa Maria guareceu un fillo dun burges que era gafo.” Cantiga 138: “Como San Joan Boca-d’Ouro, porque loava a Santa Maria, tiraron-ll’os [ollos] e foi esterrado e deitado de patriarcado; e depois fez-lle santa Maria aver ollos, e cobrou per ella sa dinidade.” Cantiga 404: “Como Santa Maria, com seu leite, cura um jovem clérigo seu devoto de grande enfermidade”.
- 16 Enrique II and his family appear in the bottom corners of the tempera panel. Enrique had been in exile in Aragón and under the protection of the Aragonese king, Pere IV. Pilar Silva Maroto notes that Enrique II commissioned three retables for the Nuestra

Señora del Tobed sanctuary in Zaragoza between 1356 and 1359. Notarial documents also indicate that by 1359, the altar for the side panels to the Virgen del Tobed had been completed (Silva Maroto 2006).

- 17 The Prado Museum documents Jaume Serra to have been active circa 1358–1390. Destorrents is thought to have worked between 1351 and 1362. Lorenzo Zaragoza may have outlasted both, as he is documented from 1363 until 1406 (Arciniega García 32). Ramón de Mur was active between 1412 and 1435, according to the Museo Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (Mur 2022). There is a curious website (Art+E 2022) with a catalog of *Madonna lactans* images: www.historia-del-arte-erotico.com/cleopatra/home.htm. While offering very little description of the images it contains, this website catalogs a vast number of images throughout the European continent, many of which are painted in the same International Gothic style as those described in this article.
- 18 Images of a nursing Eve may also be found within Christian art, which are used as the basis of a figural exegesis foretelling Mary's future redemptive role. Examples of the nursing Eve image can be seen on the eleventh-century Bernward Doors, made for the Hildesheim Cathedral; in the thirteenth-century relief of a portal to the Upper Chapel in Sainte-Chapelle, Paris, and in the stained glass paneling of the Rheims Cathedral of Notre Dame.
- 19 Rubin attests to this in her *Mary, Mother of God* (Rubin 2009, p. 150), while Rafael Durán denies it (Durán 1990, p. 40). Others note that the story first appears in art, as part of an altarpiece from a Mallorcan Templar Church, circa 1290. This altar was dedicated to the Cistercian monk and tells his life in pictures (Bauer, Salvadó). Louis Réau believes that the first images of St. Bernard's lactational miracle may be dated to 1200; the first narrative stories of this miracle may be dated to about 1350 (qtd. in González Zymla 2019, p. 212; Réau 1955–1959, pp. 215–20).
- 20 Anthony Lappin (2008) has argued against the attribution of this work to Gonzalo de Berceo, suggesting that only four works can be decisively attributed to this Riojan poet. See the well-received *Gonzalo de Berceo: The Poet and His Verses*.
- 21 The Osma Master paints a retable dedicated to Saint Ildephonsus in the Catedral de Burgo de Osma during the second half of the fifteenth century, as does Martín Bernat for a retable in the Tarrazona Cathedral (Zaragoza). An additional altarpiece, attributed to the Master of La Seu de Urgel, whose *Retablo de la Mare de Déu de Canapost* is also known as the *Retablo de la Virgen de la Leche*, dates to the last quarter of the fifteenth century.
- 22 Bernard supported the creation of the Order of the Templars during the 1129 Council of Troyes. While there is no consensus as to the part he played in creating the Templar rule, he did write *De laude novae militiae* [*In Praise of the New Knighthood*] to exhort Templar knights in the crusade.
- 23 Rafael Durán also includes within his *Iconografía española* a plate from a Cordoban Cathedral Chapter Office of the Virgin with Saints Bernard and Ildephonsus. While the painting contains the *Madonna lactans* icon, the lactational miracle is not present.
- 24 Durán traces the appearance of this miracle both in and outside of the Iberian peninsula. He cites its appearance in Guillermo Eysengreimio's *Crónica de Espira* from 1561. Durán also notes the lactational miracle in an *authenticum* dated 1599 from Edmundo de la Croix, the Abbot General of the Cistercian Order to Fr. Fermín Ignacio de Ibero, the Fietro monastery abbot, which attests to the location of the miracle in Châtillon-sur-Seine. A larger narrative of Saint Bernard presumably appears in the *Historia de la esclarecida Vida y Milagros del Bienaventurado Padre y Mellifluro Doctor San Bernardo*, which was a compilation by F. Cristóbal González de Perales that was published in 1601. Cistercian historians make the story more well known in the seventeenth century; their devotion to the saint may be seen in monasteries throughout the eighteenth century (Durán 1990, pp. 41–43).

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Article

The Transit of Mary Magdalene's Soul in Catalan Artistic Production in the 15th Century

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Abstract: There are a great many studies on the figure of Mary Magdalene in different areas of knowledge. Nevertheless, there is a gap as regards the image of this character in Catalonia, and specifically regarding the visual representation of her soul at the moment when she died. This text aims to analyze this matter based on two Catalan altarpieces: the *Altarpiece of Saint Mary Magdalene from Perella* (Bernat Martorell, 1437–1453) and *The Death of Mary Magdalene* (Jaume Huguet, 1465–1480). The analysis has been carried out based on the postulates from the tradition of studies on iconography and iconology: the relationships between image and text, the history of the iconographic types and the magnetic power of images. The basic hypothesis is that the representation of Mary Magdalene's soul in the 15th Century in Catalonia is visually borrowed from the iconographic type of the Dormition of the Mother of God. To test this, comparative analyses have been made of the visual representation of the two women and also of the textual sources, such as the canonical and extracanonical gospels, a variety of medieval legends and different hagiographies or *vitas* and sermons from the period.

Keywords: Mary Magdalene; Virgin Mary; soul; Transit; Dormition; Catalonia; Crown of Aragon; Bernat Martorell; Jaume Huguet; altarpieces

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1. Introduction

Delving into a study of a figure such as Mary Magdalene involves the arduous challenge of finding the gaps that remain to be discovered about this character. Faced with the immense bibliography about her in different areas, art history (Haskins 1996; De Boer 1997; Maisch 1998; Jansen 2001; Antunes 2014), the history of religions and feminist theology (Bernabé 1994; Ricci 1994; Schaberg 2008), anthropology of religion (Fedele 2012) and other disciplines), it is difficult to find matters that are yet to be revealed. Even so, the many-faceted Mary Magdalene never ceases to surprise, offering an area for study in which, as difficult as it may seem, there are always as yet barren terrains in which to plant the seed for new research. Such is the case of the visual representation of this character in 15th century Catalonia. In that land and time, at least two altarpieces appear that pose a matter that has not yet been studied: the soul of Mary Magdalene. This study attempts to at least partially fill the lack of attention given to these images.

The artworks studied were created by two Catalan artists: Bernat Martorell (1390–1452) and Jaume Huguet (1412–1492). The former painted the *Altarpiece of Saint Mary Magdalene from Perella* (1437–1452, Episcopal Museum of Vic) (Figures 1 and 2), whereas Jaume Huguet created the panel that is today in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC) dedicated to the *Death of Mary Magdalene* (1465–1480) (Figures 3 and 4). The representations of Mary Magdalene that appear in these artworks share the characteristic of presenting the penitent as a hirsute woman, a typical characteristic from the Italian Trecento and Germanic lands but also with some examples in France and England. Although the presence of a hirsute Mary Magdalene is an aspect yet to be studied in the Crown of Aragon (which does not occur elsewhere), this text is going to focus on the main original feature in these images: the less studied and particularly noteworthy visual representation of Mary Magdalene's

soul, coming out of her own mouth then ascending to the heavens accompanied by angels. That soul, with a very specific physiognomy, is an exceptional aspect in the international panorama of representations of the Transit of Mary Magdalene. That same gesture of the soul coming out of the mouth is a specific feature of art in the Crown of Aragon in some exceptional images in the case of Mary Magdalene, but that is not the case in the Dormition of the Mother of God.



Figure 1. Bernat Martorell. *Altarpiece of Saint Mary Magdalene from Perella*, 1437–1452, Episcopal Museum of Vic.



Figure 2. Bernat Martorell. "Transit of Mary Magdalene". Detail from *Altarpiece of Saint Mary Magdalene from Perella*, 1437–1452, Episcopal Museum of Vic.



Figure 3. Jaume Huguet, *Altarpiece of Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew; Calvary; Death of Saint Mary Magdalene*, 1465–1480, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC).



Figure 4. Jaume Huguet. “Death of Saint Mary Magdalene”. Detail from *Altarpiece of Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew; Calvary; Death of Saint Mary Magdalene*, 1465–1480, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya (MNAC).

Therefore, the main aim is to study the arrangements in the visual representation of Mary Magdalene’s soul as regards her physiognomy and her departure through her mouth and ascent to the heavens. Given that the representation of those moments is shown in images of a hirsute Mary Magdalene, some matters about the woman covered in hair will be introduced to achieve the objective, since it is no coincidence that it is in images of the hairy penitent where the soul is present. All of this plays a fundamental role in the corporeality of the penitent, both due to her hirsutism and the fact that the soul is leaving precisely through the same orifice by which Mary Magdalene, in her dissolute life, had sinned and then kissed the feet of Jesus at the time of her conversion, as well as being the orifice through which the demons that had possessed her left. All of these matters were formulated by the patristic exegesis and their configuration of Mary Magdalene as a hybrid of different women from the Gospel, a hybrid that was officialized as of the sermon that Gregory the Great pronounced in Rome in 591 (*Homily 33, Lectio S. Evang. Sec. Luc. VII, 36–50*; PL LXXVI, 1239). The Fathers of the Latin Church, in their desire to harmonise what the gospels said, attempted to understand the identity of the different women who anointed Jesus. This is how the hybrid of Magdalene came about, in which essentially the anonymous sinner in the Gospel of Luke stands out (Luke 7: 37–50), as well as Mary, the sister of Lazarus and the woman who carried out the anointment in Bethany (Foskolou 2011). Out of all of them, the one that had the greatest influence and lasted over time was the sinner, whose sin is not mentioned but due to the traditional Judeo-Christian association of female sin with sex was considered to be of a sexual nature: she was a prostitute (Monzón Pertejo 2020). Although there were significant precedents given by Lefèvre D’Étaples (1519) and Peter Ketter in 1935 (Ketter 2006), it was not until the 20th century that feminist theologians began to review the gospels without the misogynistic, androcentric prejudices arising from the patristic, revealing the probably deliberate confusion that turned the apostle into a repentant sinner (Schüssler Fiorenza 1975; Ricci 1994).

The basic hypothesis to explain the Transit of Mary Magdalene, and specifically the visual representation of her soul, rests on it being a visual borrowing of images from the Dormition of the Mother of God in the Crown of Aragon. This hypothesis will be backed by comparative analyses with artworks showing this episode of the life of the Virgin as well as by recurring to evangelical, patristic and legendary sources, sermons and *vitae* (hagiographies) from the period, which show Mary Magdalene’s high status only below the Virgin as well as the relationship between the two women. To complete the analysis, other characteristics that both women share in visual matters and theological aspects will also be mentioned.

2. Results

The *Altarpiece of Saint Mary Magdalene from Perella* is dedicated entirely to the woman from Magdala, enthroned as a saint in the central section under the scene of the Calvary. On the left, from top to bottom, the woman is represented during the supper at Bethany and the encounter with the resurrected Jesus. On the right, the episodes represented here do not belong to the patrology or the Gospel but to medieval legends: in the top section, the hirsute woman is raised to Heaven by angels while a hermit cleric looks on awestruck by such an event. The lower section shows the death of Mary Magdalene on a bed, with her long hair perfectly arranged over her chest and her eyes closed, accompanied by Jesus himself, who with his hands extracts the penitent's soul before the attentive gaze of a group of angels. The physiognomy of the soul is that of a small Mary Magdalene wrapped in white fabrics with a halo.

The artwork by Huguet belonged to an altarpiece dedicated to Saint Anne, Saint Bartholomew and Saint Magdalene from the Church of Sant Martí de Pertegas, of which only the upper panels have been preserved today in the MNAC. In the preserved panels, the Calvary occupies the central part, flanked by the martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew and the death of Mary Magdalene. The woman is represented as completely hirsute on her death bed, accompanied by Saint Maximin and other priests and orants, before an altar presided over by the image of *Ecce Homo*. In this case, Mary Magdalene's soul, with the same physiognomy as in the work by Martorell, is ascended to Heaven by two angels.

They are two altarpieces that use the same technique (tempera on wood) and which resort to the same scenes in Mary Magdalene's life, especially as regards her penitence as a hirsute woman. In Martorell's work, the instant that the soul leaves the saint's mouth is represented; in Huguet's, it is the moment after the angels raise her soul to Heaven.

2.1. *The Death of Mary Magdalene in La Legenda Aurea and Its Vernacular Translations*

The sources linked to such images are studied below, demonstrating the difficulty in finding a textual source indicating the departure of Mary Magdalene's soul as well as her physiognomy.

As of the 13th century, images of Mary Magdalene were no longer restricted to episodes in the life of Jesus; hence, the conceptual image of Mary Magdalene began. After the officialization of Mary Magdalene's sinful past, and in consonance with the ecclesiastical ideas about the use of saints as exemplars of behavior, an entire series of images appear, representing the woman from Magdala's years of penitence (Haskins 1996; Foskolou 2011, pp. 272–73). The foundations having been created for the biography of the mythical Mary Magdalene with the patristic exegesis, the legendary side to this woman's life then grew, focusing attention on the post-ascension events. The *Vita eremitica* appeared in 9th century Italy, with Mary Magdalene assimilated as Mary of Egypt retiring to the desert with no clothes or sustenance for the thirty remaining years of her life to dedicate herself to penitence, prayer and contemplation, like a true hermit of the desert. In that same century, the *Vita apostolica* also spread, narrating the tasks of evangelization and miracles performed by Mary Magdalene after she traveled to France. Both legends ended up combined in the *Vita apostolica-eremitica* (Mycoff 1989; Auberger et al. 2008).¹

In the 13th century, with *La Legenda Aurea* (LA) (1261–1267) by Jacobus de Varagine, these and other legends were compiled, combined and organized along with other legends that appeared throughout the Middle Ages. The Dominican author of the compilation dedicated chapter XCVI to Saint Mary Magdalene, described as a sinner full of guilt who, through penitence, reached eternal glory, thereby demonstrating the Gregorian fusion of characters to be completely consolidated. As this work was the most complete and widespread as of the 13th century, an analysis has been made of this source in its original version and in the translations in vernacular languages. Specifically, on dealing with the Iberian Peninsula, the *Flos Sanctorum* (FS) and *Vides de Sants Rosselloneses* (VSR) have been chosen since they were circulating in Catalonia at the time the two altarpieces being studied here were made.²

In these legends, it is Mary Magdalene herself in parallelism with the story of Mary of Egypt who announces her own death to the hermit priest: “Our Savior has communicated to me that very soon He will remove me definitively from this world” (“*Nuestro Salvador me ha comunicado que muy pronto me sacará definitivamente de este mundo*”), entrusting her with notifying Saint Maximin to tell him “that next Resurrection Sunday, when he rises to sing the matins for the festive day, he should enter his oratory [. . .] and he will find me there” (“*que el próximo domingo de Resurrección, cuando se levante para cantar los maitines de las fiestas, entre en su oratorio [. . .] y que allí me encontrará*”). The priest notified Saint Maximin, who “on Resurrection Sunday, at the time he had been told, entered his oratory alone and saw the Saint surrounded by a chorus of angels that had conveyed her there” (“*el domingo de Resurrección, a la hora que se le había indicado, entró él solo en su oratorio y vio a la santa rodeada del coro de ángeles que la habían transportado hasta allí*”). After the encounter with Mary Magdalene, “Saint Maximin ordered all of his clergy to come into the oratory and the priest who had acted as the saint’s messenger, and in their presence he administered to her the communion of the body and blood of Christ, received by her in her mouth while her eyes flooded with tears” (“*San Maximino mandó pasar al interior del oratorio a todo su clero y al sacerdote que había actuado como recadero de la santa y en presencia de ellos administró a ésta en comunión el cuerpo y sangre de Cristo, recibidos por ella en su boca, mientras sus ojos se inundaban de lágrimas*”) (LA, vol. I, p. 388).

The original text by Varagine, which is longer than its vernacular translations, describes how Mary Magdalene looked when she received the communion before dying: “Mary Magdalene’s face, accustomed to the familiar encounters with the angels, had acquired such a shine and glowed in such a way that nobody could have more easily withstood the incidence of the sun’s rays on their eyes than the glare emanating from her face” (“*el rostro de María Magdalena, habituado al trato familiar de los ángeles, había adquirido tal brillo y resplandecía de tal manera que cualquiera hubiera podido soportar más fácilmente la incidencia sobre sus ojos de los rayos del sol que los fulgores que de aquella cara emanaban*”) (LA: I, p. 388). The FS maintains the description of Mary Magdalene’s appearance: “thus shone the Magdalene’s face since she had seen the angels continually over a long time, because more lightly could a man see the sun’s rays than her face” (“*así resplandeció la cara de la Madalena, porque muy grant tiempo continuadamente viera los ángeles, porque más ligero podría omne ver los rayos del sol, que non la su faz*”) (FL, p. 444). The Catalan version, the briefest of all, insists that the light irradiated from the woman: “And thus with him he saw her face, he could not stand it, due to the great brightness of her face, which blazed like the sun” (“*E ayxí con él la gardà en la cara, no o poc sostener, per la gran clartat de la sua visa, qui flameyava enayxí con sol*”) (VSR, III, p. 85). Thus, these legends related the Magdalene’s luminous appearance with the celestial contacts she had experienced on being lifted by the angels to Heaven in the canonical hours to receive divine sustenance, without mentioning her hairy appearance at all.

After receiving the communion, “Mary Magdalene, right there, at the foot of the altar, spread herself out on the ground, and in that pose her soul emigrated to the Lord. Just after expiring, a smell began to emanate from her body so sweet that the entire oratory was impregnated with it, and whoever entered that sacred place perceived the effluvia of such an extremely smooth aroma, which lasted without disappearing for about seven days” (“*María Magdalena, allí mismo, ante la base del altar, tendiéndose en tierra, y estando en esa actitud su alma emigró al señor. Nada más expirar, de su cuerpo empezó a emanar un olor tan exquisito que todo el oratorio quedó impregnado de él, y cuantos entraban en aquel sagrado lugar percibían los efluvios de tan suavísimo aroma, que duró sin desaparecer unos siete días*”) (LA, I, p. 388). Thus, Varagine’s version limits itself to indicating that “her soul emigrated to the Lord” and, as with the hirsute’s appearance, does not give more details about the process or the physiognomy of the soul, but it does indicate that the place filled with aromas. Consulting FS (p. 444) does not clear up questions about the soul’s physiognomy either, but indicates that it entered Paradise: “and communed by the hand of the bishop with many tears. From there, spread before the altar, that saintly soul left her body, and went to Paradise with

the angels. And after it ended, there remained such an aroma in the oratory that they continued to smell it for seven days.” (“*e comulgó de la mano del obispo con muchas lágrimas. Dende, echada ante el altar, saliole aquella alma santa del su cuerpo, e fuese para Paraíso con los ángeles. E después ue ella finó, quedó tanto olor en el oratorio, que por siete días continuamente lo olián*”). The same occurs in the Catalan version: “And appealing to all the clergymen and the aforementioned presbyter, she received the body of God from the bishop’s hand, weeping humbly. Afterwards, her saintly soul went to God. In that place there was a great aroma smelled for vii days, by all those who entered there” (“*E, apelats tots los clerges e-l prevere ya dit, ela rebé lo cors de Déu de la mà del bisbe, ploran humilment. Enaprés/la sua santa ànima se n’anà a Déu. En lo qual loc fo mot gran odor sentida per ·vii· diez, per tots sels qui là intraven*”) (VSR: III, p. 85). Hence, none of the three versions describes the visual characteristics of the Magdalene’s soul, but all coincide in the fragrances that flooded the oratory.

The only description of a human soul, albeit not of Magdalene’s, is found in the episode in which the woman, by now a miracle-working saint and object of veneration, becomes the bearer of monk Stephen’s soul “Mary Magdalene [. . .] took in her hands his soul which appeared in the form of a white dove, and [. . .] bore him to Heaven” (“*María Magdalena, [. . .] tomaba en sus manos su alma que presentaba la forma de una paloma blanca, y [. . .] la llevaba al cielo*”) (LA: I, p. 388). FS (p. 446) only indicates that Stephen’s soul was “white like the sun” (“*blanca como el cielo*”), while this episode does not even appear in VSR. Thus, the only reference to the physiognomy of a soul is found in the image of a “white dove”. However, the representations by Martorell and Huguet do not use such a description, which is the only physiognomic reference to the human soul in the legend of the Magdalene. To sum up, the most widespread texts indicate the departure of the Magdalene’s soul and its union with God in Paradise, without providing details that artists could use to lend visibility to such matters. As a result, it is necessary to turn to other resources to clarify this aspect: the representation of the departure of the soul in the Dormition of the Mother of God in works created in the Crown of Aragon.

2.2. The Soul of the Virgin in the Sources

Given that the Dormition of the Mother of God has been widely studied and is not the main subject of this study, only brief clarifications will be given about its representation in order to then focus our attention on the Magdalene. The Dormition or *Koimesis* of the Mother of God originated in Byzantium with the woman portrayed on her deathbed, her hands crossed on her chest, surrounded by the twelve apostles at the moment Jesus came to take her soul. This Byzantine arrangement remained unchanged for some time in Western art until it was modified and renewed, fundamentally as regards the posture of the Virgin, the representation of her as agonizing but not dead and the importance that Jesus gradually acquired toward the end of the Middle Ages as the bearer of the soul in detriment to the role of apostles (Reau 2000, pp. 619–32).

There are numerous panels representing this moment. Here, some have been selected from the Crown of Aragon to make a comparative analysis with the death of the Magdalene, with the ultimate aim of demonstrating the Magdalene’s visual borrowing from the Virgin. Two types of soul are detected in this selection: one that specifies its visual representation as a newborn or infant wrapped in a tunic ending in the shape of a cone (“Dormition of the Mother of God” from the *Altarpiece of Saint Michael and Saint Peter* created by Jaume Cirera in 1432–1433 (Figure 5); the “Dormition” by Jaume Serra for the *Altarpiece of the Resurrection* in 1361 (Figure 6); the work by the Second Maestro of Estopiñán, “Dormition of the Mother of God”, ca. 1450 (Figure 7), the “Dormition” by Pedro García de Benabarre (ca. 1450–1455) (Figure 8), the “Transit of the Virgin” by Joan Reixach (ca. 1460) (Figure 9) and the *Altarpiece of the Constable* by Jaume Huguet from 1462 (Figure 10),³ and another less popular type in which the soul is also represented as an infant but kneeling, as seen in the *Altarpiece of the Virgin of the Commendator* (1367–1381) by Jaume Serra (Figures 11 and 12). In both types, the soul has a halo, and its hands appear in a gesture of prayer. In addition

to these physiognomic types, there are also two variants: the more popular one appears departing from Mary's mouth while being received by Jesus, whereas the other depicts the soul already far from the body in the upper part of the composition.



Figure 5. Jaume Cirera, “Dormition of the Virgin”. Detail from *Altarpiece of Saint Michael and Saint Peter*, 1432–1433, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya (MNAC).



Figure 6. Jaume Serra, “Dormition”, *Altarpiece of the Resurrection*, 1361, Museum of Zaragoza.



Figure 7. Second Maestro of Estopiñán, “Dormition of the Virgin”, ca. 1450, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya (MNAC).



Figure 8. Pedro García de Benabarre, “Dormition”, ca. 1450–1455, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya (MNAC).



Figure 9. Joan Reixach, “Transit of the Virgin”, ca. 1460, Museum of Fine Arts of Valencia.



Figure 10. Jaume Huguet, “Dormition”, *Altarpiece of the Constable*, 1462, Chapel of Saint Agatha, Barcelona.



Figure 11. Jaume Serra, “Dormition”, *Altarpiece of the Virgin of the Commendator*, 1367–1381, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya (MNAC).



Figure 12. Jaume Serra, “Dormition” (detail), *Altarpiece of the Virgin of the Commendator*, 1367–1381, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya.

Given that in the artworks by Martorell and Huguet on Mary Magdalene, the physiognomy shown is of the former type, the images of the Transit of the Virgin showing such a physiognomy will be taken more into account. As for the arrangement of the soul, in Martorell’s altarpiece, it is clearly shown while being extracted by Jesus from the Magdalene’s mouth, whereas in Huguet’s version, the penitent’s soul is seen ascending to Heaven accompanied by two angels. With this small selection of works demonstrating the abundant representation of the Virgin’s soul in the Crown of Aragon in the 14th and 15th centuries, and due to the lack of a description of the Magdalene’s soul in textual sources, it is most likely that the image of the Transit of Mary Magdalene is visually borrowed from the iconographic type of the Dormition of the Mother of God.

Notwithstanding all of the above, the visual representation is not the only possible reason upholding the thesis of this paper, nor is it sufficient in itself. Delving into both apocryphal and legendary sources, more links can be found that bolster the motives behind this visual borrowing. In fact, the sources describe the penitent with an appearance full of radiance, indicating that after her death the place was inundated with wonderful perfumes. The sources describing the Dormition of the Mother of God also allude to the fragrances emanating as well as the radiance. Take, for example, some of the apocryphal accounts of the Assumption⁴ (written from the 4th to 6th centuries), which indicate that “at the moment when her immaculate soul departed, the place was inundated with perfume and an ineffable light” (“*en el momento de salir su alma immaculada, el lugar se vio inundado de*

perfume y de una luz inefable)” (Ps. *John the Theologian (Juan el Teólogo)*, XLIV: p. 320), “such a radiance ensued and a perfume so gentle, that all those around fell onto their faces” (“*sobrevino tal resplandor y un perfume tan suave, que todos los circunstantes cayeron sobre sus rostros*”) (Narration by Ps. *Joseph of Arimathea (José de Arimatea)*, XI: p. 347) and “she exhaled a perfume of a fragrance [so gentle] that all those around were overcome by sleep except only the apostles and three virgins” (“*se exhaló un perfume de fragancia [tan suave] que todos los circunstantes fueron dominados por el sueño, exceptuados solamente los apóstoles y tres vírgenes*”) (Book of *John, Archbishop of Thessalonica (Libro de Juan, arzobispo de Tesalónica)*, XII: p. 338). As one can see, the great brightness and fragrances are revealed to be aspects shared by the Transit of both women. Furthermore, there is another parallelism: the reference to the death and resurrection of Jesus. Whereas in the case of the Magdalene, the legends indicate that her death happened on the day of the Resurrection, in the case of the Virgin, there are allusions to the death and resurrection of her son in his own words:

“But after having suffered by men in accordance with what is written and after having resurrected on the third day and risen to Heaven after forty days, when you should see me come to you in the company of angels and archangels, of saints, of virgins and of my disciples, you can be sure then that the time has come for your soul to be separated from your body and conveyed by me to Heaven, where it will never suffer any tribulation or anguish”. (Narration by Ps. *Joseph of Arimathea (Narración del Ps. José de Arimatea)*, II: p. 344)⁵

Whereas there are no descriptions of the Magdalene’s soul, in the apocryphal accounts of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, there is some information that helps to describe the physiognomy of both women:

“He took her soul and put it in Michael’s hands, not without having wrapped it beforehand in something like veils whose radiance it is impossible to describe. But we the apostles saw that Mary’s soul, on being delivered into the hands of Michael, included all the bodily members, outside the sexual difference, with nothing but the semblance of all [human] bodies in her and a whiteness seven times greater than the sun’s. Peter, for his part, overcome with joy, asked the Lord, saying: ‘Who of us has a soul so white as Mary’s?’ To which the Lord replied: ‘Oh, Peter! The souls of all who are born unto this world are the same, but on departing the body they are not so radiant because He sent them in one condition and in others [very different] He found them, on having loved the darkness of many sins. But if one keeps oneself from the tenebrous iniquities of this world, their soul will delight in such whiteness on departing from the body’”. (Book of *John, Archbishop of Thessalonica (Libro de Juan, arzobispo de Tesalónica)*, XII: p. 338)⁶

There are several relevant aspects to the aforementioned excerpt. Firstly, there is the fact that the soul is wrapped in veils, which provides a source for the appearance of the soul covered in white, radiant fabrics. Furthermore, the physiognomy of the soul is being given, which “included all the bodily members” with “the semblance of all [human] bodies”, establishing the visual representation of the soul as being typical of the human body, without resorting to other kinds of physiognomy such as birds or butterflies, frequent in representations from Antiquity. As well as the appearance of a human body, it is added that it was “outside the sexual difference”. This reference may be linked to angelical aspects or the body of infants which, though physiologically different, are at a stage of pure innocence without manifesting any kind of sexuality. This matter would fit perfectly with the representations of the soul, both for the Magdalene and the Virgin, in the altarpieces from the Crown of Aragon, where the soul, wrapped in white fabrics, acquires the form of a newborn. However, the aforementioned paragraph also has other relevant aspects. The question posed by Peter to Jesus manifests his amazement at the whiteness of the soul. Jesus’ response holds the key to that luminosity: the absence of sin. Thus, in the case of the Virgin, free of sin since her very conception, the whiteness of the soul is evident; and in the

case of the Magdalene, said whiteness and luminosity alludes to the healing effects that penitence has achieved on her previously sinful soul, leaving it clean and pure.⁷

2.3. Shared Visualities

Together with what has been mentioned above, Mary Magdalene and the Virgin share other aspects: a death surrounded by many witnesses and the ascension to Heaven.

2.3.1. A Death with Witnesses

In the sources as well as in the representations of the two women, the departure of the soul occurs in the midst of a great many characters. This fact is also emphasized in the literature of the time about Mary Magdalene: “With a great shedding of tears she took by the hand of Bishop Maximin the body of the blood of the Lord, and where being before the altar she passed on to eternal joys, as we know by authority of very high men, and after her passing to Heaven in the place she died” (“*Con gran derramamiento de lágrimas tomó por mano de Maximino obispo el cuero de la sangre del Señor, e donde seyendo ante el altar pasó a las eternas alegrías, segund lo avemos por auctoridad de muy altos varones, e después de su pasamiento al cielo el lugar do morió*”) (de Luna 2009, p. 515). The presence of witnesses to the key events in Christianity is a constant as of their early visual manifestations. In fact, the first known representation of Mary Magdalene (Dura Europos, 2nd and 3rd centuries) is intended to present the woman as a witness to the Resurrection, a fundamental aspect in the early centuries of Christianity when the presence of witnesses was required to reaffirm the new faith. Although in the 15th century Christianity dominated the European panorama, it was not safe from the different heresies such as the Albigenian one, which rejected different sacraments, and especially the Waldensian one with its rejection of veneration of the Virgin and the saints. For this reason, presenting the death of the two main women in the life of Jesus with witnesses responded to the need to revoke heresies as well as dealing with a miraculous event in need of witnesses who were figures of authority.

2.3.2. Ascension to Heaven

In the Ascension of Mary Magdalene, one has to differentiate between two different situations: the daily ascensions during her penitence at canonical hours, and the ascension of her soul departing from her body lying down. The former had a multitude of representations in European art, shown as a woman covered in hair, with Italian and German productions being the most representative and numerous. On the other hand, as has been indicated, the ascension of her soul is a very infrequent element, such that the work by Jaume Huguet is one of the few examples in existence. In the case of the Virgin, the moment of her Assumption was widely represented. So, there are two women named Mary, the closest to Jesus, raised to the heavens by angels. It is in this matter wherein the Magdalene’s hirsuteness plays a significant role, since it acts as an element to differentiate between the ascent of the penitent and the Assumption of the Virgin.

2.4. The Relationship between the Virgin and Mary Magdalene

2.4.1. Chastity and Virginité

Sexuality, or the lack of it, is another fundamental aspect to link the two women. Both opted for a life of chastity: the Virgin always, the Magdalene after her conversion. During her years of penitence, Mary Magdalene was committed to a contemplative life and recovered her chastity by depriving her body of the mundane pleasures of her previous life as a sinner. This woman was described as the utmost example of *castissima meretrix*. This name comes from the formula used by Ambrose to name the Church itself, *casta meretrix*, and thus extol her as the Spouse of Christ based on the *Song of the songs*. Ambrose (*Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam* 3.17) mentions the genealogy of sinning women in detriment to some women saints who are omitted. Other Fathers of the Church also take up the idea of the Church as a sinning female saint or a prostitute turned into a virgin. John Chrysostom indicates that “with Christ, she who before was a prostitute, once she became the wife,

became virgin” (“*con Cristo la que antes era una prostituta, una vez hecha esposa, se convierte en virgen*”) (PG 52, 402) and Gregory of Elvira indicates that “she who was a deserving sinner becomes a virgin—as the Lord said to the Jews: *The prostitutes will precede them in the kingdom of Heaven*” (“*se hace virgen la que antes era pecadora meretriz –como decía el Señor a los judíos: Las prostitutas los precederán en el reino de los cielos*”) (Tractatus, 12, 10). These are just two brief examples of how the Church was understood as a sinner turned into a chaste virgin. Likewise, the Fathers of the Church used this same name for different repented women sinners, such as the Magdalene and Rahab, the prostitute from the *Book of Joshua*, to whom Fulgentius of Ruspe dedicates the following words: “She, who until now had prostituted herself with idols and had been an impious prostitute, was converted on receiving Jesus’ messengers into a believing, faithful and chaste woman” (“*Ella, que hasta ahora se había prostituido con ídolos y había sido una prostituta impía, se convirtió al recibir a los mensajeros de Jesús en una mujer creyente, fiel y casta*”) (Ad Euthymium de remissione peccatorum, 1, 21) (Giudice 2012). Hence, Mary Magdalene as *castissima meretrix* can also be understood as a sinner who, thanks to Jesus’ mercifulness and to practicing asceticism, recovers her virginity.

This aspect is backed by the presence of Mary Magdalene in the litanies of saints, at the head of a group of virgins: “St. Mary Magdalen,/St. Agatha,/St. Lucy,/St. Agnes,/St. Cecilia,/St. Catherine,/St. Anastasia,/All ye holy Virgins and Widows” (McGinnis 2012, p. 205).⁸ Indeed, in the miniatures manuscript preserved in the British Library (Figure 13), there is a representation of Mary Magdalene in the Chorus of Virgins. The Magdalene’s virginity requires a deeper reflection and debate, which will be taken up again in the Discussion section. In this point, the aim is to point out another of the characteristics shared with the Virgin, with the matter of her chastity being clear, whereas the matter of virginity needs greater depth. It should be remembered that in the exegesis of the Eastern Church, Mary Magdalene never acquired the facet of a sinner, being considered a holy woman, as of her role as a Myrrh-bearing witness to the Resurrection, revered as an equal to the apostles with no shadow of sin (Saxer 1958).



Figure 13. *The Benedictional of St Aethelwold*, f. 1v: Full-page miniature of the Chorus of Virgins, ca. 963–984, British Library, London.

2.4.2. Incarnation, Pain and Resurrection

Both the Virgin Mary and Magdalene appear in the Gospel and in the legends as the two women closest to Jesus. The Virgin Mary appears as the one chosen for Incarnation, and the Magdalene as the predilect disciple:

“The Lord gave immense benefits to Mary Magdalene and He distinguished her with very significant shows of predilection [. . .]; He honored her with his trust and friendliness; [. . .] He treated her constantly with understanding and gentleness [. . .] for love for her He resuscitated her brother Lazarus [. . .] she was the first one to whom the resurrected Jesus appeared and the one entrusted by Him to communicate His resurrection to the others, thus becoming *apostle of the apostles*”. (LA, I, p. 384)⁹

The women are the two pained figures at the foot of the cross. In the visual repertoire of the 14th and 15th centuries, it is Mary Magdalene who is seen to have the more visible pain, agitated and externalized, whereas the Virgin contains her grief without this diminishing her pain. In Masaccio’s *Crucifixion*, the Magdalene appears as a figure in exalted pain, which she conveys through the gesture of her entire body, especially her arms. The Virgin, on the other hand, is seen with a more contained, repressed sorrow. The Magdalene, in pain and weeping, becomes an element that more intensely channels emotions among those contemplating the representation. In the *Life of our lord and savior Jesus Christ* by Saint Bonaventure, it is indicated that the Virgin showed moderate, silent pain as opposed to the Magdalene, who wept inconsolably. One explanation for the Virgin’s contained pain is given by Saint Ambrose, who understands that her sorrow was much lighter since she knew of the future resurrection of her son (Haskins 1996, pp. 219–30). The Calvary is also represented in the panels analyzed, with Huguet repeating the formula of the Virgin’s contained pain, which loses power compared to the impassioned pain of a Magdalene embracing Jesus’ feet (Figure 14). Although the Crucifixion shows the two women’s pain differently, in medieval literature, the Virgin’s pain is also described. This occurs in the *Planctus Mariae* or lamentations. The best example of *planctus* from medieval times in the Iberian Peninsula is that of the Virgin at the foot of the cross, the utmost lament in Hispanic poetry from the 12th to 15th centuries. In Catalan, among others, there is the *Planys de la Verge*, *Les trobes en Lahors de la Verge Maria* and *Augatz seyós* (Disalvo 2010).



Figure 14. Jaume Huguet. “Crucifixion”, *Altarpiece of Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew; Calvary; Death of Saint Mary Magdalene*, 1465–1480, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya (MNAC).

There is also another fundamental element that links the two women in the Gospel: The birth and resurrection of Jesus. Whereas the Virgin is the first to have news of the Incarnation of the son of God, Mary Magdalene is the first to have news of his resurrection. Hence, both are presented as crucial witnesses to the beginning of Jesus' earthly and celestial life. This idea is also found in *LA* (I, p. 384), emphasizing the fact that the two main witnesses of the life of Jesus are women: "Just as the woman was not excluded from knowledge of the mystery of the Lord's Incarnation or of his Resurrection, neither were the angels. That is why God expressly used them [the angels] to announce one and the other mystery to the woman: the Incarnation to the Virgin Mary and the resurrection to the Magdalene" ("*Así como la mujer no fue excluida del conocimiento del misterio de la Encarnación ni del de la Resurrección del Señor, tampoco lo fueran los ángeles. Por eso Dios expresamente se sirvió de ellos para anunciar uno y otro misterio a la mujer: el de la Encarnación a la Virgen María, y el de la Resurrección a la Magdalena*"). *LA* (I, pp. 231–33) also explains that, although the evangelists do not mention it, the resurrected Jesus appeared to the Virgin before anyone else, given that "the mere idea that such a Son should have acted with such disregard and such detachment with such a Mother is repugnant to any conscience" ("*la sola idea de que semejante Hijo se hubiera conducido tan desatentamente y con tanto despego con semejante Madre repugna a cualquier conciencia*"). Thus, Varagine explains that the silence of the evangelists is because the appearance of the resurrected one to his mother is an obvious matter that does not need commentary, but also because using the Virgin as a witness would be subject to derision on being understood as "hallucinations due to the intense love she felt for her Son".

2.4.3. Sermons and Writings from the 15th Century in the Crown of Aragon

The Dominican Vicente Ferrer was one of the main preachers at the time in which the altarpieces being studied here were created. Among the matters dealt with in his sermons, he dedicated a part to the symbolic facet of the clothes necessary for the faithful's souls to reach Heaven. This shows the general feeling in the medieval panorama in which vanity and beauty, intimately related to lust, constituted the utmost feminine sins that linked them to the Devil. The main paradigm was provided by Mary Magdalene before her conversion, the "devil's daughter" ("*filla del dyable*"), later named by Ferrer as "the one in love with Jesus Christ" ("*la enamorada de Jesuchrist*"). At the same time, the Virgin Mary was the ideal model for women as of the 13th century for her purity, virginity and maternity, as opposed to the first woman, Eve (Toldrà i Vilardell 2019, pp. 434–41). Mary Magdalene is found in between, as due to her penitence, she achieves redemption for all her sins and comes close to the level of the Virgin thanks to the saving effect of penitence on her soul.

In the Sermon of the Feast of Saint Magdalene, Ferrer detects five phases in her life: the life of vice, the virtuous conversion, the gracious perfection, fruitful preaching and glorious contemplation.¹⁰ This sermon maintains the typical characteristics of hagiographic sermons, in other words, the selection of a biblical passage to turn it into a moral lesson, also adding elements from the *Summa Theologica* and the *Vitae Patrum*. Nevertheless, for the case of the women who lived at Jesus' side, as happened with the hirsute's appearance, Ferrer often resorts to the work of Jacobus of Varagine, as well as to the hymns dedicated to these characters. Ferrer points to the paths that Christ had indicated for salvation: pure innocence, whose ultimate example is the Virgin; and penitence, exemplified by the woman from Magdala. As for the contemplative side of Mary Magdalene and her ascent to the heavens, Ferrer resorted to a hymn in honor of the saint, which has been identified with the hymn attributed to Alan de Lille that appears in numerous Dominican manuscripts from the 14th and 15th centuries (Viera 1991, pp. 61–66).

In another of his sermons on the Magdalene, after explaining the entry of souls into Heaven after the arrival of the Last Judgement, Ferrer indicates that Jesus left two paths marked to achieve it: one of pure innocence and the other of penitence. The former is exemplified by the Virgin, the latter by Mary Magdalene through her years of penitence, thereby insisting again on the ways of reaching salvation. At the same time, he refers to the

Magdalene's chastity; a chastity and purity that likens the penitent to the Virgin. In this way, Magdalene becomes an *exemplum* accessible to the congregations. As for the death of the penitent, Ferrer broadens what had been seen up to then in the sources: not only does he insist on the woman's desire to commune, but he also describes how the woman explains to Saint Maximin that she will enter Paradise. Magdalene prays, repeating the words that Jesus said on the cross: "In your hands I entrust my spirit". Once her soul left her body after the communion, a multitude of angels took her to Paradise (Ferreiro 2010).

In the sermon for the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin, the preacher again establishes a link between Mary Magdalene and her contemplative life with the Virgin, pointing to three aspects. Firstly, there is Mary Magdalene's listening at the feet of Jesus related to the Virgin's awareness of Jesus' great wisdom, who "would sit at his feet", too. Next, Ferrer explains what Jesus entrusted to his mother: "you will take my place for some time; you will console my brothers, the apostles, who will resort to you when they doubt. As of that moment, the life of the Virgin was contemplative" ("*vos ocuparéis mi lugar durante cierto tiempo; consolaréis a mis hermanos, los Apóstoles, los cuales recurrirán a vos en sus dudas. Desde este instante la vida de la Virgen fue contemplativa*"). Lastly, he explains that "the third task of the contemplative life is signaled by the topic: Mary [Magdalene] chose the best part. In that phrase you have the story of the today's feast. After twelve, or twenty-four years, the Virgin one day was praying and said: 'Oh, my son! It has been so many years that I have been among the Jews; the Apostles have dispersed around the world; receive me unto You'; and she wept [. . .] Christ shows us in his Mother an example to desire Paradise" ("*La tercera obra de la vida contemplativa la señala el tema: María eligió la mejor parte. En esta frase tenéis la historia de la fiesta de hoy. Después que transcurrieron doce, o veinticuatro años, la Virgen cierto día estaba orando y decía: ¡Oh Hijo mío!, hace tantos años que estoy entre los judíos; los Apóstoles están dispersos por el mundo; recibidme con Vos; y lloraba... Cristo nos muestra en su Madre un ejemplo para desear el Paraíso*") (Ferrari 1695).¹¹

Although the link between the two women has been demonstrated in Vicente Ferrer's preaching, it is with two subsequent writers that the link between the two is completely reinforced. Joan Roís de Corella and Isabel de Villena explicitly set out a relationship of friendship and mutual help between the two women.¹² Although the writings of Corella and Villena come after the altarpieces by Martorell and Huguet, their sources are from prior translations. In the work by Corella, *Història de la Gloriosa Santa Magdalena*, the significant friendship between the two women stands out: the Magdalene remained at the Virgin Mary's side during her son's suffering and, after his death, she served and helped her for twelve years. After the death of the Virgin, the Magdalene dedicated herself to preaching and penitence. Corella also describes Mary Magdalene's death in detail, specifically the arrival of her soul in Heaven, where she is welcomed by the Virgin and Jesus, who had gathered all of the hierarchies to receive the penitent's soul, which would remain at his feet for all eternity. Hence, the work by Corella, published in 1490 but written in the previous decade, is one of the first to insist not on the sins of the woman from Magdala, but on the positive aspects of her life, among them Jesus' preference for her over the other saints, the relationship with the Virgin and her function of compensating for Eve's sin, as well as the reception of her soul in the midst of the celestial court (Juan-Mompó 1999, p. 17).

In the *Vita Christi* by Isabel de Villena, the female characters acquire the utmost roles, defending their superiority against men. Despite this great new turn, Villena's work remains a part of the tradition of the end of the Middle Ages of narrating the life of Jesus in a novelistic way, developing the characters' feelings to convey the emotion to the faithful. These works, which also include the *Vita Christi* by Eiximenis (1403), took the aforementioned work by Bonaventure as their point of reference. In Villena's text, seeing the Magdalene's pain the day before his death, Jesus entrusts her with being at his mother's side, as happens in the work by Corella:

"Magdalena: see to it that my mother is the most important thing I leave behind in this world and thus you will serve me. Love her and serve her: I leave her to take my place to console all of you. [. . .]. Do not stray from her authority and attend

to her advice and obey her. She will be your mother and your teacher. [...] You will stay by my beloved mother's side for twelve years, and afterwards you will be completely orphaned of father and mother [...]. Magdalena, for your harsh and great penitence, you will be given invaluable consolations. [...] And at the end of your life, I will come for you and bear you to my Glory". (de Villena 1987, p. 111)¹³

3. Discussion

Except for the brief mention by Baschet (2016) about Mary Magdalene's soul, there is no bibliography about it. For this reason, the discussion revolves around the elements that have been used to defend the hypothesis that the visual representation of the soul of the woman from Magdala has been borrowed from that of the Virgin. There are elements to be gleaned from said discussion that serve to broaden these matters in future studies on the topic, about which this text has made a preliminary approach.

Baschet (2016, pp. 145–46) describes the Magdalene's soul in Martorell's altarpiece as follows: "the upper half of the soul is somatomorphic, while its lower part stretches out and thins until it becomes a fine white filament that seems to come out of the saint's mouth". Far from delving into the origins of the representation, which Baschet himself describes as peculiar and circumscribed to the Crown of Aragon, he inquires into its possible meanings. The author explains that the fine filament alludes to the soul's movement, emphasizing its separation from the body, enabling two of the era's main concerns about the body and soul to be reconciled: "on the one hand, to show the link and continuity between the soul and the living person [...] and, on the other, to differentiate the soul from the body". Baschet also explains the possible meanings of the departure through her mouth, a resource used not only for saints and the Virgin, but also occasionally for sinners. Although Baschet recognizes that the physiognomy of Mary Magdalene's soul is "peculiar", as well as its belonging to the Catalan sphere, his work is restricted to the description and its possible meanings; it does not clarify the origins of the representation.

For his part, without alluding to Magdalene, Barasch (2005, pp. 13–25) underlines the variability in representing souls until medieval times, when an attempt is made to establish some fixed characteristics, especially two: their small size, taking on the appearance of a newborn, and their anonymity; in other words, the souls have a face that is not linked to the deceased. Unlike Baschet, Barasch does resort to images of the Dormition of the Mother of God as an example to detect said characteristics, concluding that the soul's appearance, resembling an infant, and its anonymity would oblige the onlookers to look at the deceased to identify them. Furthermore, toward the end of the Middle Ages, Barasch indicates that the departure of the soul gave information about its destiny: depending on whether it was taken by angels or demons, or whether there was a struggle between those beings to take it, the judgment the soul received would be revealed, and thus whether or not the deceased would be condemned or saved.

Hence, Baschet confirms the exceptional nature of the altarpieces under study here, and their approximation to the meaning gives valuable information for future research to delve not only into the origins of the visual representation of Mary Magdalene's soul, but also into its meanings. Meanwhile, Barasch's proposals, while not mentioning Mary Magdalene's visual repertoire, collaborate in reinforcing some of the proposals previously developed such as the link with representations of the Virgin. He also adds an important aspect for future studies: the significance of being raised to the heavens by angels. This is a matter which has not been developed in depth due to space limitations.

In order to finally reaffirm that hypothesis put forward here regarding the physiognomy of Mary Magdalene's soul and its departure through her mouth as an element typical of Catalan art, one can allude to other scenes where Mary Magdalene's soul is portrayed, such as in the altarpiece with stories of Mary Magdalene in the Museo Civico d'Arte Antica (Palazzo Madama in Turin, ca. 1330) and the Madonna Triptych by the Maestro of Offida (Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, Tursi, ca. 1340). In both the aforementioned altarpiece

and triptych, the Magdalene's soul is shown rising to heaven with the help of angels. Although her size is smaller, her physiognomy differs a great deal from what is seen in the Catalan altarpieces, in addition to the fact that the soul is not seen departing from her mouth. Consequently, it can be affirmed that the portrayal of the Magdalene's soul can be seen in other geographical places, but the specific physiognomy and the deceased departing through the mouth is a characteristic of Catalan painting in the 15th century. This aspect, demonstrated with the analysis put forward and relying on a comparison of artworks from other countries, is also supported by Baschet's aforementioned statements.

As for Mary Magdalene's virginity and its connection to the Virgin, Katherine Jansen has carried out two important studies in this regard (2000 and 2001). Jansen tackles the matter by resorting to the preachings of the Franciscan and Dominican orders in Italy which, like the Crown of Aragon, insist on the paths to salvation exemplified by the Virgin and the Magdalene, emphasizing aspects of the latter that make her similar to the Virgin, and also coinciding with what has been presented above. Whereas the Dominican Vicente Ferrer, among others, has been used for the Crown of Aragon, Jansen (2000) resorts to Friar Ludovico, who indicates that the two luminaries of Heaven are the Virgin and the Magdalene: the former for the innocent, the latter for the sinners, as well as insisting on the Magdalene's position at the head of the virgins. This idea is repeated by the Dominican Tommaso Agni da Lentini, who indicates Mary Magdalene's superiority not only over the other virgins but also over the saints and apostles, with only the Virgin Mary remaining above her. The same aspects seen in Catalan lands are repeated in the Italian context. In addition to the sermons, Jansen also uses the *vitas* of different women devotees of the time, such as Caterina Da Cortona and Saint Humility of Faenza, insisting on the Magdalene's virginity and her relationship with the mother Mary.

Jansen's studies are of great relevance not only because they complement and bolster what is posed for the Crown of Aragon, but also because they include an ulterior explanation of the significance of recovered virginity. As of the 13th century, the author explains, the state of virginity was no longer exclusively linked to physiological matters in order to be understood in moral terms, differentiating corporeal from spiritual virginity, while the two were not exclusive: whereas corporeal virginity was unrecoverable, the spiritual one could be reached through penitence, with Mary Magdalene as the utmost example. Jansen also detects two visual borrowings that did not appear in the Crown of Aragon: Mary Magdalene's maternity, mother of penitents, giving the example of the Church of Saint Mary Magdalene in Bergamo and the representation of the Magdalene as *Christophora* or Christ-bearer, whose origins are also to be found in representations of the Virgin (Jansen 2000, 2001). Mary Magdalene's relationship with maternity comes from some of the miracles she performed during her journey and stay in Marseilles, such as the miracle she performed on the governor and his wife, bestowing upon them the ability to have descendants. As for the portrayal of the Magdalene as *Christophora*, with the face of Jesus appearing sometimes on her breast and other times on her hands, Jansen (2000, pp. 134–37) explains its origins as regards devotion to the worship of Saint Veronica. Vannucci (2012, pp. 118–19) also explains this portrayal of the Magdalene in her hermit's life, indicating that it is borrowed from Virgin *Cristofora*, typical of Byzantine iconography. Although this typology does not appear in the Catalan artworks studied here, it is without a doubt another connection between the Magdalene and the Virgin.

As regards the relevance of the Virgin and Mary Magdalene in the life of Jesus, Ingrid Maisch strengthens the idea that the two women were the most important, referring as is being done here to the events of the Incarnation and the Resurrection (Maisch 1998, pp. 37–39). As for the pain shared by the women, Olson (2012, pp. 361–81) makes a relevant contribution by connecting the Virgin's pleas in the songs of *Salve Regina* with the intensity of Mary Magdalene's pain and tears at the moment of the Crucifixion. Olson indicates that the pain and suffering are presented as examples for the faithful, analyzing the *planctus mariae*, as has been done on previous pages. She also makes a meticulous analysis of the women's tears, a matter to take into account for future studies on the topic.

As for Mary Magdalene's hirsutism as an element that differentiates her from the Virgin, Antunes (2014) indicates that the ascent of the Magdalene could lead to a significant confusion with the Virgin, which is why the hirsute aspect of the woman from Magdala was introduced. However, while that explanation has also been proposed in its corresponding place, the Magdalene's hirsutism entails other matters that have been studied by numerous specialists (Pinto-Mathieu 1997) and are outside the objectives proposed in this study. Nevertheless, Antunes contributes an element of the hirsute Magdalene that may help to bolster the concept of the Magdalene as a virgin, at least in spirit. Specifically, in agreement with Maisch (1998), Antunes detects the origin of the hairy Magdalene not in Mary of Egypt but in Saint Agnes, a virgin martyr, whose life is also narrated in *LA* (I, pp. 116–20). Both Maisch (1998, pp. 48–40) and Antunes (2014, pp. 121–22) indicate that based on that borrowing from Saint Agnes, Mary Magdalene begins her life as a hairy penitent, years in which through contemplation and penitence she recovers her chastity, the purity of her soul and is sanctified.

Schaus (2006, p. 355) also studies the link between the Magdalene's hirsutism and chastity, indicating that while the Virgin was the utmost paradigm, the woman from Magdala became the utmost example for penitents, especially for women whose greatest virtue was chastity. In this vein, Antunes' affirmation clarifies a great deal (Antunes 2014, pp. 123–24): "The experience of the desert was a way to recover a long-lost virginity through a physical subjection of the body to the pains and ordeals of ascetic discipline, using the example of Mary Magdalene, who was a more accessible example than the Virgin".

4. Materials and Methods

The method used follows some of the basic principles in the tradition of studies on iconography and iconology, fundamentally as regards the iconographic analysis in connecting image to text. Nevertheless, the study by Saxl (1989) on the magnetic power of images has also been essential¹⁴, from which all of the reasoning stems, supporting the thesis that the representation of Mary Magdalene's soul is visually borrowed from the scenes of the Dormition of the Mother of God. To do so, comparative analyses have been carried out as regards both the visual representations and the sources. In this sense, recourse has constantly been made to the sources throughout the study, using neo-testamentary sources and medieval legends in their different translations, as well as the sermons and preachings given around the time the altarpieces were made, pious literature and the different *vitas*.

5. Conclusions

The representation of death works as a mediation "through which we experience the deaths of others and, in turn, anticipate our own" (Kinch 2013, p. 1). Hence, the death of a converted sinner, assimilated to the death of the Virgin, whose souls reach heavenly glory, meant for the faithful, is a reinforcement of the insistence on the benefits of penitence (with prior confession and communion), which is seen to be even more reinforced by visually borrowing from the Dormition of the Mother of God. If Mary Magdalene is the *exemplum* for women of flesh and blood, the assimilation of her death with that of the Virgin Mary bolsters the message given from medieval pulpits, the sermons from the mendicant orders and the *vitas* from different authors of the age. This aspect is emphasized by the fact that the images analyzed are in altarpieces, whose aims included "the remission of guilt together with the desire for personal salvation" on choosing the images represented (Molina i Figueras 1999, pp. 11–12). Here, the function of the saints played an essential role in late medieval spirituality and its heavy insistence on saving souls. Specifically, it was the souls of women that most needed *exempla* such as Mary Magdalene since the traditional Judeo-Christian association of feminine sin with sex still existed in those times.

Penitence was one of the maxims proposed from medieval pulpits, and sex the principal sin that the clergy saw in their society, with women as the main sinners. The Virgin

Mary is presented as the antithesis to Eve since she was pure and had not taken part in any sin. The choice of Mary Magdalene as the main *exemplum* came about in an age in which repentance, confession and penitence were the fundamental pillars of ecclesiastical discourses and sermons, fundamentally as of 1215 in the Fourth Council of the Lateran, when these sacraments were established, bestowing great importance on penitence and communion, the two main aspects of the Magdalene before the ascent of her soul to the heavens, obtaining salvation and entry to Paradise in images that linked the woman from Magdala with the utmost yet unachievable example of the Virgin. It is here that the role of Mary Magdalene is essential: she was an intermediate point between Eve and the Virgin since she took part in sins of the flesh and repented; she has changed cardinal sin for celestial love, becoming the utmost example of behavior for real women. Hence, the medieval Mary Magdalene became a model for the faithful who, even if they had sinned, provided they followed the saint's example of penitence they could manage to save their souls. Through the hybrid nature of her character and the legends arising about her life, Mary Magdalene became the perfect vehicle for teaching about repentance, penitents and salvation.

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Notes

- ¹ For more information on the different legends about Mary Magdalene (see Collet and Messerli 2008; Saxer 1959).
- ² For *Legenda Aurea*, the translation from Latin by Macías (2001) has been used; for *Flos Sanctorum* the medieval version by Cortés (2010); and for *Vides de Santis Rosselloneses* the edition by Maneikis Kniazzezh et al. (1977). Sources are author's translation.
- ³ In order to study the fact that Jaume Hugué depicts the departure of the Virgin's soul and that of Mary Magdalene in the same way, it would be essential to count on sources that are not accessible today, such as the contract for those works of art. Nevertheless, a hypothesis can be put forward by turning to the concept created by Bialostocki (1972) of a "framing theme" (*Rahmenthemen*), given that this would be a solution when creating a new kind of iconography making use of a previous compositional layout along with another series of artistic aspects.
- ⁴ From among the numerous apocryphal accounts of the Assumption, only the ones most representative for the proposed aims ones have been selected, using the Santos Otero edition (Santos Otero 2001).
- ⁵ "Más después que hubiere sufrido por los hombres conforme a lo que está escrito y después que hubiere resucitado al tercer día y subido al cielo al cabo de los cuarenta días, cuando me vieres venir a tu encuentro en compañía de los ángeles y de los arcángeles, de los santos, de las vírgenes y de mis discípulos, ten por cierto entonces que ha llegado el momento en que tu alma va a ser separada de tu cuerpo y trasladada por mí al cielo, donde nunca ha de experimentar la más mínima tribulación o angustia."
- ⁶ "Él tomo su alma y la puso en manos de Miguel, no sin antes haberla envuelto en unos como velos, cuyo resplandor es imposible de describir. Mas nosotros los apóstoles vimos que el alma de María, al ser entregada en manos de Miguel, estaba integrada por todos los miembros corporales, fuera de la diferencia sexual, no habiendo en ella sino la semejanza de todo cuerpo (humano) y una blancura que sobrepasaba siete veces a la del sol. Pedro, por su parte, rebosante de alegría, preguntó al Señor, diciendo: '¿Quién de nosotros tienen un alma tan blanca como la de María?'. El Señor respondió: '¡Oh Pedro!, las almas de todos los que nacen en este mundo son semejantes, pero al salir del cuerpo no se encuentran tan radiantes, porque en unas condiciones se las envió y en otras (muy distintas) se las encontró, por haber amado la oscuridad de muchos pecados. Mas, si alguno se guardare a sí mismo de las iniquidades tenebrosas de este mundo, su alma goza al salir del cuerpo de una blancura semejante."
- ⁷ This matter can be amplified by turning to *Transitus Mariae*, texts that include the oral traditions of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, which repeat the luminosity and aromas at the moment of the Dormition.

- ⁸ The litanies were extended or reduced depending on their uses. This is why Mary Magdalene varies her position: she appears among the apostles, the saints or the virgins. This does not make it any less important that in some forms of the litanies she may appear presiding over a group of virgins.
- ⁹ “El Señor hizo a María Magdalena inmensos beneficios y distinguióla con señaladísimas pruebas de predilección (...); honrónla con su confianza y amistad; [...] la trató constantemente con comprensión y dulzura [...] por amor a ella resucitó a su hermano Lázaro [...] fue la primera a quien Jesús resucitado se apareció y la encargada por El de comunicar su resurrección a los demás, convirtiéndose de este modo en *apóstola de los apóstoles*.”
- ¹⁰ Translation by Esponera Cerdán (2002).
- ¹¹ Translation by Forcada Comins. There is no date in the website of reference; I have also indicated this in the final bibliography.
- ¹² These and other texts are part of the *Querella de les Dones*, in which female characters were an important focus of discussion (See Piera 2006; Criado 2013; Cortijo 2014).
- ¹³ “Magdalena: recoman-vos la mia mare així com la pus cara cosa que en aquets món lleixe: servireu a mi. Amau-la e reveriu-la: en lloc meu la lleixe per consolació de tots vosaltres. No us parteixau de sa senyoria e estau a consell e obediencia sua Ella será mare e maestra vostra. [...] Magdalena, per confort de la vostra aspra e fort penitencia, seran-vos donades consolacions inestimables [...]. E, finit lo terme de la vostra vida, io vendré per vós e us portaré a la Glòria mia”.
- ¹⁴ Saxl, interested in the life in the images, its processes of lethargy and rebirth, as well as the variety and continuity of the images, also introduced the idea of their magnetic power; in other words, how some images can be subject to contamination by others, thereby giving rise to migrations of certain visual characteristics and also of content from some images to others. In fact, this is precisely what has been dealt with throughout this study.

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Article

The Incarnation of the Word: Andrea Della Robbia's *Annunciation* and *Adoration* Altarpieces at La Verna

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Abstract: On the mountainous crest of the Apennines are several buildings comprising the monastic site of La Verna where St. Francis received his stigmata in 1224. Described in 1493 as another Jerusalem in the West, the monastery's Chiesa Maggiore, Santa Maria degli Angeli, and the Chapel of the Stigmata house its most prominent images, Andrea della Robbia's five altarpieces (c. 1476-c. 1493). This essay explores the beholder's experiences before Andrea's earliest two altarpieces at the Observant Franciscan monastery, the *Annunciation* and *Adoration*. The history and function of this monastery are considered in light of the themes of these altarpieces and their theological significance. Of relevance are the inscriptions on the altarpieces, which rather than simply identifying the accompanying images, propose interesting interpretations and influences for the altarpieces and which suggest interactive involvement between beholder and the altarpieces in the monastic spaces. Taken together, these works reveal a sensitivity to the specific needs of the Franciscan audience, context, and location and an awareness of Renaissance devotional practices.

Keywords: Andrea della Robbia; Franciscan; La Verna; altarpiece; Incarnation; inscriptions

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1. Introduction

Situated in the peak of the Apennine Mountains is the remote Franciscan monastery of La Verna, described in 1493 by Fra Alexandro de Riciis as another Jerusalem in the West, a site of profound devotion for the intrepid pilgrim (Chiappini 1927, p. 331; Ritsema van Eck 2017, pp. 271–72). The isolated environment was ideally suited to hermetic life and is best known as the location of St. Francis' meditations and ultimately where he received his stigmata in 1224. Set within a stunning landscape, the monastic buildings are unassuming and relatively unadorned, reflecting the Franciscan ideals of simplicity, humility, and poverty. The public spaces of the monastic compound include three principal buildings of devotion: Santa Maria degli Angeli, the Chiesa Maggiore, and the Chapel of the Stigmata, the location of Francis' stigmatization (Figures 1 and 2). Within these buildings are five altarpieces that were commissioned from Andrea della Robbia between c. 1476 to c. 1493. The *Annunciation* (c. 1476), *Adoration of the Child* (1479), and *Ascension of Christ* (c. 1493) are in the Chiesa Maggiore. The *Ascension of Christ* was originally the high altarpiece for the Chiesa Maggiore but was moved in 1601 to a side chapel in the church's choir. The *Madonna della Cintola* (1486) is in the small church near the monastery's entrance, S. Maria degli Angeli, and the *Crucifixion* altarpiece (1481) is in the Chapel of the Stigmata. Two more enameled terra cotta altarpieces by Andrea's son were later added to S. Maria degli Angeli, and the *Madonna del Rifugio* attributed to Andrea della Robbia, now in the Chiesa Maggiore, was moved here in 1874 (it was not originally intended for the monastery). This is not to imply there are no other altarpieces at La Verna but rather that the *robbiane* altarpieces are distinct among them due to their shared medium of enameled terra cotta.

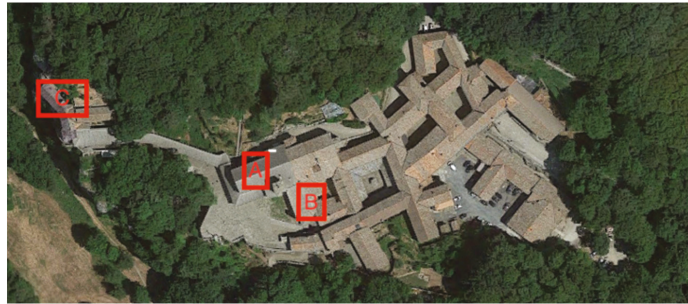


Figure 1. Aerial view of La Verna monastery. (A) Chiesa Maggiore; (B) Santa Maria degli Angeli; (C) Chapel of the Stigmata.



Figure 2. Domenicino Ghirlandaio, detail of La Verna from Sassetti Chapel, Santa Trinita, Florence. Fresco. 1483–1486 (photo source: Scala/Art Resource, NY).

In recent decades, renewed scholarly attention has been given to the prolific Della Robbia family, its workshop and vast body of work, and that of its followers. These studies range from attribution questions to multifaceted investigations into the enameled terracotta medium and to a first-ever North American exhibition dedicated to Della Robbia, which has generated even more scholarly interest in a host of related areas (Gentilini 1992a, 1998; Cambareri 2016; Kupiec 2016; Hykin 2017; Boyd 2020; Sarnecka 2020). This study considers the fifteenth-century context and interpretation of two altarpieces attributed to Andrea della Robbia for the Chiesa Maggiore at La Verna, the *Annunciation* and the *Adoration*.

2. Discussion of Inquiry

Fra de Riciis' text and other early modern visitor accounts to the sanctuary focus on the sites where miracles and visions were said to have occurred, including the Chapel of the Stigmata and S. Maria degli Angeli where a vision of the Virgin appeared to Francis (Chiappini 1927; Conigliello 1999; Moroni 1999). Subsequent scholarship has also often concentrated on the Chapel of the Stigmata and its *Crucifixion* altarpiece (Miller 2010;

Boucher 2001, pp. 14–16; Ritsema van Eck 2017, chp. 6). Of other recent scholarship on the La Verna altarpieces, questions of material, process, and patronage have been explored (Muzzi 1998; Domestici 1991; Baldini 2012, 2014; Tripodi 2014; Lumini and Bordini 2019). Nevertheless, traditional art historical questions of context and interpretation persist, especially for the sculpted altarpieces in the Chiesa Maggiore.

Andrea della Robbia's enameled terra cotta sculpted altarpieces were among the few images at the Observant Franciscan monastery in the fifteenth century (Baldini 2012; Miller 2003). Unlike Conventual Franciscans who emphasized St. Francis' life and his miracles, the Observant order strictly followed the Rule of St. Francis, his vow of poverty, and love of the Virgin; Andrea's La Verna altarpieces likewise reflect the Saint's devotion to the life of Christ and to the Virgin. As the location of St. Francis's stigmatization, it is not surprising that De Riciis' 1493 chronicle focused on the Chapel of the Stigmata, the heart of the monastery, with Andrea's *Crucifixion* altarpiece by providing a verbal picture of how a worshipper experienced this chapel (Figures 3 and 4). The *Crucifixion* with Saints Francis and Jerome accentuated the anguish of the Virgin with an inscription along the base (Jeremiah's Lamentations [I:12]: O all ye that pass by the way attend and see if there be any sorrow like my sorrow; O VOS OMNES QUI TRA[N]SITIS P[ER] VIAM ATTE[N] DITE ET VIDETE SI EST DOLOR SCIVT DOLOR MEVS). With these words, the Virgin refers to Jeremiah's loss at the fall of Jerusalem in the Old Testament as a way to describe her own sorrow at the loss of her crucified son (Wallis 1973, p. 14). Significant to the present inquiry is Fra de Riciis' description of the beholder's interactive experience before the *Crucifixion* in this chapel. He records the worshipper's specific recitation and kneeling devotional pose, which mirrors that of Saints Francis and Jerome in the altarpiece (Chiappini 1927, p. 333; Miller 2010). Although De Riciis mentioned the *Annunciation* altarpiece, he, unfortunately, provided no comparable account for how pilgrims engaged with Andrea's two earlier altarpieces in La Verna's Chiesa Maggiore (Chiappini 1927, p. 335). However, his own chronicle and other relevant Franciscan literature, such as the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, suggest that worshippers actively engaged with devotional imagery and objects to inspire a religious experience. Therefore, De Riciis' description of the pilgrim's absorbed, "somaesthetic" experience before the *Crucifixion* encourages a consideration of how a beholder would have interacted with other images and inscriptions at La Verna. Allie Terry-Fritsch defined somaesthetics as an awareness for how the body is attuned to sensory, aesthetic experiences and argued that, as a critical framework, the "viewer is a powerful tool" in the discovery of meaning (Terry-Fritsch 2020, chp. 1). Such an approach can rely on how the viewer makes meaning through touch or smell, for instance (Classen 2012; Sarnecka 2020; Karmon 2016; Quiviger 2010). This essay, however, considers, in part, how the fifteenth-century lay person or pilgrim relied on visual, spatial, and textual cues (spoken and written) to interpret the altarpieces in the Chiesa Maggiore. The *Annunciation* and *Adoration* altarpieces are also interpreted through a Franciscan lens and contextualized by the monastery as a way to examine how the altarpieces inspired devotional experiences at the monastery.

Like the *Crucifixion* altarpiece, the viewer of the *Annunciation* and *Adoration* altarpieces (Figures 5 and 6) was encouraged to empathize with the Virgin Mary, who was a model of prayer and piety and in this way a devotional guide for the worshipper visiting the monastery (Reinburg 2012, pp. 214, 218). While the *Crucifixion* altarpiece in the most sacred space of the monastery inspired a physical, interactive response before it, the *Annunciation* and *Adoration* altarpieces when read together implied a similar, albeit more modest interaction with devotees arriving at La Verna who would construct meaning through their presence by visually connecting the two altarpieces. Location is a meaningful factor in appreciating the altarpieces and the objectives of their viewers. Pilgrims embarked on a journey to this New Jerusalem because of the site's significance. Conditioned by various devotional practices, rituals, and texts, including domestic worship, pilgrims and lay worshippers brought such familiar practices with them to La Verna, prepared to engage with the environment and its images. In this way, the beholder can be appreciated as

a “critical technology” that augments the meaning of the altarpieces (Terry-Fritsch 2020, chp. 1).



Figure 3. Jacopo Ligozzi, *Chapel of the Stigmata*, plate M, engraving from Lino Moroni’s *descrizione del Sacro Monte della Vernia*, 1612 (photo source: Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington).



Figure 4. Andrea della Robbia, *Crucifixion*, enamel terra cotta, Chapel of the Stigmata (photo source: Tetraktys, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons).

The “phenomenon” of the New Jerusalem pilgrimage experience likely dates to 1491 and the *sacro monte* of Varallo, but in many respects, as argued by Ritsema van Eck, La Verna is the “primordial *sacro monte*” due to the site’s physical connections to Francis’s stigmatization and the belief that the mountain of La Verna split at the moment of Christ’s crucifixion (Ritsema van Eck 2017, pp. 247–49). As access to the Holy Land itself became increasingly difficult for the Christian west in the fifteenth century, local alternatives, such as the *sacro monte* (sacred mountain) were developed to simulate such a pilgrimage, but to a “new” Jerusalem in the West. Throughout the sixteenth century, New Jerusalem,

such as that at Varallo, became elaborate architectural and sculptural programs to provide the experience of visiting the Holy Land but without the foreign travel. Anna Giorgi noted that at the time of Andrea's first La Verna altarpiece, the *Annunciation* (c. 1476), La Verna was on its way to becoming the "natural" *sacro monte* and Jerusalem of the West as described by De Riciis in 1493 (Giorgi 2012, pp. 56–57). Furthermore, she mentions Domenicino Ghirlandaio's depiction of La Verna in the Sassetti Chapel in Florence's S. Trinità (1483–1486, Figure 2) as fairly characterizing the simplicity of the monastery before later architectural developments, such as the sixteenth-century additions of a guesthouse and a corridor leading to the Chapel of the Stigmata (Giorgi 2012, pp. 56–57). By the time of Ghirlandaio's fresco, most of Andrea's La Verna altarpieces would have been installed.



Figure 5. Andrea della Robbia, *Annunciation*, enamel terra cotta, Chiesa Maggiore, La Verna (photo source: Scala/Art Resource, NY).

Traditional art historical questions of interpretation and intention have rarely been posed to Andrea della Robbia's numerous autograph works. This is true even of Andrea's most frequently praised achievements, his La Verna altarpieces. A consideration of the *Annunciation* and *Adoration* reveals how Andrea and his work in enameled terra cotta complemented Observant Franciscan theology and how the compositions and inscriptions of these altarpieces in particular demonstrated Andrea's artistic sensitivity and awareness of the devotional needs of visitors to the monastery's public spaces and to the Chiesa Maggiore, in particular (Baldini 2009, p. 417). The Virgin and her role in the Annunciation and Incarnation are uniquely emphasized in these altarpieces with their inscriptions to facilitate a refined understanding of the Incarnation as encouraged by Franciscan theology and devotional practices. The possible recitation of the Angelus prayer, with passages analogous to the inscriptions on Andrea della Robbia's *Annunciation* and *Adoration* altarpieces in the Chiesa Maggiore, is discussed as an example of how the works inspired prayer.



Figure 6. Andrea della Robbia, *Adoration*, enamel terra cotta, Chiesa Maggiore, La Verna (photo source: Scala/Art Resource, NY).

3. La Verna and the Chiesa Maggiore in the Fifteenth Century

The La Verna monastery lacks a unified architectural plan, and its style and irregular appearance reflect the simplicity and poverty dear to Observant Franciscans.¹ The Chiesa Maggiore is expectedly plain (Figures 7–9), and as the largest and last church built on the mountain, it was intended to accommodate the growing number of pilgrims to La Verna (see Mencherini 1924; Pope-Hennessy 1979, p. 180; Lazzeri 1913; Baldini 2014). In 1432, Florence was designated as the monastery’s protector with its wool guild, the Arte della Lana, responsible for facilitating donations to it, which explains the guild’s shield of arms on the church. A 1451 papal indulgence by Nicholas V expedited the completion of the Chiesa Maggiore by 1470, only to have most of it destroyed by fire in 1472. Donations for its rebuilding dramatically increased after the fire, which perhaps created an opportunity for the monastery’s caretakers to provide some artistic and decorative unity to a monastery that otherwise lacked formal harmony (Pope-Hennessy 1979, p. 180). The church was fully restored by 1509.

Brothers at Franciscan monasteries rarely participated in artistic commissions as such decisions were often left to superiors, confraternities, or individuals and their families (Bourda 1996, 2004, esp. pp. 16–31 and 148–55). Given the expanded role of Florence in the maintenance of the monastery, it is no surprise to find prominent Florentine families supporting the rebuilding efforts at the monastery and as patrons for most of the altarpieces commissioned from Andrea della Robbia, another Florentine (Tripodi 2014). Other than the inclusion of family crests or names, there is no evidence of patron involvement regarding the La Verna altarpiece commissions. Four of the five altarpieces have inscriptions and indicate family sponsorship. Specifically, the Niccolini arms flank the inscription on the base of the *Annunciation*, declaring them as the work’s sponsor. This is the first altarpiece commissioned after the Chiesa Maggiore fire, and it is usually dated on stylistic grounds between 1476 and 1479 (Tripodi 2014, p. 165; Marquand 1919, p. 30). The balustrade on the *Adoration*’s tempietto is dated (1479) and identifies its patron as Jacopo Brizi of Pieve S. Stefano (Tripodi 2014, p. 165, n. 54; Paloscia and Bernacchi 1986, p. 48; Mencherini 1924, p. 676). Flanking the inscription on the *Crucifixion* are the arms of the prominent

Alessandri family of Florence; Tommaso Alessandri's and Andrea della Robbia's names appear in the monastery's *entrata e uscita* in August 1481, the year given to the altarpiece (Miller 2010, pp. 163–64; Tripodi 2014, pp. 152–53). S.M. degli Angeli, the first building erected at the monastery and where Francis and his followers performed the daily mass, includes the *Madonna della Cintola* (Figure 10). This altarpiece was installed in the mid-1480s, and certainly by 1488, when the Bartoli and Ruccellai families were joined by marriage, thus explaining the appearance of both family crests on the predella, which also includes banderole bearing angels and a tabernacle (Tripodi 2014, pp. 159–60; Marquand 1922, vol. I, p. 78). This is the only La Verna altarpiece with a tabernacle, which is appropriate given the chapel's original function. The inscriptions on scrolls in the predella all refer to John 6:51 (I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give up for the life of the world is my flesh) and the Eucharistic function of the altarpiece and church. The *Ascension of Christ* (c. 1490; Figure 11), originally intended for the high altar in the Chiesa Maggiore, is the only altarpiece without an inscription or family crest. It is regarded as a Medici family commission given that the presbytery and choir of the Chiesa Maggiore were under Medici patronage since 1457 (Domestici 1991, p. 76; Domestici 1995, p. 50; Gentilini 1994, p. 94). The work cannot date later than 1493 when it was mentioned by De Riciis in his visit to the monastery (Chiappini 1927, p. 332). When the altarpiece was moved to the nearby Ridolfi chapel in 1601, it is conceivable that if there had been Medici *stemma*, or an inscription, they were removed at this time. Two *robbiane* niche figures, *St. Francis* and *St. Anthony Abbot*, to the left and right on the chancel archway in the Chiesa Maggiore, are also considered Medici commissions and attributed to Andrea. The *Ascension* as the Chiesa Maggiore's high altarpiece is considered briefly at the end.



Figure 7. Jacopo Ligozzi, *Chiesa Maggiore*, plate D, engraving from Lino Moroni's *Descrizione del Sacro Monte dell'Vernia*, 1612 (photo source: Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington).

Despite the different sponsoring families for Andrea's La Verna altarpieces, a sense of harmony in both style and theme was achieved, suggesting a degree of coordination that reflected Franciscan themes and tastes, possibly inspired by the influential St. Bernardino of Siena (c. 1380–1444) (Pope-Hennessy 1979, p. 184; Muzzi 1998, pp. 47–48; Salmi 1969). By at least 1474, Andrea established a relationship with the Franciscan church, and the Observant order, when he worked with the Ugurgieri family of Siena, during the rebuilding of St. Bernardino's church there, the Osservanza (Domestici 1995, pp. 47–48; Muzzi 1998, pp. 47–48). Andrea's *Coronation of the Virgin* (c. 1474) was made for the Ugurgieri chapel in the Osservanza and dates to the years immediately preceding the La Verna *Annunciation*. St. Bernardino of Siena appealed to reform-minded Observant Franciscans. He was known for his dedication to poverty, love of the Virgin Mary, and his YHS emblem (Pastor 1969, pp. 97, 233; Moorman 1988, pp. 369–83, 446; Rarick 1990, pp. 124–45). Like St. Francis,

St. Bernardino emulated Christ's commitment to humility and poverty, and his faith thus mirrored Francis' values and devotion to Christ. Furthermore, Bernardino's sermons repeatedly characterized Francis as an *alter Christus* by drawing parallels between them, especially by emphasizing the stigmatization, a point that was sure to resonate at La Verna (Deby 2008, pp. 83–84). In short, Bernardino was extremely popular and influential, and whose flair and direct preaching style, in part, led to the relinquishment of many Conventual Franciscan convents to the Observants, including La Verna in 1431 (Barfucci 1991, p. 64; Ritsema van Eck 2017, p. 285; Tanzini 2012, p. 234). Andrea della Robbia's altarpieces at La Verna, created in the wake of St. Bernardino's canonization (1450), not surprisingly resonated with Bernardino-inspired, Observant Franciscan themes.



Figure 8. Exterior Chiesa Maggiore, La Verna (photo source: Mongolo1984, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons).



Figure 9. Interior Chiesa Maggiore, La Verna (photo source: Mongolo1984, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons).



Figure 10. Andrea della Robbia, *Madonna della Cintola*, enamel terra cotta, Santa Maria degli Angeli, La Verna (photo source: Gunnar Bach Pedersen, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons).



Figure 11. Andrea della Robbia, *Ascension of Christ*, enamel terra cotta, Chiesa Maggiore, La Verna (photo source: Gunnar Bach Pedersen, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons).

4. Franciscan Theology and the Appeal of Enameled Terra Cotta

Della Robbia's five La Verna altarpieces offer a sense of visual and thematic unity to the monastery due to their common medium and themes influenced by St. Bernardino of Siena, whose sermons often highlighted the worship of the Virgin. Pier Paolo Ugurgieri of Siena may have been instrumental in this coordination (Domestici 1991, p. 73). Pier Paolo Ugurgieri was associated with the artist as early as 1474 from Andrea's *Coronation of the Virgin* commission for his family's chapel in the Osservanza. Pier Paolo was provincial vicar of the Observant order and keeper of La Verna in 1472, at the outset of a post-fire rebuilding campaign of the Chiesa Maggiore, when Andrea's earliest altarpieces, the *Annunciation* and the *Adoration* (Figures 5 and 6) were created (Gentilini 1994, p. 90; Muzzi 1998, p. 43). From the start of this rebuilding, enameled terra cotta was the preferred medium for the monastery's ornament, and in the 1470s, this medium was practiced exclusively by the Della Robbia family of Florence. As a remote mountainous location, the monastery posed challenges of inclement weather and poor accessibility. From Vasari to present-day scholars, enameled terra cotta offered practical advantages for a location such as La Verna (Boucher 2001, pp. 14–16; Baldini 2012, p. 244). The novel medium tolerated weather fluctuations and even the largest of Andrea's works, the *Crucifixion*, made of 720 individual sections, could be transported safely by shipping those sections in several boxes from his Florence workshop to the monastery to be assembled on-site. The chronologically earlier *Annunciation* and *Adoration* altarpieces must have been perceived favorably, for the medium and artist were chosen for the monastery's subsequent high altarpieces in its three most public devotional buildings.

Composed of eighty-six interlocking pieces of enameled terra cotta, the *Annunciation* is considered one of Andrea's finest and most elegant reliefs. Across the aisle is the slightly more rectangular, ninety-five-piece *Adoration* altarpiece (1479). Within the relatively spare interior of the Chiesa Maggiore, the shiny blue and white altarpieces are prominent and seem to coordinate with each other visually and spatially. Each altarpiece is set within a *tempietto* which strengthens their physical and formal association and gives the impression they could be read as a pair (Domestici 1991, p. 73; Muzzi 2000, p. 517). Characteristic of Andrea della Robbia's style, both altarpieces have blue backgrounds with white figures in modest relief and a minimal use of accent colors, such as green for flower stems or hay. Both are framed in white, the *Annunciation* with a classical palmette motif, while the *Adoration* also includes Andrea's signature cherub heads along the top. God the Father appears in both but more modestly so in the balanced composition of the *Annunciation* and more boldly with additional angels in the *Adoration*. Compared to Andrea's three later altarpieces here, the *Annunciation* and *Adoration* are small and more rectangular with a horizontal composition. The *Crucifixion*, *Madonna della Cintola*, and *Ascension* include more color, are substantially larger, oriented vertically, and have a more narrative quality. That is, the compositions are animated with many more expressive and gesticulating figures that assist in narrating the scenes. By contrast, the *Annunciation* and *Adoration* are significantly more restrained.

Stylistic and compositional differences notwithstanding, the Della Robbia altarpieces are united by medium. Authors from Pliny the Elder to Lorenzo Ghiberti morally equated terra cotta with modesty, innocence, and humility, qualities which complemented Franciscan ideals of poverty and simplicity (Muzzi 1998, p. 46; Panzanelli 2008; Miller 2013, pp. 8–9; Cambareri 2016, p. 43). For instance, Fra Giovanni Dominici suggested such material associations when he advocated that domestic devotional objects be made of simple materials because costly materials could interfere with genuine piety (Domenici 1927, p. 35). Because Franciscans likewise upheld the virtues of humility and simplicity, these ideals were applied to church adornment. Andrea's sculpture in enameled terra cotta suitably matched Franciscan preferences.

Admittedly, though, Andrea's altarpieces are not simply baked clay. They are shiny, reflective, and brilliant. Andrea Muzzi contended that the relationship between the simple, lowly medium of terra cotta and Franciscan art appealed to the Franciscan desire for

poverty and simplicity only on an intellectual level because the terra cotta sculptures were ultimately covered with enamel (Muzzi 1998, p. 46). Nevertheless, the reflective white of the Della Robbia enamel could also symbolize the “invisible light of God” as described in Marsilio Ficino’s *De Lumine*, in which the luminous reflections of enamel are equated with spiritual splendor and purity (del Bravo 1973, p. 26; Gentilini 1992a, pp. 101–6). Enameled terra cotta satisfied, at least theoretically, the desire for a humble, simple art form whose luminescence was also theologically associated with divine light and purity (Gentilini 1992b, p. 445; Kupiec 2016, pp. 106–7). The spiritually symbolic overtones of the white enamel glaze harmonized with St. Bernardino’s Franciscan reform sensibilities in which white enamel was a spiritual metaphor for light, God, purity, clarity, and innocence (Domesticci 1995, p. 47). Light was an essential symbol for St. Bernardino. His emblem was an emblazoned YHS monogram (Holy Name of Jesus), which depicted “rays of light” emanating from the monogram, often in yellow or gold, on a blue ground. This visual symbol of light was directly above and behind his head when he preached and became a popular devotional focal point for his congregants (Debby 2008, p. 83). The radiating YHS emblem was augmented by St. Bernardino’s sermons which connected light and goodness. For example, he preached how “White is shining and resplendent: just as the virtuous soul is radiant and shines with the grace of God” (St. Bernardino of Siena 1935, p. 168). The writings of the Dominican St. Antoninus, archbishop of Florence from 1446 to 1459, also associated white and purity, underscoring both the popular reach and influence of St. Bernardino but the growing familiarity of shining white as a symbol for purity and divinity (Kupiec 2016, pp. 106–7; Gentilini 1992a, p. 38). Catherine Kupiec elaborates that because white Della Robbia enamel literally reflected light, it could be conflated with light itself; thus Della Robbia altarpieces with enameled white figures could further communicate Christ as the Light of the World as from John 8:12 (2016, p. 106).

The symbolic meaning of white enameled terra cotta was broadly understood by fifteenth-century audiences, which legitimized among the faithful the outwardly sumptuous appearance of the lustrous and brilliant material. Pier Paolo Ugurgieri and other Franciscans could seize upon this familiar understanding and the words of St. Bernardino’s sermons and transform his metaphor of light into tangible reality through Andrea’s altarpieces. Taken together, the clay as well as the white enamel were understood as humble and pious materials and perfectly suited to the Franciscan caretakers at La Verna.

5. The *Annunciation* and *Adoration*: Inscriptions, Invocations, and Interaction

While the material of the altarpieces satisfies some general values of the Observant Franciscans, Andrea’s altarpieces at La Verna thematically, textually, and iconographically also demonstrate Andrea’s sensitivities to theological concerns and Renaissance devotional practices. Specifically, the *Annunciation* and the *Adoration* illustrate the Franciscan perspective of the Incarnation where Christ’s humanity and flesh pre-existed in the sinless Virgin. For instance, the Franciscan monk St. Bonaventure (c. 1217–1274), who wrote his *Journey of the Mind to God* (1259) at La Verna, also stressed the Word and Incarnation in his theological writings and sermons. St. Bonaventure claimed that at the Incarnation it was “not simply that God became flesh, but that the Word, specifically, became flesh” and the flesh came from the Virgin Mary (Hayes 1994, pp. 85–86; Muzzi 2000, p. 521; Bynum 1986, p. 422). Furthermore, Bonaventure, like the anonymous Franciscan author of the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, encouraged the *imitatio Christi*, the imitation of Christ. The *Meditations* urged the reader (viewer) to identify emotionally with the protagonists, particularly Christ and the Virgin (*imitatio Mariae*). This text also explicitly stated, “let us contemplate the life of the Virgin in whom the Incarnation was effected” (Bonaventura 1961, p. 10). Such empathetic imitation was a popular, contemporary form of devotion generally known as the *devotio moderna*. Andrea della Robbia responded to such influences at La Verna where the concept of the Incarnation is similarly pronounced in these two Chiesa Maggiore altarpieces, and in which the significance of the Virgin and the Word/*verbum* is distinct and crucial to their interpretation.

To address Franciscan theological and devotional needs, Andrea included inscriptions in all but one of the altarpieces at La Verna, which clarify the interpretation and foster worshipper interaction with the works and space. The La Verna altarpieces notwithstanding, base inscriptions of this nature are not regular features on Andrea della Robbia's altarpieces. Of the others that include inscriptions, such as the *Osservanza Coronation of the Virgin*, mentioned above, or the *Madonna and Child between Saints* in the Medici Chapel in S. Croce (c. 1480), the inscriptions tend to identify the subject or patron. In the case of the *Osservanza* altarpiece, the inscription identifies the subject on a scroll within the composition. Notably, however, a Della Robbia *Crucifixion* at Santa Maria Primerana in Fiesole (c. 1505–1550) duplicates the inscription from the La Verna *Crucifixion*. Nevertheless, the La Verna base inscriptions are distinct. I suggest that the earliest two *robbiane* altarpieces in the Chiesa Maggiore, the *Annunciation* and *Adoration* altarpieces, were intended visually, thematically, and textually as a pair to prompt pilgrim or beholder engagement. The altarpieces are across the nave aisle from each other (left and right, respectively) and, facing the entrance, are visible to the arriving worshipper (Figures 7–9). Thus, rather than flush against the side walls of the church, the altarpieces are perpendicular to them, thus increasing their visibility from the church's entrance. Specifically, the altarpieces coordinate within church environment and invite devotion through text and image.

The base of the *Annunciation* altarpiece reads: ECCIE • A(N)CILLA • DO(MIN)I • FIAT • MIHI • SECV(N)DVM • VERBVM • TVV(M) (Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done according to Thy Word). This text from Luke 1:38 is the Virgin Mary's response to Gabriel's announcement that she will bear the Christ child. The inscription thus identifies the image above as the moment *after* Gabriel's announcement when upon Mary's acceptance, the Incarnation occurred, and the Word was made flesh. Andrea atypically placed the Virgin on the composition's left with Gabriel at the right, who looks to the Virgin, perhaps listening to her response. A half-length figure of God the Father looks down on Mary, who just received her answer to Gabriel's announcement. The descending Holy Spirit indicates Mary's answer and acceptance of her role as the mother of God and the moment of the Incarnation. Andrea della Robbia included some traditional *Annunciation* motifs, such as the symbolic lilies separating the two figures and the Virgin reading, presumably Isaiah's prophecy of the virgin birth and Incarnation. However, placing the Virgin *Annunciate* on the left is uncommon in Italian Renaissance art (Denny 1977, pp. 111–13). By reversing her traditional location, the Virgin Mary's active speaking role is emphasized with her words on the base moving from left to right, establishing a narrative flow, and underscoring the Virgin as the vehicle of the Incarnation (Denny 1977, p. 136). It is perhaps noteworthy that Andrea never again repeated this format. With the Virgin at the composition's left, she is more legible from the entrance and faces the center of the church. Conceivably, this arrangement supports the left-to-right reading of the text as well as the site-specific nature of the work.

The Latin inscription on the base of the *Adoration* is essentially the immediate response to the *Annunciation* altarpiece: VERBVM CARO • FATTV(M) • EST • DE VIRGINE • M(ARI)A (the Word was made flesh from the Virgin Mary). Two points are clearly made in the *Adoration* inscription—not only is the Word, from God the Father, made flesh, but the flesh is of the Virgin Mary. God the Father with flanking half-length angels bearing a banderole of music reading *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* makes for a rather dynamic composition. The remaining imagery initially appears as a traditional *Adoration* or *Nativity* scene, but the base inscription defines it as the Incarnation through its reference in this case to John 1:14: the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Although the inscription alludes to John, the subtle deviation from it once again emphasizes the role of the Virgin Mary: the Word was made flesh from the Virgin Mary.

Zuzanna Sarnecka noted a similar shift in emphasis when it comes to this subject and inscription on domestic devotional objects (Sarnecka 2019, pp. 176–77). Relatedly, the small-scale objects she considers are glazed terracotta for the home environment where they can be picked up and touched. Compositionally, the *Adoration* is like many other

smaller versions by Andrea and his uncle Luca della Robbia, with the haloed Child on a wedge of green hay off-center to subtly shift the focus to the adoring Virgin, whose head is nearly in the center of the composition. The compositional type had become popular in the 1450s as a “visual metaphor for the Incarnation, penitence, and eremitical religious devotion” (Holmes 1999, p. 172; Ruda 1993, pp. 218–28). Essentially the visual language of the Adoration or Nativity symbolized the Incarnation, and in the case of the La Verna altarpiece, the inscription literally defines it so. The popularity of this subject for the domestic environment likely accounts for the many smaller versions of this subject by Della Robbia (Sarnecka 2019). In fact, the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s *Virgin Adoring the Christ Child* (after 1479) is described as a variant of the large Brizi (La Verna) *Adoration* (Figure 12); this smaller-scaled work would have been suitable for home worship, but as with most such objects, we cannot determine a specific household. Nevertheless, images of the Virgin and Child, in all media, are found in abundance in domestic inventories from the Italian Renaissance and frequently noted in bedchambers (Cooper 2006; Sarnecka 2020, p. 6). Another interesting parallel between the La Verna *Adoration* and other Della Robbia versions, such as Luca della Robbia’s smaller-scaled *Nativity with Gloria in Excelsis* (c. 1470; Boston Museum of Fine Arts) or the Della Robbia *Nativity* panel variously attributed to one of Andrea’s sons in S. Maria degli Angeli, is the inclusion of musical references (Sarnecka 2019, pp. 177–78).



Figure 12. Virgin Adoring the Christ Child, enamel terracotta; workshop of Andrea della Robbia, after 1479 (photo source: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Open Access Policy, public domain).

Medieval and early Renaissance literature, such as the *Golden Legend* or the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, advocates reading the altarpieces as visual and textual commentaries on the Incarnation. For example, the *Golden Legend*’s account of the Annunciation explicitly connected it with the Incarnation: “And it was fitting that an angel should announce the Incarnation, because in this guise the fall of the angels was repaired . . . The Incarnation in sooth took place to repair not only the fall of man, but the ruin of angels . . .” (da

Voragine 1969, p. 204). The *Meditations* also expressed how the Incarnation was immediate upon the Virgin's acceptance: "Then the son of God forthwith entered her womb without delay . . . At that very point the Spirit was created and placed into the sanctified womb" (Bonaventura 1961, p. 19). Andrea's *Annunciation* depicts the moment after Gabriel's announcement, the Annunciate's response and Incarnation. Through the focus on her response rather than Gabriel's address, the altarpiece visually and textually promotes devotion to the Virgin. The inscriptions on both altarpieces fundamentally augment the interpretation of the image rather than merely identify the subject.

Roger Tarr discussed Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Annunciation* (1344; Figure 13) as a relevant example whereby the painting's text elaborates on the image by eliciting a verbal or read response from the image's beholder (Tarr 1997, p. 77; Van Dijk 1999). The visible "spoken words" within Lorenzetti's *Annunciation* also reflect on the Incarnation where instead of announcing that the Virgin will bear the Christ Child, Gabriel's words on the painting read "*Non est (erit) impossibile apud Deum omne verbum*" (Nothing is impossible for God's Word) and Mary's reply, "*ecce ancilla domini*" (Behold the handmaid of the Lord) (Tarr 1997, p. 225). Their words are worked into the gold ground of the painting as if they were actually spoken, issuing from their mouths. Mary's response in Lorenzetti's work leaves unsaid Luke's remaining passage, let it be done according to Thy Word (Tarr 1997, p. 226). Tarr contended the spoken word *verbum* in this passage becomes "the vehicle for the transmission of God's will" (1997, p. 226). The complete phrase in Andrea's *Annunciation* makes clear the Virgin has accepted her role according to the Word and her significance in the Incarnation. *Verbum*, both spoken and written in the Annunciate's expanded response in the La Verna *Annunciation*, literally supports the divine mystery above. The bold placement of the text across the base, furthermore, implies more than a passive spectator before the altarpiece but rather one who will read or speak the Virgin's spoken words as well. Jessica Richardson elaborated on Tarr's scholarship to suggest that "depicted speech" need not be contained within the pictorial space itself but rather can extend into the viewer's space, where the beholder in front of the work completes its meaning, prayer, or ritual (2019, p. 354).



Figure 13. Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Annunciation*, panel. Siena, Pinacoteca (photo source: Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons).

Biblical inscriptions were familiar features on Renaissance religious images to identify subjects, to make visible words spoken by the image's protagonist, adding depth to an

image's interpretation through invocations that invite the beholder to participate in the event (Richardson 2019; Wallis 1973). Including the Virgin's words as the inscription on the La Verna *Annunciation* emphasizes the Incarnation and underscores her central role in it. Moreover, when the *Annunciation* is read together with the *Adoration*, the inscriptions invite prayer from the worshipper in the space before and between the two altarpieces. The pilgrim entering the Chiesa Maggiore, standing in the nave between these sculpted altarpieces, physically connects them and experientially creates additional meaning.

The *Adoration's* inscription also emphasizes that the "Word was made flesh from the Virgin Mary", thus highlighting her role in the Incarnation, complementing her centrality in Andrea's composition. This inscription might refer to a significant passage from the Nicene Creed recited at Mass, "... and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man." Despite similarities between the inscription and the Creed, I would suggest that the Angelus prayer offers a closer parallel. In fact, the Angelus prayer's most relevant passages unite the inscriptions on both the *Annunciation* and *Adoration* altarpieces. The Angelus, originally recited in the evening, at the supposed hour of the Incarnation, is a recitation that evolved among Franciscans, and, in fact, was encouraged by St. Bonaventure as a prayer dedicated to the Incarnation (Thurston 1901, 1907):

Behold the handmaid of the Lord
Be it done according to thy Word.
The Word was made flesh
And dwelt among us

These passages from the Angelus, borrowing from both Luke and John, are then followed by Hail Marys, and the remaining prayer is likewise devoted to the Incarnation. The specific passages from the Creed and, more convincingly, the Angelus prayer support the visual and textual evidence in both altarpieces and suggest an interaction with and response (vocal or read) by the worshipper/pilgrim before the altarpieces as encouraged by contemporary literature and devotional practices. Regarding the Angelus, for instance, one must imagine a pilgrim, who, according to tradition, would pause at the compline bell to offer devotion to the Incarnation by reciting this prayer, verses of which are referenced on Andrea's altarpieces. The inscriptions, particularly the text on the *Annunciation*, can refer to a viewer and reader, as well as to a speaker reciting the Virgin's spoken response/inscription as one's own prayer, who in an extreme act of piety empathizes with Mary by speaking her words. The sense of sound, real or imagined, augments the worshipper's experience before the altarpieces. The musical references in the *Adoration* also simulate an auditory experience, but one that is loud and joyful, even if only imagined.

By considering the *Annunciation* and *Adoration* as a pair or as pendants, the beholder physically facilitates the interaction between the altarpieces. Allie Terry-Fritsch describes such an experience at an early sixteenth-century Franciscan pilgrimage site outside of Florence, dubbed the New Jerusalem at the *sacro monte* of San Vivaldo in Tuscany (Terry-Fritsch 2020, pp. 161–215). Visitors who made the pilgrimage to San Vivaldo visited its various spaces and structures built to create a simulated experience of visiting the Holy Land and its sacred locations. Among the visual experiences are a pair of relief sculptures on the exteriors of two buildings, an *Ecce Homo* and a *Crucifige*, between which the pilgrim would physically mediate the "spatial gap" between the works creating an immersive environment for the beholder to contemplate numerous devotional scenarios (Terry-Fritsch 2020, pp. 193–94). As a *sacro monte*, La Verna, too, was described as a Jerusalem in the West, but its sites of devotion were far less developed than San Vivaldo. However, La Verna had the virtue of being the actual site of St. Francis' stigmatization as well as being formed at the moment of the Crucifixion. It was believed the formation of La Verna's deep chasms and fissures occurred at the very hour of Christ's death when the Gospel says that the rock split, Matthew 27: 50–52 (Ritsema van Eck 2017, p. 259). Nevertheless, the devotional practices before and between images at these modestly later sites offer a meaningful way to consider the altarpieces in the Chiesa Maggiore. Worshipers arriving

at La Verna, physically invested in the trek up the mountain, were eager to experience the environment where St. Francis lived and prayed (practices they sought to emulate). Within the austere interior of the Chiesa Maggiore, the two altarpieces, left and right of the nave, read like a prayer book or at least hint at such object association and familiar form of domestic devotion; both altarpieces and prayer books inspired devotional reading and engagement with imagery. Virginia Reinburg offers a useful analogy on medieval books of hours whereby the book provides the “personal script for prayer—as like the two panels of a diptych” (2012, pp. 214–17). Furthermore, in books of hours, the Annunciation was usually the first image illustrated and it was then followed by an invocation or “dialogue” with God (Reinburg 2012, pp. 214–17). The diversity of objects used as meditational prompts in the Renaissance encourages a kind of cross-fertilization whereby one form could influence or inform how other forms were used and interpreted. The prayer book is also instructive for it reminds us that devotional reading rarely required a command of Latin or grammar, was often performed before images, and was a form of prayer that could be silent or vocal, in which the written words might only serve as initial prompts for the most familiar prayers that one “already knew by heart” (Reinburg 2012, p. 111).

Worshippers visiting La Verna were already conditioned by their everyday devotional routines practiced in their homes or hometown liturgical settings, and they brought those familiar rituals and practices with them to La Verna. Subsequently, the beholder at La Verna standing between the *Annunciation* and *Adoration* altarpieces had various approaches and strategies by which they could experience the works and space, which in turn could motivate deeper meaning and engagement. The tactility of the relief sculptures, their reflective surfaces, and their inscriptions as prompts for prayer, “activate and emplace” the worshipper at La Verna who drew upon a tradition where images were cues for various devotional activities to aid their meditative practices (Terry-Fritsch 2020, p. 19; Williamson 2004, pp. 386–87). These traditions included prayers before the popular Marian images found in fifteenth-century homes, often lit by candles during private devotions (Sarnecka 2019; Kupiec 2016, pp. 112–16). Given the similarity of theme and potentially material, such domestic works might have informed how visitors engaged with and perceived the Chiesa Maggiore altarpieces, especially when they were likewise illuminated by candles on the altars before them. This reciprocity of religious experiences and objects seems especially meaningful for domestic religious images in enameled terracotta or majolica as it could blur the distinction between familiar and unfamiliar settings. When one returned home from their visit to the *sacro monte* of La Verna, for instance, their domestic devotional objects could have additional resonance because of this new experience. Zuzanna Sarnecka describes curious majolica model chapels and sanctuaries that were produced mostly in Urbino in the sixteenth century (Sarnecka 2020). One such example is a model La Verna sanctuary that dates to 1521 (Sarnecka 2020, pp. 12–13). The unknown owner might very well have used the miniature sanctuary to memorialize a pilgrimage to the monastery, like a devotional souvenir, to embark on a “mental pilgrimage” by visually navigating the different buildings in the model monastery and thereby interacting with it as a devotional aid (Sarnecka 2020).

In 1493, Fra Alexandro de Riciis described practices that demonstrated how such cultural emplacement and imaginative connections occurred with worshippers to La Verna’s most sacred site in the Chapel of the Stigmata with its *Crucifixion* altarpiece. The importance of location resounds potently in this chapel, and the *Crucifixion* binds the subject to the location where St. Francis, meditating on Christ’s suffering, saw a vision of the seraphic crucifix and received the stigmata (Miller 2010, p. 164). The *Crucifixion* altarpiece served as a visual and textual prompt for the beholder, who would stand on the same rock as Francis to recreate and emulate his meditations and his visionary experience. The beholder experience in the Chapel of the Stigmata offers a model for how a beholder could engage with the *Annunciation* and *Adoration* altarpieces. Although lacking the profundity that resonates at the Chapel of the Stigmata, the Chiesa Maggiore was the largest public devotional church on the mountain, built with the intention of receiving eager worshippers.

Just like the model sanctuary of La Verna mentioned above that could be picked up and explored with hands and eyes, visiting worshippers to the actual sanctuary likely sought to engage with the entire space of the remote sanctuary, including the Chiesa Maggiore.

Were one to enter the Chiesa Maggiore in the 1480s, one would see the two *tempietti* housing and drawing attention to the *Annunciation* and the *Adoration*. Because they are visually and thematically related, one can imagine the worshipper connecting them, engaging with the altarpieces and the space. By 1493, the high altarpiece in the Chiesa Maggiore, the *Ascension of Christ* (Figure 11), was in place. The effect must have been stunning, with the *Annunciation* and the *Adoration* essentially flanking the much larger *Ascension* (680 pieces) between them. Compared to the flanking altarpieces, the *Ascension* is taller, more colorful, and includes many more full-length figures. The composition depicts the apostles and the Virgin Mary in the lower half of the altarpiece, closer to the beholder, and the ascending Christ flanked by three-quarter-length angels are in the upper half. The figures are more animated, expressive, and in bolder relief than Andrea's work of the 1470s. The shape of the altarpiece echoes that of the chancel arch that originally framed the work when it was at the high altar, suggesting the artist and his workshop accommodated the space of its intended location. Without an inscription, one can only speculate on how the beholder might have interpreted the *Ascension* especially in the context of the *Annunciation* and *Adoration*. While these two earlier works readily function as a pair, regardless of the presence of the high altarpiece, how might the *Ascension* function with the pair? Visually and spatially, the three altarpieces read as a triptych across the space of the Chiesa Maggiore, with the *Annunciation* and *Adoration* as the "outer wings" to the central panel, for instance. Thematically, the "wings" of this triptych mark the beginning of Christ's mortal life, while the *Ascension* marks the end of his life on earth. Passages from the Golden Legend and the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* promoted a reading of all three subjects together (da Voragine 1969, p. 290; Bonaventura 1961, pp. 381–82). For example, when referring to those who ascended with Christ, Jacobus da Voragine wrote of "certain angels who did not have full knowledge of the Mystery of the Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection; and seeing the Lord ascending into Heaven by his own power, with a multitude of angels, and of holy men, they wondered at the mystery of the Incarnation and the Passion . . ." (1969, p. 290). Conceivably, then, the worshipper could continue to engage the space of the Chiesa Maggiore with the third altarpiece, one that also coordinated visually and possibly thematically with the *Annunciation* and *Adoration*.

6. Conclusions

While Fra de Riciis' text is the earliest visitor account to the monastery after Andrea's altarpieces were completed, the Ligozzi engraving and Moroni text are evidence of performative devotional practices at La Verna extending into the seventeenth century (Chiappini 1927, p. 333; Miller 2010, p. 168; Conigliello 1999, pp. 25–26). As the earliest chronicle, however, De Riciis' description of an interactive relationship between worshipper, altarpiece, and liturgical space can extend to the Chiesa Maggiore. As popular as Andrea's *Adoration* was, Andrea never repeated it as an altarpiece for a church (only smaller-scale versions likely for home worship); Andrea also never repeated the composition of the La Verna *Annunciation* for an altarpiece. These altarpieces were unique in Andrea's prolific career, and I suggest their compositional arrangements may have been determined by the physical context of the church. As well, I propose they were intended to be read and understood together as a pair in this distinctively Franciscan context where their interpretation was enabled by the worshipper who made meaning of them through their proximal relationship. These interpretations depend upon the worshipper interacting with the images and engaging in the dialogue between the altarpieces as indicated by their inscriptions. Engagement of this kind was described at later Italian pilgrimage sites and *sacri monti* in the early sixteenth century. A 1514 Franciscan treatise for the pilgrim to the sacred Monte at Varallo, for instance, directed the worshipper to participate in the sacred dramas portrayed in the sculptures as if they were occurring immediately before the pilgrim at that very

moment (Shearman 1992, pp. 41–42). Furthermore, mentioned above, at the Franciscan New Jerusalem of San Vivaldo, a robust spatial and visual program was developed to likewise engage the pilgrim’s mind, body, and imagination (Terry-Fritsch 2020, chp. 4). La Verna is distinctive as a Franciscan venue due to its renowned history and location, and that history explains its selective use of devotional imagery and in a material that fittingly supported Franciscan ideals of humility and purity. The Della Robbia altarpieces inspired prayer and devotion through their placement, inscriptions, and awareness of contemporary devotional practices and objects such as domestic Marian images and prayer books.

La Verna is a profound, yet remote site of Franciscan veneration and pilgrimage. However, despite its remoteness, the fifteenth-century visitor to La Verna standing before its altarpieces would have understood to a greater or lesser degree the type of active devotion expected before religious images and would have employed familiar strategies by which to engage with the divine. Beholders imagined themselves as participants in visual and textual depictions of holy events to fully apperceive the emotions and experiences of Jesus or the Virgin (Johnson 1994, pp. 282–83; Baxandall 1988, pp. 40–41). The events of St. Francis’ own life provided vivid examples of this manner of devotion. Visual cues within Andrea’s altarpieces also reinforce their textual interpretations and the participatory role of the worshipper. The compositions and inscriptions of the *Annunciation* and *Adoration* support a central Franciscan tenet, the Incarnation, in which the consequences of the Annunciate’s visible speech in one altarpiece are manifested in the other, the *Adoration*. The thematic parallels potentially explain the compositional placement of the Virgin, where the Virgin from each altarpiece faces the other, forming visual bookends to the thematically related content they enclose. In between the altarpieces, in the nave of the Chiesa Maggiore, the beholder connects the two works, visually, physically, and through prayer as prompted by their inscriptions.

With much of the sanctuary’s growth having occurred in the fifteenth century, the *sacro monte* of La Verna became the “template” for other spiritual retreats, other “new Jerusalems” in the West (Ritsema van Eck 2017, p. 285). La Verna anticipated other devotional pilgrimage retreats by aiding the faithful in their quest to engage and identify with holy personages and events. As a fifteenth-century precedent to those later ensembles, Andrea dell Robbia’s La Verna altarpieces served as meditative works for worshippers who moved through its spaces, reflecting on and emulating St. Francis’ veneration of Christ and the Virgin Mary. With inscriptions that are more than scene identifiers, the *Annunciation* and *Adoration* altarpieces in the Chiesa Maggiore promoted devotion to and empathy with the Virgin Mary by allowing the worshipper to imitate her response and reflect on the significance and consequences of the Word.

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Notes

- ¹ For a thorough history of the monastery, its transition to the observant rule, and its place in the evolution of *sacri monti*, see Ritsema van Eck (2017), pp. 247–86; Baldini (2012).

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Article

Musical Epigraphies of Antiphon *Salve Regina* by Cristóbal de Morales: The Walls of the Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora del Pueyo, Villamayor de Gállego, Zaragoza

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Abstract: In 1990 a publication by Pedro Calahorra reported a unique musical notation of a *Salve* on the walls of the Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora del Pueyo in Villamayor de Gállego, Zaragoza. The contributions offered in this article have enhanced research in this area through a revised study of this musical epigraphy. The analysis of the palaeography of notation reveals the dating of the work and, therefore, a possible collation with the Spanish polyphonic sources belonging to the white mensural notation, determining that it is the *Salve Regina* in four by Cristóbal de Morales. This study aims to recognize musical epigraphies as historiographic-musical sources of information capable of intervening in the reconstruction of a musical past, so they must be restored, preserved, catalogued and displayed like any historical document, regardless of their physical support. The *Salve Regina* written on the walls of the Villamayor de Gállego sanctuary is the witness of a Christian tradition of devotion to the Virgin Mary. Within the Rite of *Salve* this chant was the most popular in the Iberian Peninsula during the Renaissance.

Keywords: musical epigraphy; Cristóbal de Morales; *Salve Regina*; white mensural notation; heritage

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1. Introduction. Musical Epigraphies as a Manifestation of Religious Art and a Symbol of Faith

Musical epigraphies as historical sources are of utmost importance for religious studies as they were part of a mode of cultural, social and artistic expression created by Christian communities in their acts of worship and rituality. Musical notations have been found in different regions of the world written on the walls and spaces of sacred architectures since the standardization of musical writing. Like the image, music was placed at the service of religion. Likewise, epigraphic notational practice signified a profound act of faith that sometimes accompanied iconic images in chapels of worship. In fact, the known examples of musical epigraphy seem to contain two purposes: the main one, to manifest faith and devotion to the Virgin and the Saints by perpetuating with parietal writing the idea of the sacred and finite, reaffirming that music serves God and God shows himself through it: “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would begin to cry out” (Lk 19:40); and on the other hand, serving in a mnemonic process to remember the melodic-mensural line and, at times, the text to unequivocally interpret the chant.

The *Salve Regina* of the epigraphy located on one of the walls of the Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora del Pueyo in Villamayor de Gállego, Zaragoza, was a vehicle for transmitting the great Marian devotion that existed in Renaissance Spain, which is why it must be understood within the liturgical space where it was written, in front of the main altar where the *Maiestas Mariae* presided over the whole scene, and where the antiphon was performed. The Sanctuary in Zaragoza was dedicated to Our Lady of Pueyo due to, according to legend, the appearance of the Virgin to the shepherd Gerardo on the top of the mountain where she requested the temple to be located. The confraternity of Nuestra Señora del Pueyo dates back to as early as 1319 (Roche Castelrianas and Turón 2012, p. 30) and remains active to

the present day. The first members were King Martin I the Humane and his son Martin the Younger.

Marian devotion in Spain is demonstrated by the number of important temples dedicated to the Virgin, the texts of the Holy Fathers offered to her and the devotional feasts in honour of Mary, usually accompanied by music. Since the Middle Ages, the Virgin has occupied a prominent place in Spanish popular devotion: “the number of Marian patronymics in the Church clearly exceeds that of other saints. And the name of Mary was also preferred by women [. . .]” (Fernández Conde 1982, p. 303). In the Golden Age the Catholic monarchs showed a strong devotion to the Blessed Virgin, especially to the Immaculate Conception. “Studies of the Hispanic iconography of the Immaculate Conception agree that it was towards the end of the 16th century when the definitive type of the Immaculate Conception was established in Spain. The theological formulation of the Immaculate Conception did not mature until the Council of Trent. It was here, and in the context of the Counter-Reformation, that theology was definitively ready to support the very fact of the conception sine macula of the Virgin [. . .]” (García Mahiques 1996–1997, p. 177). The affection for the Virgin in Spain in the 16th century was of a marked character and would spread to the recently discovered America in the evangelising mission. After the Council of Trent, Marian devotion expand even further with the reaffirmation of old medieval confraternities based on legends of apparitions of the Virgin or miracles, and new titles such as the Immaculate Conception and the Rosary. In relation to the latter, the recitation of the holy Rosary was popularised along with indulgences, and thanks to Pope St. Pius V, the members of the Spanish Armada of Galleons belonged to its confraternity. Over the coming centuries, devotion to the Virgin was such that she was even proclaimed patron saint of Spain: “The devotion that the monarchs of the different kingdoms of Spain had shown since the Middle Ages to the Immaculate Conception of Mary continued in the Modern Age with the dynasties of the Habsburgs and the Bourbons. A singular fact is her proclamation as patron saint of Spain” (Alejos Morán 2005, p. 812).

The study presented here aims to make musical epigraphs known as a type of historical musical sources. This specific case reflects a tradition of Marian devotion rooted in Renaissance and Catholic Spain which, manifested in a small religious centre in Zaragoza, made common use of the *Salve Regina* composed by one of the greatest Spanish polyphonists, Cristóbal de Morales.

The surviving musical epigraphs are an expression of religious art, bearing in mind that music had an important place in everyday liturgical life. In many cases, as we will show, the epigraphic sources are related to devotion to the Blessed Virgin within the ritual of the Mass or Divine Office, as “the *Salve* became a common and habitual chant at the end of many offices” (Suárez Martos 2010, p. 154), or outside these with the Rite of the *Salve*.

2. A Brief Note on the *Salve Regina* and Its Tradition in Spain during the Renaissance

With the unification with Carlo Magno, all the monastic communities of the Frankish Kingdom adopted the rule of Saint Benedict (480–543), who advocated prayer and manual work as models of monastic life. “For the historian the most important aspect of the rule was its establishment of the Divine Office, the eight services that were performed daily in addition to the Mass” (Hoppin 2000, p. 56). One of the novelties of this order lay in the possibility of alternating chanting groups. Under the Benedictine constitution, chant in religious institutions—monastic, cathedral or parish—was present in the liturgy, appearing before, during or after the liturgy.

All in all, the singing in Benedictine monasteries lasted at least six hours each day. In late eleventh-century Cluny, where monks did not have to work and could concentrate fully on meditation and singing, they could easily spend the entire day in church. The number of psalms sung there every day had increased to 215. Monks attended two or three conventual Masses, in addition to offices, processions, litanies, and other public prayers. Not surprisingly, this led to the overburdening of the monastic memory. (Busse 2005, p. 49)

The recited psalms form part of the great structure on which the liturgy rests. They must “be introduced with a chant called antiphon, and the didactic element is followed by a piece of music called responsory, which serves either as commentary or meditation” (Asensio 2003, p. 143). *Salve Regina*, together with *Alma Redemptoris Mater*, *Ave Regina Coelorum* and *Regina Coeli*, is one of the four Marian antiphons of the Breviary whose Latin text is:

*Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiae,
vita, dulcedo et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevæ,
ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes,
in hac lacrimarum valle.
Eia, ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos
misericordes oculos ad nos converte;
Et Iesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exsiliium ostende.
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.*

In the Edict of Ephesus in 431 the dogma of Mary as Mother of God was proclaimed. From then on, Marian devotion grew and reached a climax during the Renaissance. Its cult, established under Pope Sergius I (687–701), was linked to the annual festivals in honour of the Virgin: The Purification, the Annunciation, the Assumption and the Nativity. During the 12th century, another feast, the Immaculate Conception (on 8 December) was strongly introduced, together with the Visitation (on 2 July) at the end of the 14th century.

In the twelfth century an elaborate Marian antiphon began to be sung at the end of the nightly office of compline, and by the end of the thirteenth century the nightly singing of such an antiphon was nearly universal. The end of each liturgical day, then, no matter what its theological theme, was marked by Marian devotion. The four most common of these antiphons—the *Salve Regina*, *Alma redemptoris mater*, *Ave regina caelorum*, and *Regina Caeli*—were among the best-known chants of the entire Middle Ages and were all set countless times to polyphony in the Renaissance. In wealthy civic churches, elaborate musical performances often grew out of the nightly singing of the Marian antiphon, and these performances became very popular with the city-dwelling public. In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, these musical extensions of the liturgy, known as *Salve* services (*Salve* for the Marian antiphon *Salve Regina*), became one of the most prominent formats for Marian polyphony in cities such as Brussels, Bruges, Antwerp, Nuremberg, and Seville, and no doubt many others whose archives have yet to be thoroughly mined. (Rothenberg 2011, p. 17)

Devotion to the Virgin Mary, manifested through chants dedicated to her, led to processional practices within the monastic enclosure. A clear example of annotations on psalms can be found in the arches of the cloister of Las Huelgas in Burgos with a clear use of seasonal liturgy. But processional practices were also performed in ceremonials that involved the people, especially by orders that executed practices outside the enclosure of the convent, such as the Franciscans or Dominicans. The antiphon *Salve Regina* formed part of both practices:

They instituted a popular procession featuring the Marian antiphon *Salve Regina*. In this practice, the Dominicans would walk from Compline in their own church to the church of the laity, singing the antiphon with the people and praying to the Virgin Mary for protection. Special services for the Virgin, and the increasingly elaborate music associated with them, would mark the lives of musicians throughout late medieval Europe. As a result, *Salve Regina*, an antiphon written in the eleventh century, became one of the most beloved pieces of music in Europe. (Fassler 2014, p. 170)

During the Renaissance a large number of polyphonic compositions on the *Salve* were written by remarkable authors such as Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Jacob Obrecht, Nicola Porpora, Tomás Luis de Victoria, Francisco Guerrero and Cristóbal de Morales, among many others.

In Renaissance Spain, the *Salve Regina* was the most popular work of the Rite of the *Salve*, along with other motets and prayers performed on Saturday afternoons. This Marian devotion was enshrined in Spanish ecclesiastical institutions such as the cathedrals of Seville, Tarazona, Palencia and Castilla. “Marian ritual was at the centre of devotional life in Spain, perhaps even more so than in other areas of the sixteenth century” (Wagstaff 2002, p. 4). Seville embraced a large number of sixteenth-century composers in the service of the Church. As the studies of Suárez Martos (2010) have highlighted, in Seville the rite of the *Salve* was performed on Saturdays in the chapel of the Antigua since the 16th century. “In the codices Tarazona 2/3, Toledo 25 [. . .] manuscript 1 of the cathedral of Seville, [was] expressly copied in 1555 to be used in the service of the *Salve* that took place in the chapel of the Antigua [. . .]” (Ruiz-Jiménez 2012, p. 319). Similarly, in the cathedral of Santiago, in 1531, the *Salve* was sung in front of the image of Nuestra Señora de la Preñada in the back room, performed on Saturdays and the eves of the feast in honour of the Virgin and Santiago (Ruiz-Jiménez 2012, p. 348). Images of Marian devotion presided over the chapels of ecclesiastical institutions with paintings or sculptures to which they were often sung in liturgical or civic rituals (Wagstaff 2002).

As notably in the Antigua chapel in Seville Cathedral, for example, *Salve* services often took place in special chapels in front of a painting or statue of the Virgin, and many were endowed by private, often ecclesiastical patrons, or—as at the Church of Our Lady (now the cathedral) in Antwerp—by lay (‘*Salve*’) confraternities. The early *Salve* service predominantly followed a set pattern in which, especially before the early 1530s, the *Salve Regina* was often performed alternatim in chant and polyphony, and in conjunction with Marian motets, prayers and responses, organ music, and also sometimes bells. (Nelson 2019, p. 115)

The musical and textual structure of the *Salve* will be shaped over centuries of devotional tradition. Two important 16th century polyphonic sources have been preserved, E-Sc 5-5-20 (Capitular and Columbine Library) and E-Sc 1 (Seville Cathedral Archives), extensively studied by Robert Snow, which reflect the tradition of the antiphon with early compositions and variations of the *Salve*. This initial Iberian context of the *Salve* was initiated by authors close to the Catholic monarchs during the 15th and early 16th centuries, such as Anchieta, Medina, Ponce and Escobar—whose compositions appear in manuscript E-Sc 5-5-20—followed by other great polyphonists such as Cristóbal de Morales, Francisco Guerrero, Rodrigo de Ceballos and Pedro Fernández de Castilleja, whose *Salve Regina* is preserved in manuscript E-Sc 1. Snow “examined a large number of liturgical books to determine that *Salve Regina* was used in devotions throughout the year in a number of important dioceses in Spain, including Seville, Toledo, Zaragoza, and Vich” (Wagstaff 2002, p. 10).

The manuscript’s older layer [Seville 5-5-20] begins with three *Salve Regina* settings by Ponce, Medina, and Anchieta, and continues with Marian motets by Anchieta and Peñalosa; later layers contain an additional *Salve Regina* by Rivaflacha, and motets by him, Pedro de Escobar, and Antoine Brumel. All four of its *Salve* settings divide the text into ten verses and set the even verses—“Vita, dulcedo”, “Ad te suspiramus”, “Et Jesum”, “O clemens”, and “O dulcis Virgo Maria”—polyphonically, as was the usual practice in Spain and the rest of Europe. (Knighton and Kreitner 2019, p. 177)

Josquin’s *Salve Regina*, tripartite and in five voices, will have a decisive influence on Spanish polyphonies on this antiphon. In fact, the E-SC 1 copied in 1555 opens with Josquin’s *Salve* followed by Morales’. Josquin created the second division with the verse *Eia ergo* and the third beginning with *Et Jesum*. His music will be copied and disseminated

by different centres in the Iberian Peninsula, “but Seville 1 with the *Salve* and five motets is striking evidence of how Josquin’s works were used alongside those by Spanish composers during the period when a more international school of composition was emerging there” (Wagstaff 2002, p. 3). Authors such as Wagstaff propose the importation of the *Salve* and some of Josquin’s motets to Cristóbal de Morales as a consequence of his stay in Rome. The important revolution in communication brought about by the printing press meant that the costly manuscript codices of polyphonic music shared the stage with more and more volumes of printed music, which facilitated the dispersion of the polyphonic repertoire. For example, “one of the great publishing events of the sixteenth century [were] the two books of masses by the composer Cristóbal de Morales [. . .]” (Ruiz-Jiménez 2012, p. 321). Various religious institutions with less purchasing power—convents, hermitages, parishes, oratories, etc.—than the great ecclesiastical seats—cathedrals and collegiate churches—were able to access the musical cast that was taking place in the Iberian Peninsula by acquiring books of printed polyphony, allowing them to develop their musical activity, their rites and devotions.

3. Marian Devotion in the 16th Century in Musical Epigraphies

Musical epigraphies are historical musical sources written or inscribed on hard or semi-hard support that will last over time. The examples of musical epigraphies presented below—most of them Spanish in order to establish a geographical correspondence with the epigraphy of Zaragoza studied here—show the presence of the Virgin in the cultural and religious tradition during the Renaissance. In this way, both Carrero (2015) and Calahorra (1990) show that the musical notation of the *Salve Regina* of Villamayor de Gállego is related to the liturgical space and its route in an act of devotion to Mary. On the other hand, Arrúe Ugarte (2013) mentions a *Salve* inscribed on a wall of the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla in La Rioja along with other sacred chants. Likewise, the fragments of musical language, a four-voice canon, in the former convent of Carmen Calzado in Valencia were accompanied by some Marian symbols such as the fleur-de-lis. In the 16th century Lodovico Zacconi (MS 559 of the Biblioteca Oliveriana, Pesaro) points to the common practice of writing canonical musical pieces on the walls of cloisters or places of worship written by clerics with charcoal, which he calls “canoni da muro”. The latest recent study by Brumana (2017) emphasizes the correspondence between the musical notations on the walls in the municipal gallery in Assisi dedicated to the Madonna and St. Roch and other melodies belonging to sacred environments between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In this paper we must highlight the publications made by various researchers such as Pedro Calahorra (1990) or Eduardo Carrero (2015) who made a journey through different written music on the walls of sacred spaces establishing a relationship between this type of musical annotations and choral topography, pulpits, lecterns and music stands: “These are reminders to recall the sung musical excerpt” (Carrero 2015, p. 47). Calahorra (1990) found a musical notation written on a wall in the Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora del Pueyo in Villamayor de Gállego, Zaragoza (Figure 1).

[The *particella*] The measures are 69 × 89 cm; with nine staves drawn with vermilion paint, as already mentioned, as well as the notation. This corresponds to the classical notation of organ singing music: square and rhomboidal notes. And the text accompanying is the one with the antiphon *Salve Regina*, fully developed. (Calahorra 1990, p. 192)

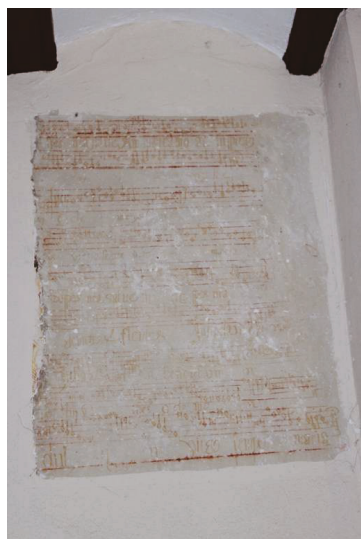


Figure 1. Musical notation of Sanctuary del Pueyo, Villamayor de Gállego, Zaragoza.

As the author says, keys are not appreciable and the state of conservation is not good. Calahorra provides a possible transcript of a *cantus I* and the Marian antiphony.

Carrero points out this parietal musical writing:

It is about covered galleries around the church that respond to an old portico very altered in the works undertaken in the church, in 1728. Baroque factory is masking a late gothic structure, as evidenced by the corbels, doors and epigraphic remains in plaster. On one of its sides, next to the entrance door of the church, musical remains appeared, made with characters that refer to the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, and, therefore, matching in time with fragments of the original factory. The score and text correspond to the *Salve* and they are giving us basic information about this portico and the liturgical use of it, which is none other than the Marian processions that included the prayer of the *Salve* upon arrival at the church. (Carrero 2015, pp. 47–48)

Arrúe Ugarte (2013) reports about different graffiti in the former Benedictine novitiate in the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla, the monastery of Yuso, second novitiate, in La Rioja. The musical notation found is that of a dance that became popular during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries known as *Al villano que le dan zebollita*. Arrúe comments on other notation signs discovered, including:

In the adjoining room and on the third plaster, corresponding to the various documented between 1733 and 1760, graffiti are found representing five four-line staves with square notation, three with inscription under them, one illegible and the others “Santus” and “Salve”, which tells us about the religious character of this music. Likewise, two staves, one with square notes and another with two rhomboidal notes. Also, it has been observed what look like lists of musical notes, which were possibly used as a note for some type of exercise or as a reference to memorize certain sound sequences. (Arrúe Ugarte 2013, p. 58)

The image of the epigraphy is in the southern room of the monastic enclosure, specifically in the third plaster, where we can observe how Arrúe Ugarte (2013) describes square notes preceded by the drawing of a hand with an inscription that reads: *lue sacerdos magu qui iaze os dueuit Deos î uento î justus Secular.*

The recent case of the musical epigraphies inscribed in a chapel of the Gothic cloister of the convent of the Carmelitas calzados in Valencia (Figures 2 and 3) (currently, *Centre del Carme Cultura Contemporània, CCCC*) concluded that it was music belonging to the white mensural notation, specifically to the second half of the sixteenth century, a date coinciding with the stay of the composer Mateo Flecha el Joven as a Carmelite friar in the Valencian convent.

Musical notation can be dated to the end of the sixteenth century, although with particularities in the carving due to the difficulty of showing black notes. In fact, in these sources we have not seen the inference of black notes, frequently used in semiminim calls of white mensural notation. In this case, semiminim seems to have been replaced by the minim with stem. In any case, epigraphy 1 contains *signa congruentiae*; this reveals a canon (perpetual) in four voices. (Seguí and Tizón 2019, pp. 82–92)



Figure 2. Musical epigraphy, perpetual canon in 4, Valencia (Seguí and Tizón 2019, p. 88).



Figure 3. Transcription of the epigraphic canon of Valencia (Seguí and Tizón 2019, p. 88).

In addition, this canon has the particularity that under it, accompanying it, there were inscribed what seem to be signs similar to neumes (*virga, tractulus, clivis*) based on strokes that marked accents and melodic movements. Next to the canon a phrase was found in Latin (*qual cu qu et [. . .] cu me be cura [?]*) as an emblematic epigram that could be related to the enigmatic canons.

The text accompanying the musical notation found, *qualisculque* or *culme* could be related to the rhetorical and persuasive sense given to the canons from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. These enigmatic canons were accompanied by a guide text to be deciphered by the reader, something similar to emblematic, European cultural phenomenon characteristic from the sixteenth to the eighteenth

centuries which also developed what is known as an emblematic music. (Seguí and Tizón 2019, p. 90)

However, preservation of the source is not good and part of the text is blurred. The second epigraphy investigated in the Valencian convent is a *cantus I* and their corresponding *cantus firmus*.

Regarding epigraphy 2, we have not been able to make a polyphonic transcription with respect to other sources. Certain elements are already established in the epigraphy itself which may give rise to some confusion. For example, a circle appears at the beginning of the piece and, *a posteriori*, a cut semicircle meaning a time signature of 4/4. (Seguí and Tizón 2019, p. 88)

The *cantus firmus*, square notation, no clef is kept at the beginning of the staff. The *cantus I* contains larger figures that could denote signs of congruence matching the *cantus firmus* with the voice, but the poor state of conservation does not allow for any further contrapuntal approach.

Although it is not a Spanish epigraphy, it is important to note the recent study by Biancamaria Brumana (2017). The researcher establishes a relationship between a melody incised on one of the paintings of a mural cycle in *Pinacoteca Comunale di Assisi* dedicated to the Madonna and Saint Roch in veneration of the saints for help during a plague, with other devotional melodies, written between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such as: the fragment of the canon that appears on the frontispiece of the commentary to Vitruvius by Giovanni Battista Caporali, in 1536, which the author had previously painted on the altarpiece of Saint Girolamo; one of the graffiti found in the choir of the Sistine Chapel; a manuscript preserved in Denmark; or a melody from the musical canons of the theorist Lodovico Zacconi (1555–1627):

La testimonianza seicentesca di Zacconi, che colloca questa melodia al primo posto tra i “canoni da muro”, mostra il perdurare della sua fortuna e rinvia ai sapienti canoni enigmatici, laddove la musica si associa a motti di contenuto morale e religioso per creare un’espressione d’arte tipicamente rinascimentale in cui il compositore è anche teologo e la musica si coniuga con i simboli della fede. (Brumana 2017, p. 72)

The music of all these examples of descending melodic patterns reflects a devotional character associated with the Catholic Church, often together with the pictorials that accompany the music in this sense.

4. Musical Epigraphy of the *Salve Regina* from Villamayor de Gállego in Zaragoza

The Renaissance musical fragments painted on the wall of the cloister of Villamayor de Gállego in Zaragoza are the remains of the Marian procession that took place in the covered ambulatory that runs around the whole church, where the *Salve Regina* was sung in one of the liturgical stations located at the foot of the nave. These musical annotations of the antiphon functioned as a support resource accompanying the art of memory, a mnemonic resource rooted in the medieval tradition and continued in the Renaissance.

All of the memorized material, whether it was chant or counterpoint progressions, was organized in a systematic way according to abstract musical principles that helped in the process of memorization and retrieval. Thus, a singer who wanted to sing polyphony would take a chant melody from his mental inventory, organize it rhythmically, and then place a second or third part against it. This would be easy because he had all possible progressions of consonances at the tip of his tongue. Alternatively, he could choose to preserve his composition in writing (Busse 2005, p. 253).

The alternation between the memorised chant and the visual support of the musical notation inscribed on the sacred walls of Villamayor de Gállego are a vestige of the renaissance cultural tradition in the Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora del Pueyo. From this musical notation we can make an approximation to the period in which the music was written and other related data about it.

Musical palaeography is the science that studies the graphic systems of musical fixation used by human beings, regardless of the materiality of the support, the means of production of the signs, and the chronology. The object of study of this scientific-technical discipline is the identification, reading, analysis, dating and transcription of musical ideograms.

Musical epigraphies are historical musical sources written or inscribed on hard or semi-hard support that last over time.

The musical epigraphy studied can be found in the Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora del Pueyo, Villamayor de Gállego, Zaragoza. Its spatial location is on the upper right wall of the east entrance to the church. The author is anonymous.

This musical epigraphy (Figure 4), size 69 × 89 cm, is written with paint on stone in two phases: Firstly, nine vertical staves were printed, and secondly, musical graphs were added next to the Latin lyrics of the accompanying text. The range of the noteheads is about 1 cm to 1.5 cm; the range of the stems is about 1.6 cm to 2 cm.

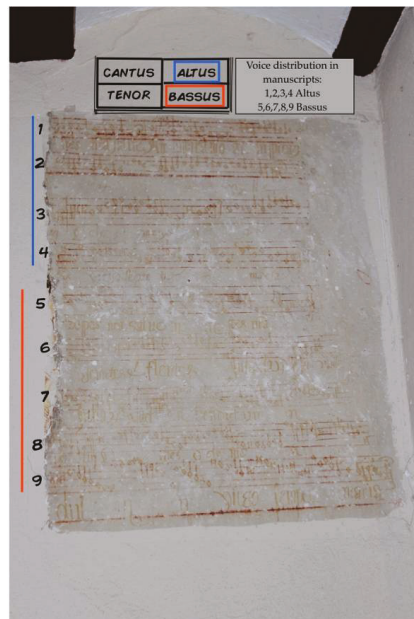


Figure 4. Musical epigraphy of the *Salve Regina* (numbered), mid 16th century, Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora del Pueyo, Villamayor de Gállego, Zaragoza.

To draw vertical staves, a string was utilised, arranged from side to side, which left a strong reddish line printed. Both the musical notation and the textual lyrics of the *Salve Regina* were painted with a lighter red colour, a little orange and with some kind of medium-thick brush. The colour was probably obtained in the following way, according to custom: a mortar was used to crush minium into a powder, and then it was mixed with egg yolk which was removed from the membrane that wrapped it; then everything was mixed with ox gall. If you wanted to make it darker, add a little coal, and if you wanted to make it lighter, mix it with a little water.

As for the morphological elements, epigraphy shows some marked chisel strokes on the underlying wall after its discovery, which detract from the sharpness of the image. Many of the musical signs appear blurred at the beginning, middle and end of the staff.

No clues are preserved, nor are any mensuration signs.

The Latin text of the antiphon *Salve Regina*, located below the musical notation, is written in round Gothic script and has been partially erased: *spes nostra salve/A te suspiramus*

a te suspiramus/O Clemens/Virgo semper virgo maria/spes nostra salve spes nostra/gemetes et flentes/In hac lacrimarum valle/Et iesum benedictum/tris tui/o Clemesa/Dul virgo semper maria.

The whole set of musical writing signs in the epigraphy corresponds to the white mensural notation half from the fifteenth century to the end of the sixteenth century. In this period musicians used the rhomboidal notation signs. Graphic signs that we find are:

- Breves.
- Semibreves.
- Minim.
- Semiminim.
- Ligatures, for example, bars 76–78 s staff of *altus*, descending ligature *cum–cum* (perfectly and properly), breve-longa (BL) with fermata to complete *tempo*. Bar 141, staff 9 from *bassus*, ascending ligature *cum opposita propietate*, semibreve-semibreve. Bar 171, staff 9, *bassus*, ascending ligature longa-longa (A–D) to finish the chant.
- *Punctum additionis* both on semibreves (for example, c. 44 *bassus*, staff 6) or minims (bar 45, *bassus*, staff 6).
- Fermata on ligatures, chant rests.
- Leger lines, staff 9, *bassus*, (bars 147–148).
- Longa, breve and semibreve rests.
- *Custos* at the end of every staff (except for second, fourth and ninth staves) indicating the height of the first note below.
- Alteration of the staff: *bassus*, bar 106 flat for B, staff 8. B flat is the only altered note that appears in the hexacordal system and is considered *musica recta or vera* (guidonian hand). The rest of the alterations are not written in the body of the *Salve*. We find *musica ficta* in modal cadences, these sharp or halftone.

Musica ficta from the epigraphy:

- *Altus*: bar 26 B flat; bar 39 C sharp; bar 67 G sharp; bar 71 C sharp; bar 76 B flat.
- *Bassus*: bar 128 C sharp.; bar 169 B flat.

Musica ficta from *Salve Regina* in four voices:

Below are the *semitonia subintelecta* that appear in Morales' antiphony as chords (Figure 5).

The piece is framed in a period of transition where the polyphonists link the ancient mode ready to be transported, with the incipient tonality.

The mode of the *Salve* belongs to the authentic *protus, mode I with D* for tonic and A for tenor, recitative note or *repercussio*. Therefore, clauses are sharps both for the final cadence on the keynote D, C sharp, D, and in the medial cadence on the diapente A, G sharp, A. Each cadence accompanies the conclusion of the text or sentence.

Following Rubio's (1983) observations regarding contrapuntal coincidences in different polyphonic authors we extract the following examples for the clauses in the *Salve* by Morales (Figure 6).

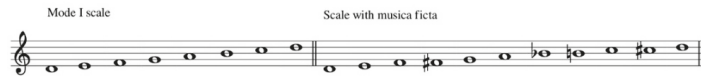
The first example, bars 47–50, shows a medial cadence on the diapente with a 4–3 suspension on a chord in fundamental state with the bass moving in descending fourth, so the clause is sustained. In the example of bars 11–13 we can find 3–4 suspension with the cadence on the *finalis* note.

In the second example, bars 36–37, of clause over dominant, suspension is 6–7 with second major descendent movement in the bass. It is the same in bars 138–139.

Bars 117–118 are a pass cadence where the bass is ascending in 2nd interval, therefore sharp, V of V, making a cadence in the final note or tonic D.

In the example bars 19–20 of pass cadence, in other words, the one that is effected on the degrees of the scale that are not the tonic or the dominant, is executed in G major.

Authentic protus, mode I



Musica ficta as chords

Salve Regina in 4 Cristóbal de Morales

c. 9 c.11 c.11 c.12 c.19 c.26 c.27 c.27 c.32 c.36 c.39 c.49 c.52 c.57 c.60 c.67 c.71 c.76

20 c.76 c.77 c.91 c.106 c.106 c.106 c.118 c.123 c.128 c.129 c.139 c.145 c.152 c.169 c.169 c.170

Figure 5. Musica ficta from *Salve Regina* in 4 by Cristóbal de Morales. Source: own elaboration. Mode I scale and scale with *musica ficta*. Source: own elaboration.

Musica ficta in the cadences

Salve Regina in 4 Cristóbal de Morales

c. 47-50 c. 36-37

Cantus: in hac la - cri - ma - rum val - le. Ad te

Altus: ge - men - tes et flum - tes, sal - te su - spi - ra -

Tenor: - - - - - tes su - spi - ra -

Bassus: - - - - - tes mus, mus,

c. 117-118 c. 138-139 c. 11-13

Cantus: cle - mem. O dul - cis do,

Altus: mem. O dul - ve,

Tenor: Vir - go, -stra, sal - ve,

Bassus: cle - go. do, spes no - stra,

c. 19-20 c. 59-61 c. 74-77

Cantus: sal la - cri - ma - rum, rum, la - cri - ma - rum val -

Altus: spes no - stra, sal la - cri - ma - rum val - le,

Tenor: - - - - - ve, spes - rum val - le, la - cri - ma - rum val -

Bassus: sal - ve. la - cri - ma - rum val - le, la - cri - ma - rum val -

Figure 6. Cristóbal de Morales, *Salve Regina* in 4, bars 47–50; bars 36–37; bars 117–118; bars 138–139; bars 11–13; bars 19–20; bars 59–61; bars 74–77. Source: own elaboration.

This example shows (bars 19–20), still belonging to a cadential process, treatment, according to the common rules of the treatises of that time, a chromatic note in a major 6th interval, A–F sharp, between bass and tenor, preceded by adjacent movements and contrary to an octave. Also, for “un-singable semitones”, notes with same name, in this case F sharp F sharp from tenor, mensural theorists such as Bermudo proposed its treatment with a major 6th interval. Chromaticism ascends and the bass descends in a major 2nd on a chord in fundamental state.

Another example of “un-singable semitone” is found in bar 60 where musical signs become rhetorical-musical figures. Again, a major 6th B–G sharp between bass and tenor is resolved by a chromaticism that ascends and a bass that descends in a major 2nd. The interval is again preceded by adjacent movements and contrary to an octave, resolving into a fundamental state chord. Also, this example from bar 60 has the addition that the “un-singable semitone” G sharp–G sharp (semiminim–minim) is in rhetorical relationship with the text, the word *valle* (*valley*) (*en un valle de lágrimas*), a neutral and equal esplanade for two equal notes, like two tears falling into the valley. The rhetorical resource of the katabasis or descending line in the propinquity of the adjacent movements appears in almost all the text that says the word *lacrimorum* (descending tears), especially from bar 74 to 77 in the *bassus voice*, and the epigraphy studied here is included in staff 7. In a rhetorical analogy to the intake and exhalation of air, a katabasis (melodic line ascending) is followed by an anabasis (melodic line descending) in the word we sigh (*Ad te suspiramus*), for example, from bar 29 to bar 33 of *cantus*.

Collation with musical sources dating from the same period has led to the conclusion that it is the *Salve Regina* four-voice antiphony by Cristóbal de Morales (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Clean copy of the epigraphy of Villamayor, Zaragoza. Source: own elaboration.

Anglés (1971) in *Ópera Omnia by Cristóbal de Morales* brings together in a study the musical sources of the *Salve* in four voices of this polyphonist’s work that are preserved in Spanish geography:

- Barcelona, Orfeo Català, MS. 6, f. 34v–36 (B). Does not contain author’s name.
- Madrid, Library House of the Duke of Medinaceli, Ms. 13230, f. 184v–189 (M).
- Valladolid, Santiago Parish Church, without a symbol, f. 40v–42 (V).

Anglés asserts: “The text is that of the Marian antiphon sung according to the liturgical practice of alternating polyphony with plainchant, or with organ verses, so that it is more a composition of polyphonic verses than a motet” (Anglés 1971, p. 25). The author distinguished between the manuscript M and V with respect to B, because M and V “omit *et in ‘et spes’* and add *semper* in ‘*Virgo semper Maria*’ (Anglés 1971, p. 25).

The *Salve Regina* epigraphy of Villamayor de Gállego de Zaragoza corresponds to the model of Madrid and Valladolid where the text (with a calligraphic textual gothic script, with brachygraphic signs) says *virgo semper maria*, which proves that in this Marian sanctuary there was a printed manuscript of the same characteristics as the M and V from which they copied the musical text on the wall next to the literary text. We suspect that this is a direct copy of a printed source for two reasons:

- Because voices were written down on the wall according to the layout of a choir book where the *altus* and the *bassus* are spatially positioned on the straight side of the sheet (the right-hand page of an open book), the *altus* at the top and the *bassus* below it. This distribution of the epigraphy is the one that has been uncovered, where we can see a fragment of the *altus* and below it part of the *bassus*. Restoration work may reveal that on the other side of the lintel of the door, behind the baroque stonework, is the *cantus* and *tenor* of the same antiphony.
- Because calligraphy of the musical notation is entirely rhomboidal as in the musical impressions of choir books of this period. This piece was composed by Cristóbal Morales about the middle of the sixteenth century when autographic musical signs were already drifting towards oval note forms.

There is documentary evidence of two interventions in the building of the Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora del Pueyo during the sixteenth century, a time of economic boom for the town of Zaragoza: the first in 1507 “to extend the layout of the hermitage [. . .] the courts and the council of Villamayor agree with a renowned master builder from Zaragoza, Alonso de Leznes to accomplish a reform” (Roche Castelrianas and Turón 2012, p. 43); the second in 1529 when “other work was performed to refurbish and extend some of the rooms in the saint’s house” (Roche Castelrianas and Turón 2012, p. 43). On the other hand, we know from the chronicles of the Carmelite Fr. Roque Alberto Faci (1739), that the church and the cloister were at different heights, and that they were flush in a renovation in 1736, so that the original height of the epigraphy would not be the current one (Faci 1739, p. 269).

However, after the attribution of the *Salve* to a specific author, we can date the epigraphic musical source to the second half of the sixteenth century, when Cristóbal de Morales had already composed this music and it had been distributed in printed copies. We infer that part of the chant, mensuration and epigraphic keys that we see today, are still covered by other strata according to “the fashion of the time”, but they have not been lost and could be uncovered by restoration work. Even so, and knowing the work, we know clefs are usual for polyphonic vocal music: C clef in the third line for the *altus* and F clef in the fourth line for the *bassus*.

The mensuration sign is that of *tempus imperfectum diminutum* (the cut C, the most frequent time sign in the 16th century), which no longer responds to diminishing values as was usual in the fifteenth century. *Cinquecento* music is usually transcribed in *integer valor*.

The element that informs us that this is not an epigraphy performed at the same time as the Baroque ornamentation painted on the lintel during reforms made to the sanctuary’s construction in the eighteenth century is the stratigraphic excavation of which traces have been left (Figure 8). From this excavation a succession of strata is obtained that confirms a chronological sequence showing that the musical epigraphic notation is one level below the baroque ornamentation, so that, according to a relative archaeological dating—whose fundamental principle is that the lower level came first and therefore, before the higher one, the epigraphy cannot belong to the eighteenth century. Identical painting that must

have accompanied the Baroque one on the left lintel (Figure 9) is observed in a layer on the right lintel above the layer on which the epigraphy is written.



Figure 8. Relative archaeological dating, Villamayor de Gállego, Zaragoza.



Figure 9. Baroque ornament left side, East door, Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora del Pueyo, Villamayor de Gállego, Zaragoza.

There are a total of nine staves –which we have marked with numbers (1 to 9) in Figure 4, copied from the *recto* of printed manuscript (*fol. r*) with the *altus* and the *bassus*. The first four staves correspond to the *altus* (1–4):

- The first one is from bar 22 to 39.
- The second from bar 64 (fourth beat) to 78.
- The third from bar 106 (third beat) to 126.
- The fourth from bar 150 to 170.
- The next five bars correspond to the *bassus* (5–9).
- The fifth from bar 9 to 25 (first beat).
- The sixth from bar 39 to 60.
- The seventh from bar 71 to 100 (two first beats).
- The eighth from bar 105 (last beat) to 129.
- The ninth from bar 140 (third beat) to 171 (end of the piece).

Preservation state of the spellings of both tessituras is quite deteriorated, although the *altus* is preserved in a more legible state. The *bassus* is more damaged.

The following signs do not appear in the *bassus*:

- Bar 11 in the second beat G breve (whole-note 2:1).
- Bar 14 in the second time D semibreve (half-note) and minim rest (crotchet).
- Bar 17 minim rest.
- Bar 39 breve and minim rests (blurred).

- Bars 55–57 semibreve and longa rests (blurred).
- Bar 58.
- Bar 79 minim rest and G semibreve.
- Bar 114 semibreve rest.
- Bar 116 semibreve rest.
- Bar 164 breve (A).

5. Conclusions

The study of the musical epigraphy of the *Salve* of Villamayor de Gállego, located on the walls of the Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora del Pueyo, determines that it is the Marian antiphon *Salve Regina* in four by Cristóbal de Morales, which leads us to two conclusions: the first is that there was probably a musical source in the hermitage of this town in Zaragoza with the same characteristics as those in Madrid and Valladolid compiled in the studies of Higinio Anglés, which was copied directly from the printed manuscript onto the wall of the cloister. In the Marian devotional act of Villamayor de Gállego, when the religious congregation—accompanied, perhaps, by the people—went around the ambulatory that surrounded the entire perimeter, stopping at the foot of the nave where the image of the Virgin presided over the main altar, the musical epigraphy of the *Salve*, written on both sides of the wall, probably served as a mnemonic resource to sing the chant, delimiting the exact location where it should be sung.

Thus, and as a second conclusion, musical epigraphies are historiographic-musical sources that can provide testimony or data of a musical past, and should therefore be restored, preserved, catalogued and displayed like any other historical document, regardless of its support, and become part of our musical heritage.

The musical epigraphies of Villamayor de Gállego in Zaragoza are the vestige of a religious tradition and represent the *Salve Regina*, the most popular Marian antiphon of the Rite of the *Salve* in the Iberian Peninsula during the Renaissance. The great Marian devotion that existed in Spanish territory is associated with the musical practice of polyphony, essential in Christian rituals and extended, in part, thanks to the power of communication provided by the printing press.

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Article

Retooling Medievalism for Early Modern Painting in Annibale Carracci's *Pietà with Saints* in Parma

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Abstract: Annibale Carracci (1560–1609) drew on the Italian Renaissance tradition of the Man of Sorrows to advance the Christological message within the altarpiece context of his *Pietà with Saints* (1585). From its location at the high altar of the Capuchin church of St. Mary Magdalene in Parma, the work commemorates the life of Duke Alessandro Farnese (1586–1592), who is interred right in front of Annibale's painted image. The narrative development of the *Pietà with Saints* transformed the late medieval Lamentation altarpiece focused on the dead Christ into a riveting manifestation of the beautiful and sleeping Christ worshipped by saints and angels in a nocturnal landscape. Thus eschewing historical context, the pictorial thrust of Annibale's interpretation of the Man of Sorrows attached to the *Pietà with Saints* was to heighten Eucharistic meaning while allowing for sixteenth-century theological and poetic thought of Mary's body as the tomb of Christ to cast discriminating devotional overtones on the resting place of the deceased Farnese Duke.

Keywords: Devotional Art; Reform of Art; Early Modern and Italian Renaissance Art

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The *Pietà with Saints* (Figure 1) for the high altar of the Capuchin church of Saint Mary Magdalene in Parma articulates the increasing attention brought to the aesthetic qualities of the Man of Sorrows tradition and the value placed on creative imitation on the part of its maker, Annibale Carracci (1560–1609). An original exponent of the post-Tridentine sensibility, he explored new devices of visual rhetoric in a time ripe for re-evaluating sacred images to advance religious devotions and to broaden and enrich artistic traditions (Robertson 2019, pp. 19–32). Annibale produced this impressive work of art during his second visit to Parma in 1585, when he also convinced Cardinal Odoardo Farnese to become his most consistent patron. Count Carlo Cesare Malvasia and the papal diplomat Giovanni Battista Agucchi both recount that Annibale stopped for some time in Parma to study the Great Cupola by Correggio in the Cathedral of Parma, and had the occasion to make the works he produced for the Duke that were so well received that they opened his way to go to Rome under the protection of Cardinal Odoardo Farnese (Agucchi [1646] 1947, p. 240; Malvasia [1667] 1967, p. 403).

Annibale's *Pietà with Saints* represents the subject of Christ outside the tomb in a nocturnal landscape where angels are carrying a cross over the body of the Savior before His Resurrection. The saints participate in a vigil with gestures of increasing narrative animation as a means of emphasizing their attitudes as exempla of piety. St. Francis is kneeling with outstretched arms, St. Claire is holding the Eucharistic tabernacle, Mary Magdalene is engrossed in prayer, and St. John the Evangelist reacts to the swooning Virgin who props up Christ's head.

The gestures and facial expressions convey the passions of the mourning figures in a multiformed Albertian *istoria* that advances the sacramental significance of Christ's body. Annibale contributed to the expressive potential of the Italian Renaissance altarpiece by dramatizing the devotional through constant references to Raphael, Michelangelo, and Titian to suggest tragedy, transcendence, and redemption. The swooning Virgin, St. Francis, St. Claire, Mary Magdalene, and St. John the Evangelist enact in Annibale's *Pietà with Saints* functions that affirm their role of witnesses to an embodied experience of devotion. The Capuchin friars in concert with Venetian altarpiece traditions and the interests of

the Farnese House explored precisely this sense of the materiality of Christ's body when Annibale's altar painting became part of a funerary context.



Figure 1. Annibale Carracci, *Pietà with Saints*, 1585. Panel. Galleria Nazionale, Parma, Italy. Image Courtesy of Galleria Nazionale, Parma, Italy; <https://useum.org/museum/Galleria-nazionale-di-Parma> (accessed on 20 June 2021).

Within less than a decade of Annibale's completion of the *Pietà with Saints*, Duke Alessandro Farnese, the military leader of the wars against the Low Countries, died on

campaign in 1592. His body was transported back to his native Parma and buried in the Capuchin habit in the Church of St. Mary Magdalene in front of the high altar decorated with Annibale's *Pietà with Saints* (Robertson 2008, pp. 84, 101, 114, 128). The new historical function of the Capuchin church as sepulchral monument for the Farnese Duke revealed and at the same time reinforced the intrinsic properties of Annibale's *Pietà with Saints* to symbolize the presence of the mystical body through the human body of Christ. Such similarity of divine and human materiality affirmed the eternal life of the soul, in this case the memory of the Farnese Duke interred directly in front of the altar. It may not be simple coincidence that, after Annibale's *Pietà with Saints* became intrinsically associated with the Farnese house, Francesco Mochi (1580–1654) undertook the sculpting of an equestrian bronze statue in Piacenza in 1620–1625 as a fitting military tribute to the Duke. The *Pietà with Saints* must have had an enduring effect on Cardinal Odoardo Farnese, who began negotiations to bring Annibale and his brother, Agostino, to Rome to work in the Farnese Palace in 1593 (Robertson 2008, p. 84).

Annibale deployed noticeable borrowings from Correggio (1489–1534) in the *Pietà with Saints* in order to validate the Renaissance altarpiece tradition and at the same time to respond to the criticisms leveled against him by painters of his native Bologna. Both his *Crucifixion with Saints* (1583) and *The Baptism of Christ* (1585), which Annibale had painted in Bologna, had incurred scathing critique for being distinctly based on a mere imitation of nature, depicted with a bold and broad application of paint (Summerscale 2000, p. 93; Freedberg 1989, pp. 24–26). The Bolognese detractors, however, misread Annibale's use of brushwork and the material thickness of paint as an experimental means of exploring the pictorial field (Stoescu 2010). With an unprecedented melding of talent and technical virtuosity, Annibale's *Pietà with Saints* manifests innovation alongside a respect for the altarpiece tradition. In capitalizing on the Italian Renaissance altarpiece and on its foremost exponent in Parma, Correggio, Annibale proved himself skilled in the manipulation of established styles (Sohm 2001, pp. 29–30). His brushstrokes astutely interpreted the stylistic differences among Raphael, Michelangelo, Correggio, and Parmigianino (1503–1540), articulating the relative merits of competing artistic approaches and simultaneously giving free rein to his originality to capture iconographic meaning with creative imitation.

This paper argues that Annibale cast the worshipful attitude of the bystanders (the saints) in the *Pietà with Saints* with a medieval Christocentric emphasis on the relevance of Marian devotion to funerary altarpiece practice. Annibale directed devotional attention to the figure of Christ in order to retool what was by then an archaic altarpiece mode – the Lamentation (Humfrey 1993, pp. 73–76; Humfrey 1996; Prosperi 1997, pp. 21–26). His interpretation of the Lamentation scene as a transfigured space, in which all the elements work together to make Christ the center of narrative action, elevates to new levels earlier examples of Lamentation altarpieces. The originality of the *Pietà with Saints* thus lays bare an early modern altarpiece conception that reinforced archaic directions in religious art around 1500 (Van Os 1990, p. 204; Humfrey 1993, p. 64). This trend registers an acute awareness on the part of artists of the status and legitimacy of traditional Christian images in the years around 1500 as a characteristic of a self-conscious religious culture, one analyzed long ago by Erwin Panofsky (Panofsky 1953, pp. 250–58) and more recently by Hans Belting (Belting 1994, pp. 432–42), Bernhard Decker (Decker 1990), and Joseph Leo Koerner (Koerner 1993, pp. 80–126). An up-to-date evaluation of this trend in the sixteenth-century context of convergent humanist and reform thought points out that religious images exceeded a mere reversion to earlier practices. Alexander Nagel underscores the “medieval modern” aspect of archaism within forms of emphatically Christocentric imagery that restored a clarity and purity believed to have existed in the past (Nagel 2012, pp. 32–33). The religious culture to which Annibale's altarpiece belonged was structurally anticipated by earlier processes of spatiotemporal displacement, translocation, and translation from Byzantium to Western Europe that relayed the iconic devotional image of the Man of Sorrows to new generations of artists (Constantoudaki-Kitromilides 2013, pp. 147–90).

The task of prayer and supplication originally served by the Pietà resonated with the devotional practices of the Capuchin friars at the church of Saint Mary Magdalene in Parma. The Capuchins appeared to have revered the Man of Sorrows as significant to the passions experienced by the servant and to the explorations of the visual capabilities of the icon for a more immediate interaction with the supplicant in the afterlife (O’Kane 2005). The iconographical development of the Man of Sorrows helped the faithful to experience Christ’s sufferings in individual terms, which not only awakened sorrow but also prepared the soul toward salvation (Decker 2008). Annibale’s conception for the *Pietà with Saints* harkened back to older prototypes and devotional modes of the Italian Renaissance altarpiece tradition. It is noteworthy that Annibale never reprised the funerary context of the Pietà in any other altarpieces he painted. He took up work on another sepulchral altarpiece only late in his life, around 1604–1605, when he produced the *Madonna of Loreto* for the Madruzzi Chapel in Sant’Onofrio, Rome (Benati and Riccòmini 2006, p. 416). His health faltering at the time, he may not have executed this work himself but was evidently behind the archaic frontality of the composition, which revived the mode of the *Pietà with Saints* and also anticipated Annibale’s last altarpiece, *Madonna and Child in Glory with Sts. Nilus and Bartholomew* (1608–1609), in the Founders’ Chapel at the Abbey Church in Grottaferrata.

The *Pietà with Saints* depicts a Lamentation scene that intensifies the dominance of Christ’s presence in the format of an icon. The figure of Christ, derived from the frontal configuration of the Man of Sorrows image, is the focus of devotional attention in a scene of vigil over His body before the Resurrection. The Italian Man of Sorrows tradition had been developing since the late fourteenth century with distinctive features borrowed from the Burgundian tradition that allowed for the introduction of God the Father or angels in the composition. Annibale developed the composition of the *Pietà with Saints* as a natural outgrowth from the Man of Sorrows prototype, expanding and introducing a distinct setting and additional figures. Christ is shown seated, His arms hanging open and body propped on a square (altar-like) block covered with a white (altar-cloth-like) winding sheet. This evocation of Christ’s body as the consecrated Host beckons us to consider earlier altarpieces such as Agnolo Bronzino’s *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, 1529 (Florence, Uffizi Gallery) and Andrea del Sarto’s *Lamentation (Luco Pietà)*, 1523–1524 (Florence, Pitti Palace) that explored the properties of Christ’s body as a subject relevant to the altars and chapels used for family burials. Bronzino’s *Lamentation*, painted for the altar of the Cambi family in Florence’s Santa Trinità shortly after completing his work at the Capponi Chapel, underscores the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist through explicit references to the chalice, the shroud on which Christ’s body has been laid, and the officiating saints which are, just like in Andrea del Sarto’s *Lamentation*, historically and theologically essential to the communication of the salvific sacrifice (Natali 2010, p. 45).

In Annibale’s *Pietà with Saints*, a less conventional setting directs dramatic responses directly to Christ. The narrative quality of a nocturnal Lamentation and the great Cross carried by angels, which occupies the upper part of the image, breaks with the arrangement most commonly associated with traditional Lamentation scenes. Annibale captures the literal, material, and structural aspects of a real space, but presents them to the viewer as abstract, pictorial, and spatial entities in the painted altarpiece. In suppressing the internal consistency of the historical narrative commonly associated with the liturgical drama, Annibale places a higher degree of emphasis on the body of Christ.

Annibale’s effort to distance Christ from the literal space of the image encapsulates his critical insights into devotional thought. New configurations of theological problems were taking shape before Annibale’s eyes in the closing decades of the sixteenth century (Prosperi 2001, pp. 168–85). They included a proliferation of sacred environments, relics, and pilgrimages, and above all artistic modalities for representing the mystery of transubstantiation through the means of language (Jones 1995). The thirteenth session of the Council of Trent focused on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the way the conceptual body exists in a sublimated, yet real, substance that is rather elusive to

the literal sense of language (Waterworth 1848, session 13 chp. 1). The Venetian painter Paolo Veronese (1528–1588) chose to investigate the Dead Christ by enhancing its relevance to seventeenth-century Italian Renaissance practice in ways conducive to metaphor and transformation. Veronese's two altarpieces involving the theme, namely, *St. James*, c. 1581 in Venice's San Giuliano (commonly called San Zulian) and the Petrobelli altarpiece, c. 1563–1565 (Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada), creatively illustrate the Man of Sorrows adored by saints and angels not in a death or burial scene, but in a heavenly vision more immediately attached to personal religious meditation (Puglisi 2013, pp. 257–95).

In earlier Lamentation scenes, the principles that connect the figure of Christ to the biblical event conformed to the prescriptions of the church fathers. In ecclesiastical understanding, a restrained gesture of lament rather than an unleashed dramatic sentimentality effectively helped the devotee to associate prayer with the redemptive character of the Passion narrative (Savonarola 1971, pp. 263–66; da Lucca 1527, 3v–4r). Lamentation scenes that combine an internal historical consistency with a significant degree of emotional restraint in the attitudes of the lamenting figures show a great measure of compliance with this concept. In Pietro Perugino's *Uffizi Lamentation* (1495) and in Sandro Botticelli's *Lamentation* (1499) in the Poldi Pezzoli Museum in Milan, a very refined sense of decorum responds to the theologically informed code of the Lamentation (Nagel 2000, pp. 41–43). In these works, the liturgical context of the altarpiece is stressed through explicit links between the historical worshippers and the prayerful practice directed to the altar.

Annibale's *Pietà with Saints* departs from the traditional coordination between the attitudes of the historical figures depicted in previous church altarpieces, the worshipful activity focused on Christ, and the devotee praying in front of the high altar at the Capuchin church. His tendencies registered the influence of reforming thought on the altarpiece painting created in Rome in the post-Tridentine decades, when the appeal of the traditional icon dovetailed with orchestrated efforts to improve the aesthetic outcome. Even though largely motivated by the transfer of theological thinking to altarpiece practice, the religious art produced during that period was recognized by Federico Zeri as art *senza tempo*, namely, outside of time, as exemplified by Scipione Pulzone, Marcello Venusti, Girolamo Siciolante, and Giuseppe Valeriano (Zeri 1957, p. 80). In Annibale's *Pietà with Saints*, while a variety of devotional gestures may still appear controlled by theological convention, an intense emphasis on the figure of Christ is brilliantly inscribed on the altarpiece. The arms of Saint Francis are stretched toward Christ with a rhetorical force most commonly associated with presentations and exhortations to worshippers to behold Christ and the objects of the Passion. In a number of Annibale's images of St. Francis, including a preparatory drawing (Figure 2) and the 1585–1586 painting *St. Francis Adoring the Crucifix* (Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice), the saint kneels in the right foreground with outstretched arms and turns his head to viewers, addressing and inviting them to direct their gaze to the Crucifix (Posner 1971, p. 13). The prominence of St. Francis and his turning toward the viewer are violations of the traditional narrative closure designed to make Christ the focal point of ritual and devotion.

A number of intentional disruptions of the internal historical consistency of the Lamentation scene reposition Christ as the fulcrum of devotional attention. A riveting focus on Christ connected the Lamentation scene to the heart and mind of the worshipper in ways that directly associated painting with the rise of the Eucharistic function of the altar in the post-Tridentine decades (Waterworth 1848, session 7, especially canons I and VIII). For example, similar principles are at work in Agostino Carracci's *Lamentation* of 1586, now in the State Hermitage Museum, and in Pietro da Cortona's *Pietà* from 1620–1625 in Santa Chiara, Cortona, which reveal a new set of formal solutions to the preeminence of Christ as fulcrum of Eucharistic significance in altar painting. Renaissance pictorial depictions of the Passion had persistent recourse to the art of the medieval period to reframe the unending search for Eucharistic theology and for a canon affirming the doctrine of transubstantiation, a search that occupied the second period of the Council of Trent (1551–1552) (Hsia 2005, p. 16).



Figure 2. Annibale Carracci, *St. Francis (Study for the Pietà with Saints)*, 1583–1585. Drawing. Image Courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, U.S. Rogers Fund, 1972; <https://www.metmuseum.org/> (accessed on 20 June 2021).

Annibale sought to expand the traditional disposition of altarpiece conceptions of the Lamentation based on the highly creative idea that Christ was asleep but not dead in the Lamentation. This interest in penetrating the mysterious properties of the dead Christ transcended the mere narrative framework of the historical life of Christ. The iconic and devotional character of Lamentation, a devotional theme derived from the Gospel accounts of the Virgin present at the foot of the cross, of the deposition of Christ from the cross, and of the preparations of His body for burial, shared with the Pietà its capacity as visual counterpoint to prayers and meditation. Henry Maguire, who emphasized the literary origin of Lamentation, also noted the trend to combine the Lamentation and Entombment in one scene in paintings after the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in which Mary is the principal mourner (Maguire 1981, pp. 102–7). In Giovanni Bellini's *Lamentation* altarpiece (1491) for Santa Maria dei Servi in Venice, the Mother of God is duly honored and placed squarely in the image center to draw attention to the treatment of the passions (Wilson 2017, pp. 93–110). Raphael engaged the subject of the Lamentation over the Dead Christ in the altarpiece he painted in his young age for the convent of Sant' Antonio in Perugia, thus paving the way for a dramatic repertoire of gestures and motions directed toward Christ (Lingner 2003, p. 77). Annibale's process of innovation singled out for commemorative ends in Parma a notable position on the representation of the body of Christ.

The sixteenth-century theory of imitation in Italian Renaissance art required that the Lamentation hinge on the appropriation of Alberti's notion of *istoria*; namely, the consistency of narrative action and devotional gesture. Annibale challenged Alberti's *istoria* by depicting a living Christ seated before the tomb, thus claiming a decisively self-conscious approach to altarpiece development and earning recognition from most astute art critics. The antiquarian and humanist Giovan Pietro Bellori (1613–1696) gives us the most detailed description of the *Pietà with Saints* in his first extended biography of Annibale published in 1672 (Bellori 2005, pp. 72–73). Bellori also recorded Federico

Zuccari's praise for Annibale's talent of reviving the spirit of Correggio in ways that advanced the Lamentation altarpiece (Bellori 2005, p. 73). In his account of the *Pietà with Saints*, Bellori describes how the saints are symmetrically arranged around Christ, every figure establishing a separate and meditative relationship with him: St. Francis kneeling with outstretched arms; St. Claire holding the Eucharistic tabernacle; and St. Mary Magdalene praying on the right. Behind the scene, St. John the Evangelist looks at the disconsolate Virgin who is swooning on the tomb's rock and propping up Christ's head with her hand.

These multiple foci of devotion drew on the history of the narrative altarpiece. Already in the 1470s and 1480s, Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506) offered a new concept in his prints, specifically his *Entombment* engraving, that revolutionized the world of religious art by concentrating on disparate moments of narrative action. Mantegna scattered moments and dramatic attitudes across the image's field with the clear objective of achieving a sustained devotional mode throughout. The effect of Mantegna's structural reformulation of the traditional entombment scene was to move Christian worship beyond historical information to a ritual setting. Resistance to Albertian principles of *istoria*, namely, consistency of material, proportion, gesture, and theme, helped to accommodate Mantegna's narrative engraving of ideas as pictorial inventions (Nagel 2000, pp. 43–46). It is a well-known fact that the interests of Annibale and of the Carracci Academy in fusing art practice and creativity relied to an unprecedented degree on the engravings of many Italian and Northern Renaissance artists (Bohlin 1979, pp. 41–43, 58–59). In the *Pietà with Saints* Annibale's effort to adapt the Lamentation scene to the altarpiece conventions of symmetry and frontality established a continual dialogue with the experimental mode of Mantegna's *Entombment*. The key move came when Annibale coordinated the tradition of the *imago pietatis* with inventive directions in Albertian *istoria* from prints. The resulting solution brought notable changes to the archaic associations of the Man of Sorrows to the Christian altar and to the mystery of the Eucharist. The role of prints, manuscript illuminations, sculpture reliefs, and monumental altarpieces circulated in the Venetian quarters, as well as the influence of Monte di Pietà and Holy Sacrament confraternities, reinforced the material link between the Man of Sorrows and the Eucharist in Sacramental altars (Humphrey 2013, pp. 219–56). The critical development of the Lamentation carried out by Annibale went hand-in-hand with equally significant reevaluations of the status of the altarpiece as a central possibility of Christian image making after the closing session of the Council of Trent (1563).

1. *Imago Pietatis* in a Novel Altarpiece Context

While the historical characters in the *Pietà with Saints* strike new and dramatic gestures, the depiction of Christ betrays a concentrated study of illustrious Renaissance predecessors. Annibale registered the influential interventions of Rosso Fiorentino (1495–1540) and especially Michelangelo, who elaborated a new conception of the dead Christ in the arms of the Virgin Mary (Nagel 2000, pp. 155–58). In Parma, Annibale's receptivity to Correggio's *Lamentation* of 1524 (Figure 3) betrayed his interest in a range of meaningful sources from Modena and the narrative ideas of Cima da Conegliano's *Lamentation* (Figure 4).

During his first visit to Parma, Annibale made a copy of Correggio's *Lamentation*, originally in the Del Bono Chapel of the Church of St. Giovanni Evangelista. In a letter to his cousin, Ludovico, Annibale announced that he had arrived in Parma in 1580 intending to study, draw, and contemplate his favorite Correggio paintings: the *Madonna della Scodella* and the *Madonna of Saint Jerome* (Summerscale 2000, p. 95; Malvasia [1667] 1967, p. 365). It was during this first Parmesan sojourn, which also marks the beginning of his enduring interest in Correggio's legacy, that Annibale developed an ongoing preoccupation with the Lamentation narrative. In engravings of the subject of the *Pietà* such as the 1597 *Il Cristo di Caprarola* (Figure 5), Annibale demonstrates the degree to which he mused on the dramatic disposition of historical characters around Christ in Correggio's *Lamentation* (see Cristofori 2005, pp. 320–22).



Figure 3. Correggio, *Lamentation*, 1524. Oil on canvas. Galleria Nazionale, Parma, Italy. Image Courtesy of Galleria Nazionale, Parma, Italy; <https://museum.org/museum/Galleria-nazionale-di-Parma/> (accessed on 20 June 2021).

Charles Dempsey has recognized in Annibale's preference for Correggio a persuasive force that advanced the pictorial tradition of their native Emilia toward personal expressive forms and at the same time refined his original use of *colorito suave* and the chiaroscuro he gleaned from Titian (Dempsey 2006, pp. 338–402). In order to rekindle earlier pictorial practice, Annibale studied Correggio to prepare himself for engaging the talent of Raphael. Countless artists of his generation strove to assert themselves in relation to the forces of taste and fashion that Raphael had established (Sohm 2001, pp. 29–30, 37). Annibale used Raphael to illustrate what Correggio had contributed to art, but emulated the softness of Correggio's modeling of forms and contours rather than Raphael's formal treatment in his investigation of devotional expression (Nagel and Wood 2010, p. 271).



Figure 4. Cima da Conegliano, *Lamentation over the Dead Christ with Sts. Francis and Bernardino*, 1495. Panel. Galleria Estense, Modena, Italy. Image Courtesy of Galleria Estense, Modena, Italy; <https://www.gallerie-estensi.beniculturali.it> (accessed on 20 June 2021).



Figure 5. Annibale Carracci, *Il Cristo di Caprarola*, 1597. Engraving. Image Courtesy of Archivio Libreria Antiquaria Bourlot, Torino, Italy.

An extraordinary Christocentric focus was for Annibale an irresistible opportunity to carry out experimental drawing and painting. It is not surprising to see in his conception of the sleeping Christ signs of an integration of drawing, painting, sculpture, and religion, which all refined and diversified the more traditional Lamentation scene. The figure of Christ in a preparatory drawing held in the Uffizi Gallery (Figure 6) served an idea to be fully explored in the *Pietà with Saints* (Posner 1971, p. 13). In this drawing, Annibale investigates the distinguishable type of Christ in a sitting position, his head and knees angularly bent, that signals borrowings from the highly poetic and imaginative sleeping Christ in Rosso Fiorentino's *Dead Christ with Angels* of 1525 (Figure 7). His adoption of a mystery-oriented approach to the dead Christ of the sort developed by Fiorentino, who once described his depiction specifically as a Christ "in forma Pietàtis", went hand-in-hand with Michelangelo's conscious return to the tradition of the *imago pietàtis* (Nagel 2000, pp. 156–58; Franklin 1989). Annibale intentionally connected his *Pietà with Saints* to Michelangelo's interest in penetrating the mysterious properties of the Man of Sorrows tradition in the realm of presentation drawing. As in Michelangelo's practice, Annibale endowed the figure of Christ with a sculptural feeling and a beautiful, pristine quality of body that reshaped the traditional Man of Sorrows on the model of antique sculpture. As Alexander Nagel convincingly argues, Michelangelo's interest in the figure of Christ was intrinsically bound up with the revival of antique figural formulas, a concern that he compellingly introduced in the arena of religious art (Nagel 2000, pp. 102–3). The impetus for artistic reform in the post-Tridentine decades supplied criticisms of the pagan nature of the classical authority, but revisionist approaches to older manifestations still allowed for various new styles to develop insights into the preservation of the ancient models in the artistic problematic of Trent's aftermath (Lingo 2019, p. 13).

The affinity between Annibale's Uffizi drawing and Michelangelo is not merely a matter of an archaic approach but also a structural investigation of specific formal choices. Annibale found in the sleeping Christ, and in the activities of unveiling and awakening, a number of thematic associations with his own interpretation of the Man of Sorrows tradition. The figure of Christ in the Uffizi drawing adapts the head and torso of Michelangelo's *Pietà* in St. Peter's, Rome, which was engraved by Annibale's brother, Agostino Carracci, in 1579. Michelangelo explored in his early Roman *Pietà* the mysterious force of Christ's body asleep and to this end gave the marble the radiance of the pristine, nude, and nearly woundless body. The marmoreal quality of the marble used in antique sculpture captured the transformation of Christ that took place in the interval between his death and Resurrection when life was latent and inseparably united to the body (Nagel 2000, p. 100).

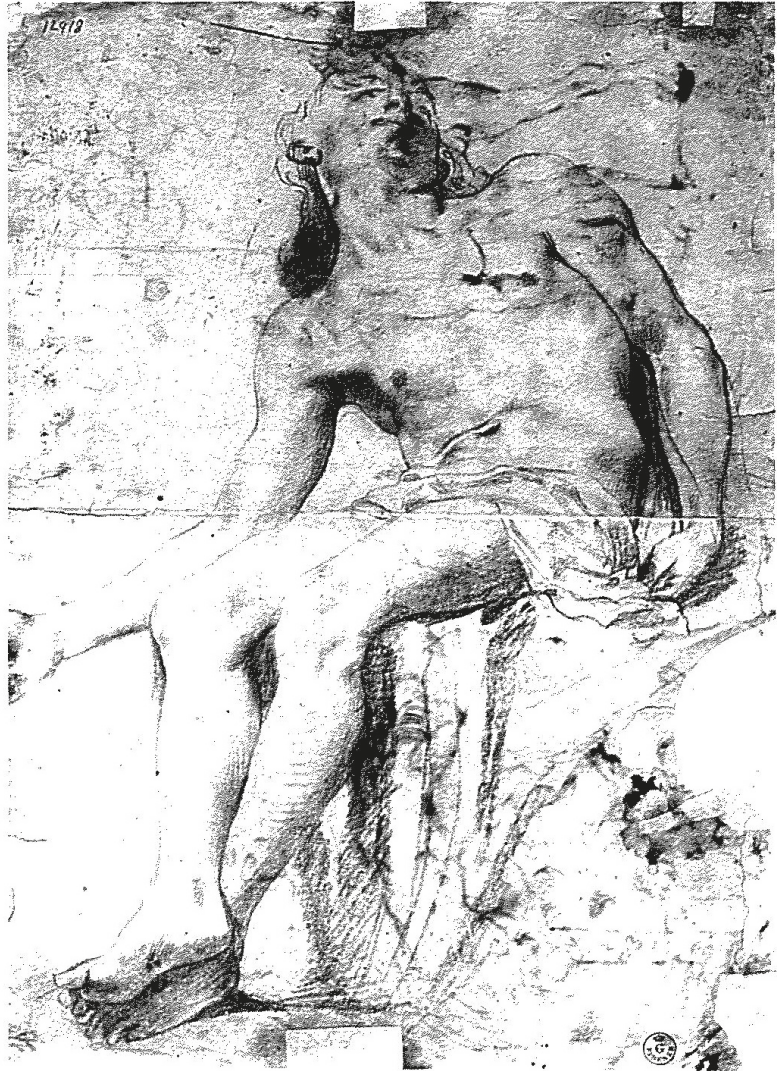


Figure 6. Annibale Carracci, *Christ (study for Pietà with Saints)*. Drawing. Uffizi Gallery, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, Florence, Italy. Image Courtesy of the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy.

In the narrative context of the *Pietà with Saints*, Annibale conflated a traditional *Pietà* with the Lamentation narrative, elevating the formal treatment of Christ's body to higher dramatic ends and showing His body gently twisted to one side with the head cradled in the Virgin's hand. This pictorial idea originated in Michelangelo's *Pietà* drawing of 1538–1544 for Vittoria Colonna (Figure 8), a renowned poet and his longtime friend, which offered a highly effective solution to the relationship between Christ and the Virgin by giving a yoke-like posture to Christ's body, falling under ground level and into the lower part of the Virgin's body (Nagel 2000, pp. 166–68). Annibale refashioned the life-giving emphasis embodied in the motif of maternal love that bound Christ and the Virgin in order to revive the theme of Christ's body in the interval after the death but before the Resurrection.

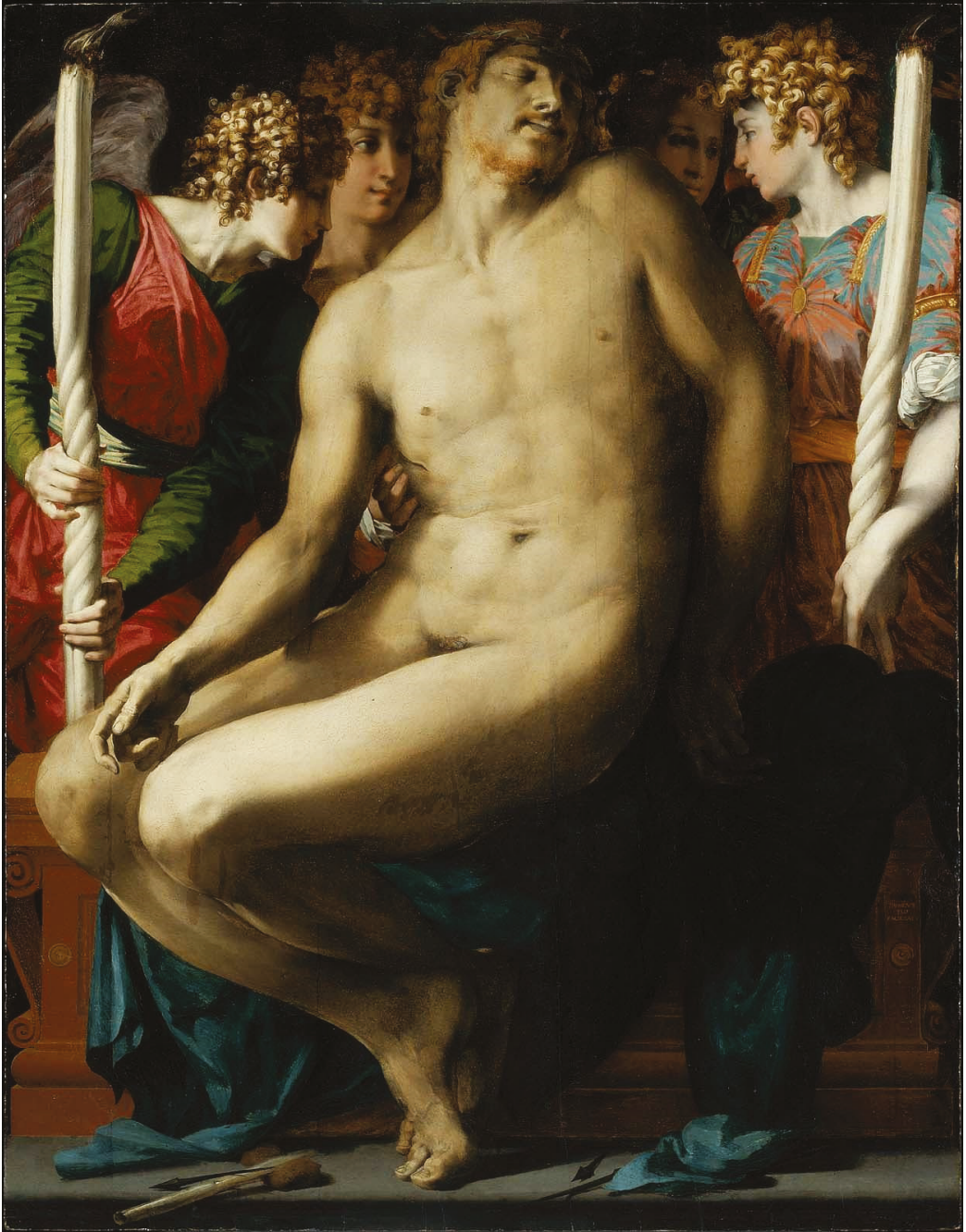


Figure 7. Rosso Fiorentino, *Dead Christ with Angels*, 1525. Oil on panel. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, U.S. Image Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, U.S. Charles Potter Kling Fund.



Figure 8. Michelangelo, *Pietà for Vittoria Colonna*, 1538–1544. Drawing. Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, U.S. Image Courtesy of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, US.

The search for a quasi-animated life force in Christ's body prompted Annibale to develop Michelangelo's *Pietà* for Vittoria Colonna inside the underexploited subject of a nocturnal Lamentation focused on an image of the Man of Sorrows outside the tomb. An intense pictorial gravity around Christ's body in the interval after his death but before his resurrection is an enduring motif of Annibale's depictions of the Lamentation scene. The *Burial of Christ* (Figure 9), a painting on copper in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum, New York, shows a significant degree of invention in the treatment of the sleeping Christ in a nocturnal scene rife with movements (Christiansen 1999). In it, Annibale expands the tradition of *imago pietatis* inside the sepulchral cave, illuminated artificially by a lit torch. The interpretation of the *Burial of Christ* as a return to the *imago pietatis* in early modern altarpieces inspired the full-scale altarpiece of Sisto Badalocchio for the Oratorio della Morte in Reggio Emilia, and the copy made by the young Guido Reni in 1594, after he left the workshop of Denys Calvaert and joined the Carracci Academy in Bologna (Christiansen 1999, p. 417).

The figure-centered focus of the *Pietà with Saints* brought religious painting quite concretely into dialogue with metaphors of a sleeping and beautiful Christ in early religious poetry (Belting 1994, p. 270). The work of the Council of Trent drew attention to the Christian past in order to prioritize theological thought from the early Church. The poetic epigrammatic inscriptions written on Crucifixion icons in the past complemented the visual argument of the icon painter that Christ did not suffer an ordinary death on the Cross. (Mango 1963, p. 317). The metaphor of Christ asleep that appears in several ninth-century Crucifixion icons from Mount Sinai advanced the notion of Christ's immortality and reunification with God (Weitzman 1976, p. 107). The insistence on the sleeping Christ originated with the icon painter who sought to make life visible in death and to outshine the weakness of mortal man with the beauty of Christ. The Metropolitan of Euchaita, John Mauropous, a poet, epigrammatist, and hymnographer in the circle of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus (1042–1055), integrated the effigy of the sleeping Christ into the liturgical canons he wrote. His epigram poem on the Crucifixion celebration, one of the twelve great feasts of the Byzantine Church, describes Christ metaphorically as "sleeping" on the wooden Cross (Belting 1994, p. 270).

The reconciliation of life and death in the metaphor of sleep, which appears to have been widespread in early religious poetry, sustained the task of visual exegesis in icon painting. In his thoughts on the Crucifixion, the disciple of John Mauropous, Michael Psellus (1017–1078), commended the pictorial refinement of the painter who can preserve the highly dramatic description of the Crucifixion narrative without presenting the dead Christ disfigured or deprived of the signs of life. The beauty of Christ became for painters the recognizable sign of a continuation of life after death and the invocation of special forms of devotional attention recognized by religious poets. It is noteworthy that Psellus broke the rules of narrative consistency of time and action that allowed the icon painter to depict Christ as both alive and lifeless (*empsychos* and *apsychos*), thus setting the stage for challenges to Alberti's *istoria* in the fifteenth century and beyond. In counterpoint to Alberti, and in the context of early modern means of inducing a contemplative response to the figure of Christ, the presentation of Christ reemerged in the Italian Renaissance in forms borrowed directly from the visual tradition of the icon. After the poet and humanist Angelo Poliziano, artistic advisor to the young Michelangelo, recalled the dead Christ in his sermons, late Quattrocento painters adjusted this model to new investigations of the dramatic Passion narrative in the altarpiece (Nagel 2000, pp. 75–77).



Figure 9. Annibale Carracci, *The Burial of Christ*, 1595. Oil on Copper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, U.S. Image Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, U.S. Edwin L. Weisl Jr. Gift, 1998; <https://www.metmuseum.org> (accessed on 20 June 2021).

2. The Funerary Altarpiece and Church Altar

Annibale's respect for archaic poetic license made him formally receptive to this highly imaginative Christ. This quality of a perfectly harmonized line between narrative development and early sacred image was well-suited to the task of commemorating the life of Duke Alessandro Farnese, whose death occurred after less than a decade after the completion of Annibale's work. As a funerary altarpiece, the *Pietà with Saints* lent itself to a conception of religious art utterly interpretative and at the same time highly permeated by the function historically served by icons.

An entire sequence of events lends credibility to the idea that the Farnese family diligently planned their sepulchral place in the Capuchin church. The Capuchins, who appear to have been the first commissioners of the *Pietà with Saints*, were the favorites of the Farnese family (Chvostal 2001, pp. 177–80). Duke Ottavio Farnese, the second Duke of Parma and Piacenza, had obtained the church of St. Mary Magdalene and the adjacent convent for the Capuchin order in the early 1570s. After the death of Maria of Portugal, the wife of Alessandro Farnese, the church of St. Mary Magdalene was decreed the burial place of the Farnese family. Upon his death in 1592, Duke Alessandro Farnese's body and the remains of Maria of Portugal were interred in the crypt, which thereafter became known as the final resting place of the Farnese (Chvostal 2001).

We are left in no doubt that Annibale's ideas linking prayer to the altarpiece traditions of the Man of Sorrows attracted the attention of the House of Farnese. A late fifteenth-century tradition in Parma related the term *pietās* to the essential role played by the Virgin in the episodes of the deposition, lamentation, and entombment (Humfrey 1983, pp. 126–27). Annibale must have found in the Parmesan environment an outlet for his ideas of reinforcing the sacramental interpretation of the figure of Christ through the Marian associations with Michelangelo's drawing for Vittoria Colonna. The drawing explicitly interpreted the Virgin's body as tomb, an idea Vittoria Colonna herself expressed when she said that "the Virgin had made of her nearly dead body a sepulcher in that hour" (Nagel 2000, p. 184; Colonna 1860, p. 171, sonnet 21). The *Pietà with Saints* revealed in a funerary context Christ's death as the source of regeneration, and thus implicitly illustrated how the commemoration of the deceased Duke might partake in a divine mystery.

Annibale culled from the rich history of the Renaissance altarpiece to accommodate his beautiful, pristine Christ adapted from the Man of Sorrows tradition to a funerary context. The *Lamentation over the Dead Christ with Sts. Francis and Bernardino* (1495) by Cima da Conegliano (1459–1517) was originally planned for the funerary chapel of Alberto Pio (1475–1531), Cima's most illustrious patron (Humfrey 1983, p. 33). Pio, an enthusiastic supporter of humanist scholarship and a papal delegate, commissioned Cima to paint a Lamentation for the high altar of the Franciscan Observant Church of St. Nicolò in Carpi. Peter Humfrey has drawn attention to the melding of private devotional function and funerary context in Cima's work (Humfrey 1983, pp. 33–34). Cima created an image that Pio first enjoyed in his lifetime as a devout Christian and subsequently took to Rome when he became imperial ambassador to the pope in 1512. While keeping with the private devotional function, the painting is unusual among Cima's works in more than just its emotional character. Cima must have been aware of the discussions of the Virgin's participation in the events of the Passion, which in Pio's theological circles concentrated on the term *pietās* (Humfrey 1983, pp. 33–34). Mary's swooning pose in Cima's *Lamentation* illustrated the link between her body and Christ's tomb (Hirn 1958, pp. 162–63). The inclusion of St. Francis, the exponent of the Franciscan Observant doctrine of the co-redemption, and of St. Bernardino of Siena, were equally reflective of the continued significance of this medieval narrative conception. According to Henk van Os, the association of the Virgin with funerary art spawned an altarpiece direction of significant innovative substance (Van Os 1990, pp. 113, 163).

Cima paid attention to small-scale landscape details and the casting of light on textures, fabrics, and the surrounding complement of lamenting figures—St. Mary Magdalene, St. John the Evangelist, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, St. Francis, and St. Bernardino—all of

whom direct their prayers to Christ. A full range of minutely described plants and stones in the foreground perfectly correspond to the Magdalene's costume with sparkling jewels. It has been noted that the example of Cima's religious painting initiated a trend toward *pietà* altarpieces with settings of pure landscape that was to become increasingly popular (ibid, pp. 16, 35). In Albrecht Dürer's *Feast of the Rosegarlands* of 1505 (National Gallery, Prague), and continuing with major works by Palma Vecchio and Titian, this feature advanced the *pietà* setting not as a real space but as a transfigured or figural space, all the elements of which work together to convey a mystical experience.

The location of Cima's *Lamentation* in close proximity to Parma gives us insight into the pictorial goals of Annibale's *Pietà with Saints*. Cima's compositional principles and the placement of figures close to the picture plane heightened the required feature of truthfulness of representation in altarpiece painting derived from the icon. On the other hand, the pictorial realization of the *Pietà with Saints* refuses to remain in the late fifteenth-century of Cima's *Lamentation*. The closeness of Mary Magdalene to the picture plane and the action of St. Claire holding the Eucharistic tabernacle make the *Pietà with Saints* one of Annibale's first religious compositions in which the action is determined by exhortatory development and eucharistic ritual.

3. New Trends of Archaism after Trent

The *Pietà with Saints* demonstrates how Annibale's creative force captured the Eucharistic significance of the church altarpiece in the post-Tridentine decades. His interpretation broke the mold of merely reprising the Lamentation iconographic type, thus superseding the archaic-oriented ideas of ecclesiastical reformers and theorists. It was characteristic of the historical principles of Tridentine Rome to place a premium on images of Christ inspired by early Christian models. The evolution of the post-Tridentine period as a time of enduring continuity with early Christian art not only fostered a new synthesis of canonical models but also fomented creative views of truth and cultural authority (Locker 2019, pp. 2–12). Altarpieces derived from these models combined a significant degree of historical reflection with a distinct awareness that the frontal presentation embodied a truthful link to the icon and to traditional modes of attention and worship (Lingo 2008, pp. 6, 78, 216).

This remarkable identification with early Christian art was also the corollary of a revival in medieval practices of pilgrimage and relic veneration in the post-Tridentine decades. Cardinal Carlo Borromeo (1538–1584), a leading prelate and reformer, distinguished his agenda for Catholic reform through personal penitential example and by taking pilgrimages, often barefoot, to venerate miraculous images and sacred sites. Borromeo's pilgrimage to the Sacro Monte di Varallo, his promotion of relics, practice of meditation, and personal emulation of St. Francis of Assisi, culminated in his pilgrimage to the Holy Shroud, brought to Turin for him in 1578 and preserved thereafter in the ducal and royal chapel (Casper 2021; Wright 2005, p. 211). Borromeo also addressed matters of art in his influential treatise *Instructiones fabricae et suppellectilis ecclesiasticae libri duo*, completed in 1577, in which he held out the dignity of religious painting as integral to church reform (Voelker 1977, p. 229). Cardinal Borromeo's efforts to project a post-Tridentine prospect back into early Christian images were largely shared by ecclesiastical theorists. The age of early Christian history was increasingly associated with acts of relocation (translation) of the bones of early martyr saints to the recently restored churches of Rome (Ditchfield 1995, p. 85). Cardinal Cesare Baronius (1538–1607) initiated an entire campaign of harnessing the sanctity of these relics from the Apostolic past, and systematized his findings in ecclesiastical historiography, an emerging branch of Christian humanism (Brown 2001). His colleague, Filippo Neri (1519–1595), the founder of the Roman Oratory, revived belief in the efficacy of prayer to the icons that populated Roman churches after they were brought to the Christian West in the thirteenth century and after the fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. Neri was determined to reinstate the practice of prayer and supplication of the Oratorians as well as the spiritual and sacramental function that icons had served in medieval theology.

Thus, notions of old media, formats derived from icon painting, and funerary portraiture were increasingly captured in innovative ideas in the altarpiece tradition. These interests were nonetheless based on ideas of style and decorum, or appropriateness to purpose (Gaston 2013, pp. 74–91). In their assimilation to church art, they reinforced the perception that the icon was particularly instrumental in asserting the contemporary authority of many religious images (Stoenescu 2011). It is noteworthy that early Christian artifacts drew the attention of early modern artists, whose works contributed to the structural restoration of a powerful Christocentric focus in the post-Tridentine Church. A revealing example is Annibale's *Pietà with Saints*, which demonstrates a deep engagement with the Man of Sorrows tradition for the purpose of highlighting the Eucharistic significance of the *Pietà* altarpiece. Remarkably, Annibale managed to reconcile the Eucharistic argument with his adaptation of religious concerns to fit a funerary altarpiece function that came after the completion of his painting, deriving inspiration from the reform ideas of Michelangelo's drawing and sculpture. The *Pietà with Saints* thus provides powerful testimony to an emerging theme in late sixteenth-century religious painting in which the artist draws attention to the aesthetic value of the icon as an object of artistic imitation. Unlike many ecclesiastical patrons and theorists who confined archetypal images to the evidentiary role of a historical continuum with the apostolic past, Annibale, and some leading contemporaries such as Federico Zuccari, Rubens, and the engraver Enea Vico, strove to uncover the artistic value of earlier images of Christ as a repository of models worth imitating (Stoenescu 2011, p. 427).

The reciprocal and active relationship between Christ and the saints in the *Pietà with Saints*, however, leaves no doubt that Annibale had more in mind than a historical image of devotion. Titian's final painting, a *Pietà* altarpiece he produced for his own tomb in Venice's Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, attests to the complexity of heritage and miraculous efficacy in the wake of the Reformation and the decrees of the Council of Trent (Nygren 2015). The integration into the altarpiece of an image of the real intercession between the saints and Christ elevated the icon of the Man of Sorrows to a new status as an aesthetic source for the Lamentation altarpiece. The body of Christ in the *Pietà with Saints* attests to Annibale's preoccupation with the Corpus Christi in a religious climate deeply invested in affirming the doctrine of transubstantiation. The rhetorical thrust of the altarpiece captures the theological content of the transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. This measure of religious expressivity updated an archaic religious culture centuries after Patriarch Nikephoros defended the icon as an artistic object in 820. The original function of the icon—namely, to maintain the continual relationship between image and archetype while distributing the appearance of a historical person across time and space—is amplified in Annibale's *Pietà with Saints*, just as the boundaries of religious painting and the altarpiece were extended in the late sixteenth century.

Annibale's effort to include Christ "in forma pietatis" in the *Pietà with Saints* was therefore more than an act of reaffirming the icon within modern painting. Here, the agency of the artist supersedes the deliberate archaism responsible for the conscious return to the tradition of the Man of Sorrows. The influence of Michelangelo and Rosso Fiorentino is not so immediate as to construe a simple act of imitation. While Annibale aligned his pictorial art with certain essential aspects of Renaissance art, he viewed Christ as integral to a repertoire of updated iconographic motifs that assuredly found its way into the *Pietà with Saints*.

In a comprehensive examination of the benefits of inserting the icon into religious painting in the late medieval and Renaissance periods, Sixten Ringbom underscores the sophisticated, dramatic close-up that combined the intimacy and frontal address of the icon with new narrative conceptions (Ringbom 1984, pp. 57–58). Ringbom cautions that the preservation of the icon format would allow for the accoutrements of narrative development to stray into secularism (Ringbom 1984, pp. 74, 124). Annibale's *Pietà with Saints* discussed here suggests a distinct awareness that the icon should serve a purpose higher than a merely decorous reiteration of the Lamentation scene. As envisioned by

Annibale, the highly imaginative Christ is something more than a conscious return to the tradition of the *imago pietatis*. The figure of Christ appears in the truly archaic type of the Man of Sorrows with angels, or the *Engelpietà*, but Annibale directs the model to a renewed significance as a vehicle for the Eucharist and funerary function of the altar. Christ “in forma Pietatis” is the generating force of narrative meaning, and not merely a conscious connection to the imitation of the Man of Sorrows tradition. By virtue of a poetic discourse integrated into the narrative framework of the Passion, the *Pietà with Saints* carries through the atemporal quality of the real presence of Christ.

Annibale traced back the formal and iconographical criteria of the *Andachtsbild*, the devotional image designed as an aid for prayer or contemplation, to principles that nourished the creation of dramatic compositions. In parallel with a rise in concerns over the efficacy and dignity of prototypical images, alternative modes of engagement with existing pictorial traditions prioritized the austere and solemn character of religious art. The intersection of art and devotion is paradigmatically evident in Annibale’s formal and aesthetic choices that elevate the cultic significance of the altarpiece in the post-Tridentine decades. Annibale’s *Pietà with Saints* is a revealing example in the substantiation of a continuum of Medieval and Renaissance art that redresses the imbalance between religious and aesthetic goals.

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Article

Engraving and Religious Imagery in the Modern Age: Between Verisimilitude and the Suggestion of Non-Existent Realities. Analysis of Some Cases Elaborated in Spain

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Abstract: The didactic importance of the religious image can be appreciated in the use of engraving and its power to disseminate, especially in the urban society of the Modern Age, in connection with the printed book. Such images will use their evocative power to suggest, based on observable realities, a reality that never existed, but which is convenient to create: The image will be able to construct this reality and convince observers of its undoubted existence. Some examples elaborated in Spain will be analyzed, as well as their inventors or the engravers who followed the instructions of the previous ones.

Keywords: Christ; crucifixion nail; biblical bronze serpent; Saint John of God; auto-da-fé; last judgement; Philip IV of Spain; martyrs of Japan; purgatory; Alardo de Pompa; Fosmas; Quart

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1. Introduction

The study of the religious image in the Spanish Modern Age can be approached from multiple perspectives. In this article, I will try to make an approximation through engraved images. I consider that the dissemination power of engravings is essential, as it enhances the contents to be transmitted (Ramírez 1988). Moreover, since the objective of the religious image is the dissemination of specific values, its alliance with the printed image is logical and fruitful; especially if the urban society of the Spanish Modern Age is taken into consideration, as it is the moment in which it begins to have specific weight in the population as a whole. In this context, the book and the printed image, whether associated with it or not, acquire importance (Maravall 1975).

Reflections on the uses of such image are multiple and early; for example, to stress the relevance given to it in preaching, we could use the anecdote of the archbishop Hernando de Talavera. He was the first of this status in Granada, appointed in 1493, by Isabella the Catholic, immediately after the conquest of what used to be a Muslim city and kingdom (1492). According to Bermúdez de Pedraza (1638)¹, he used the holy cards to preach the new faith among the people of the surrounding villages, using the image as a support, due to the language difficulties. The same would be done by religious people aimed at spreading this same faith in the New World. Friar Diego Valadés (1533–1582), “engraver of some of the illustrations in his book *Retórica Cristiana (Christian Rhetoric)* and inventor of others” (Vargas 2009, p. 264), explained in 1579 that prints were used to teach the new religion: “As the Indians were not literate, it was necessary to teach them by some kind of illustration; for this reason, the preacher points out the mysteries of our redemption with a pointer, so that by going through them, they may be better remembered.” (Vargas 2009, p. 264)². It can be noted in this reflection how he values the images not only for teaching purposes but also for their mnemonic power, probably reinforced by the impact that such images would have on this population. L. L. Vargas adds to the previous quotation the one by Friar Diego de Ocaña (1565–1608), who mentions the passion for possessing them, awakened among the natives: “Que si . . . tuviera yo . . . veinte o treinta mil estampas,

todas las gastara, porque cada uno llevara para tenerla en su aposento"^{3*} (Vargas 2009, p. 264). Most probably, in this case, thaumaturgic or miraculous powers of all types would have to be added, with which they would be associated (and this is another, and no less important, of the powers invoked with the image).

On the other hand, reflecting on this same image, it can be noted that it shows situations that are, perhaps and conveniently, only pretending to be real. Indeed, the image will have the power to shape realities, entire worlds that will be shown as truthful. From those people whose inhabitants had no heads—in their chests were the eyes, the nose, the mouth . . .—which are narrated before Pliny did so and Pliny himself, followed by St. Augustine, St. Isidore of Sevilla . . . , and that end up appearing in the xylographs of the book *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* by the false Jehan de Mandeville, and even inhabiting, according to the latest versions, the New World to the monster that personifies hell, devourer of sinful souls for ever and ever. This being repeated from the chariots of the medieval theatrical performances to El Greco's artworks ("Adoration of the Holy Name of Jesus", 1577–1579), for example, and heir—why not—to the Egyptian god Ammyt, both serve as examples of a long iconographic trajectory. The memory of Plato immediately comes to mind here: He considered painters to be charlatans who deceive people; the key nuance is that what Plato considers a lie is what we consider to be the truth, perhaps the only truth: what our eyes can see. Hence, the demand for verisimilitude that, without leaving the classics, Horatio says in his *Epistola a los Pisonos* (*Epistle to the Pisos*) (1st cent. BC) to the creators: We should not ask to believe that "snakes mate with birds, lambs with tigers" (Aristóteles 1988, p. 129).

Verisimilitude also became a requirement for figurative representations in the Modern Age. Theorists insist on it and give prominence to a concept: decorum, propriety. My intention here is to walk along this difficult-to-define line that uses the logic of the plausible to evoke events or even non-existent worlds in a convincing and impressive way, including or departing from parts of that truth that is effectively verifiable, at some point, from the empirical. I reiterate the aim I stated at the beginning: to transmit values in the religious sphere, which is always difficult to separate from the political one. From the engraving, the image strengthens its capacity to configure realities with a strong evocative power, which will increase its mnemonic power, a fundamental purpose in all these compositions. With these so-called realities will come the power to shape, in the minds of contemporaries, useful ways of interpreting, understanding their world, and acting in it.

2. Developing

2.1. About the Image of Christ

Let us begin with, perhaps, the most elementary but not the simplest: The portrait of the model person. Not only is it not simple, but it may even be—according to our current criteria—impossible. Therefore, it seems to be a great audacity to present the visage of Jesus, from a tondo, in an engraving (Figure 1); it is not an approximation of him in one action or another: It is his pretended portrait in a bust, in profile. I refer to the book by Felipe de Sosa,⁴ where the image of Christ's visage is shown, in the manner of the portrait books of illustrious personages, whose fashion began at this moment. This image will not be referred to because of the option chosen, which represents a white man with European features,⁵ with obvious connotations that will not be discussed here.

Let us observe this representation as the visage of a man in his prime, around his thirties, with masculine features accentuated by his small split beard, his hair over his shoulders, curled at the bottom and parted in the center of his head and, above all, in the perfect (canonical, according to the Greek canon⁶) measurements of his head (distributing the visage into three equal parts --high forehead/ glabella, glabella/end of the nose, end of the nose/chin--, each of these parts being the measurement of his straight, fine, and perfect nose), the classicist option of the Renaissance use, where perfection or beauty is identified with goodness --and, conversely, ugliness with malice--⁷. "The ideal and geometric measurements were appropriate above all, or even exclusively, to Christ and

the Virgin . . . [in artistic representations, as they were] the only examples of perfection of character and humoral balance” (Defradas and Klein 1989, p. 149). Thus, I relate this to the meticulous, supposedly realistic configuration of the visage of Christ, since this desire for veracity would have an instrument that is being used at the time: physiognomy. With the knowledge it provides, not only will the character and moral values of the person be identified according to each of the details of the conformation of the visage,⁸ even minimal, but conversely, by knowing the character and moral values of the person, a suitable visage can be assigned. Pomponio Gaurico, in his treatise *Sobre la escultura (De sculptura)*—Florence, 1504—, includes a treatise on physiognomy derived from ancient Greek and medieval⁹ treatises, where he defends that the expression and characteristics of the visage translate the soul and vice versa,¹⁰ the latter being the option that interests us here as it makes it possible to know the visages of people from other times, now deceased. The fundamental principle that always governs the definition of perfection is that of *mediocritas*: “balance, measurement, the equal distance between two opposite deformations, perfect form, are always indications of laudable qualities” (Defradas and Klein 1989, p. 148). Thus, unlike those who inhabit the north and those who inhabit the south (with extreme physical and moral qualities, abounding in these the negative), “those who inhabit the center, between the north and the south, also have the intermediate characteristics: they are of medium height, hair neither too curly nor too straight, honey-colored skin, a more pleasant appearance, apt for study, ingenious, sensitive, modest and thoughtful . . . ” (Gaurico [1504] 1989, p. 162). So, he begins to describe a series of physical qualities that Gaurico tries to identify—often in a confusing and contradictory way—with different peculiarities of character, mainly masculine. Curiously, although he does not allude to it, the purpose of the possible fidelity to the visage of Christ is always present in him, so he ends with a lament (being here the only mention of it) about the careless representation that is usually made of him (Gaurico [1504] 1989, p. 188).



Figure 1. Anonymous. *Rostro de Cristo*. PHILIPPE DE SOSA, *Libro de la Primera parte, de la excelencia del Sancto Evangelio . . .*, n.p.

We will try to apply his remarks to our image. Gaurico begins with the eyes, to which he gives priority: “Nature intended the eyes to be the windows through which our souls are observed” (Gaurico [1504] 1989, p. 165); “Adamantius says [that] whoever you see with black and slightly arched eyes, you will be able to judge that he is strong and brave, like the

lion ... whoever has a fixed and penetrating gaze, like the ox, will be serious and sober ... Aristotle says that perfect eyes should be neither large nor small ... " (Gaurico [1504] 1989, p. 167); "if his eyelids are light and unwrinkled, if his forehead is smooth and his eyebrows are not bushy, we are in the presence of a generous, just, gentle, pious, approachable, hospitable and good counsellor man. The wet and sad looking eyes reveal a studious man, dedicated to numerous disciplines" (Gaurico [1504] 1989, p. 171); "those whose gaze is not evasive are strong and unshakeable" (Gaurico [1504] 1989, p. 172); "those whose pupils are large are very gentle in spirit, generous, magnanimous and strong, as so are lambs and oxen are. Those whose pupils match the size of their eyes are honorable" (Gaurico [1504] 1989, p. 173). "A high forehead is proof of docility and good exercise ... Those whose upper lip covers the lower lip are quite prudent ... A sharp chin identifies people of great refinement of spirit" (Gaurico [1504] 1989, pp. 176–77). "The general opinion is that the perfect head, from the point of view of intellectual faculties and from any other, is the medium-sized, upright, fairly proportioned head ... ; Aristotle ... claims that soft hair is a sign of fineness of spirit ... Ears ... square and of medium size [indicate] great fineness of hearing" (Gaurico [1504] 1989, p. 179). "According to Adamantius, the ... thin face [is proper] to the studious" (but also to "lovers and schemers") (Gaurico [1504] 1989, p. 179). Finally, "the strong neck [is characteristic of those who are] hardy, courageous and gifted for study ... if not bent, it reflects moderation and ability for various arts and studies" (Gaurico [1504] 1989, pp. 180–81). We have chosen the features described by Gaurico that are best referred to in the engraving analyzed, with the suggested implications for the character. On the negative side, however, there would be: "The bags that may appear under the eyes ... characteristic of drunks ... ; eyebrows curved towards the temples, cheerful character ... ; a straight nose reflects an intemperate tongue ... " (Gaurico [1504] 1989, pp. 174–75). In addition to these aspects, which would not fit in with the supposed personality of Christ, we can add nuances regarding the total expression of the visage studied, in our opinion, of dignity and sadness, marked by the bags under the eye and by other wrinkles next to the lower part of the nose and the corner of the lips. As the author of the text, Sosa, insists, we are before a Christ who has suffered in the Passion, who has suffered it in his body as a man, something that is insisted on throughout the book, and specifically in his sadness: "Y como començasse ya a ocupar aquel su divino corazón, la tristeza en desmedido grado, dixo a los tres sobredichos discípulos: Triste esta mi alma hasta la muerte ... Padescio verdadera y no fingidamente en este lugar, para que en los siglos advenideros uviesse memoria de aquel debido sentimiento, de su sagrada passion ... Verdaderamente se canso, verdaderamente tuvo hambre ... verdaderamente derramo copiosas lagrimas y se entristecio, como parece en este lugar del huerto de Gethsemani."^{11*} (Sosa 1569, p. 18 vo.).

As for the nose, straight or Greek, it is a reflection of perfection and beauty, a module of the canon that governs such beauty in the classical visage, Christ's perfection which is also insisted on in the text: "en la naturaleza humana deste varón justo, se halla no solo unión con la naturaleza divina, mas todo aquello que puede divisar entendimiento criado en estado de perfección ... Y quanto a la forma exterior y visible, excede aquel hombre Dios ... y es preferido a todos los hombres"^{12*} (Sosa 1569, p. 108 vo.); "hermoso en el aspecto y forma corporal"^{13*} (Sosa 1569, p. 3). For this reason, it is noted, "el dolor que atravesso el alma destes sanctos varones [al descenderle de la cruz], acordándose de la hermosura, con que vieron aquel rostro divino y aquella gracia y autoridad ... repartiendo ... dones ... de toda salud y consolacion"^{14*} (Sosa 1569).

It would also be necessary to add the split, not long, beard, which would be linked to the traditional representation of Christ in relation to the classical image of the philosopher (Grabar 1985, p. 21), and we should remember the different allusions to his character as a studious man, according to certain facial features—or the Syriac image.

In conclusion, and on the basis of these facial characteristics, Christ would be a person gentle in spirit, peaceful and docile, kind and hospitable, moderate and prudent, honest, fair, generous, and pious; this would be combined with courage, strength of spirit, and resilience against adversity. In addition: serious, studious, and interested in different fields of knowledge and skilled in various arts.

Although we do not venture to assert that Gaurico was the source for this representation, he could easily have served the anonymous author of our engraving, as well as the author of the text of our book. I cannot even affirm that such engraving was made for this book; I am only unaware of a similar and earlier one. However, what is clear to us is the aforementioned claim to realism in the portrait, a claim that the author of the text, Felipe de Sosa, proposes, assumes, and shows throughout the text, which is why he includes this engraving and no other, and which leads him to include only one other engraving in this book: an extremely faithful copy—such faithfulness includes the size—of the nail of Christ’s hand on the cross, a relic possessed by Philip II of Spain: “Para que la devoción del piadoso lector se incite; y encienda con mayor fervor . . . ponemos aquí la propia forma y figura de uno de aquellos clavos, con que fue affixado en la cruz, aquel sanctissimo y soberano señor”^{15*} (Sosa 1569, p. 121). With this copy, we come to the real reason for the book, the one that would justify these realistic pretensions: to guarantee the veracity of this relic, its authenticity, to which the detailed description of the relic responds,¹⁶ as well as its representation in the engraving (Figure 2).

Esta es la forma del Clavo, que traspasó vna de las manos sanctissimas, de aquel Señor, que formó el Cielo y la Tierra. Ni es mayor, ni menor, porque está sacado ala medida del proprio, que está en el sobredicho lugar. Está roblado por dos partés, y faltale la parte de la punta, porque salió con dificultad (segun parece) por averlo fixado a aquellos cruels ministros, sobre la mano del Salvador, con gran violencia. Y lo segundo, por ser la madera de la Cruz de calidad muy espessa y fuerte, como parece en la cruz, engastada en oro, que está en la mesma Recamara del sobredicho Rey, que sera de casi vn xeme en longura.

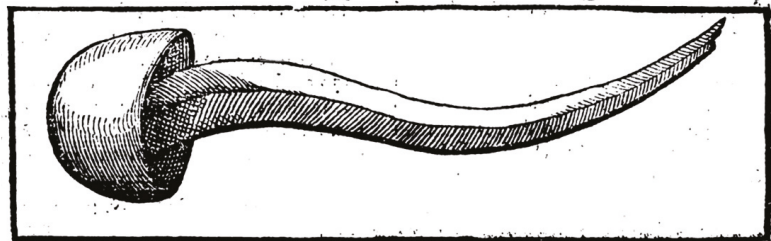


Figure 2. Anonymous. *Clavo de una mano de la crucifixión de Cristo*. PHILIPPE DE SOSA, *Libro de la Primera parte, de la excelencia del Sancto Evangelio . . .*, Third book, p. 121.

It is noteworthy how important it is to defend the veracity of such a relic which, in turn, legitimizes the possessor as a world leader in his battle for the defence of the “true” religion, an essential binding force for the preservation of his immense territories and justification of the battle for its increase. The same aspiration to fidelity justifies the inclusion and form of the two images engraved in the book.

Formally, the visage is presented in an oval, framed by an inscription: TV ES CRISTVS FILIVS DEI VIVI QVI IN HVNC MVNDVM VENISTI. Inside, the bust of Christ also has an inscription: IHS XPS SALVATOR MVNDI¹⁷ The head is surrounded by a halo, within which four semicircles separated by three small bursts of light, which in turn contain other supposedly luminous outbreaks, help to accentuate what the author defines in the text as light in his resurrected body: “Mas en la resurrección . . . permaneciendo en la mesma substancia de naturaleza humana, la rodeo de dotes y de grandes dones de gloria, de impassibilidad, de sutileza, de ligereza y de claridad . . . la claridad que consiste en la hermosura del color perfecto, y en resplandor de mayor claridad que la luz del sol”^{18*} (Sosa 1569, p. 178 r. y vo.). This is how the represented moment of Christ’s life is made concrete: resurrected. Indeed, it is the eternal moment, the best translator of the essence of the character represented.

Moreover, the configuration of the image, the bust in profile and within this slightly oval, or elongated tondo,¹⁹ is reminiscent of classical representations of notable men, from the Roman emperors on coins, to the repertoires of illustrious men (emperors, literati,

scientists, popes . . .), as well as those of the texts that are beginning to spread at this time—and we cite only a few prior to our book²⁰ that could have served as iconic references—that of Andrea Fulvio (*Illustrium Imagines*, Rome, 1517), that of Antonio Zantani and Enea Vico (*Le imagini con tutti i riversi trovati*, Venice, 1548), that of Guillaume Rouillé (*Prontuarii iconum*, Lion, 1553), or that of Jean de Tournes (*Insignium aliquot virorum icones*, Lion, 1559). In this respect, it should be noted that the engraving in question dates from 1569, in Seville (Juan Gutiérrez's printing house).

I would also like to point out the link between such configuration, in which image and text are united with the world of the emblematic, which is also spreading widely at that moment. In this respect, I agree with Rafael Zafra Molina when, speaking of this model of representation of illustrious men, *icones* (icons), he states: "The work of Alciatus, recognized as the beginning of the emblematic genre, is undoubtedly the main predecessor of the books of *icones*, from which they take precisely what makes them books of emblems: the technique of amplifying and glossing through a combination of image and poetry a common place—in the *icones* a character—synthesized in the nickname" (Zafra 2014, p. 137). As a nickname and allusive inscription in the engraving we are studying, the texts quoted in its frame could be considered, adding the long text that follows this icon of Christ, a text that always refers to his life and passion, and thus we will find the fundamental elements of the emblem. Moreover, the didactic pretensions inherent in the emblematic genre, which in the *icones* would be centred around a model figure, would be even more evident in the figure of Christ.

F. de Sosa's book is a fundamental source for another one, printed a few years later, in 1604, in Granada, written by the Mercedarian Pedro de Medina and with a similar theme,²¹ although centred on the cross of Christ. From the engravings he includes, he will also try to configure with them a reality that he will try to affirm with a multitude of data and bibliographical references. The engraving of Christ on the cross will be analyzed and, like all the others, it is anonymous (Fernando Díaz de Montoya's printing house) (Figure 3).

In the text, Medina insists on the perfection of Christ's body, referring to the classical canonical proportions: "Christo, el qual fue por lo menos de seis a siete pies de largo, por ser el estado mas común de un hombre perfecto"^{22*}. From such perfection derives the measurements of the cross: "Que el cuerpo sanctissimo de Christo en el instante de su concepcion fue organizado y perfectissimo y acomodado para el anima sanctissima y bienaventurada que Dios infundia en el mismo . . . assi como el Espíritu Sancto fabrico en aquella inefable [Virgen] un cuerpo humano, el mas perfecto de quantos se pueden pensar, según la perfección del alma sanctissima que le avia de informar, en orden todo a la unión hypostatica del Verbo con la misma humanidad, assi también pues el mismo Verbo humanado y passible avia de ponerse estendido y clavado y muerto en una Cruz, convino, y fue así, que el mismo Espíritu Sancto con particular providencia la traçasse y ordenasse como fuese de la materia y forma que fue, en orden y a fin de la manifestación de la bondad de Dios, de la exaltacion de la gloria de su hijo Christo y de la Redempcion humana"^{23*} (de Medina 1604, Libro Primero, p. 397). Indeed, the engraving shows Christ as a well-formed man, with a perfectly muscled body, even athletic, young, and beautiful, in which, if we look closely, we will find the perfect proportions perfectly measured for the male body, according to the classical canon. The detailed configuration of this so-called reality includes the characteristics of the cross: "En la cruz del Señor estuvieron quatro maderos, que son el mástil derecho el madero transversal, el tronco puesto al pie [para fijar bien la cruz en el suelo] y el titulo puesto arriba . . . Demas desto también estuvo otro que fue un çoquete asido con clavos en la Cruz baxo los pies de el Redemptor, donde los tuvo clavados"^{24*} (de Medina 1604, Libro Primero, p. 367). The mechanical usefulness of all these pieces of lumber is described and explained. We add a controversial aspect—specifically in the artistic representation—at the time, which Medina would clearly explain: the insertion of Christ's two feet on the cross with a single nail—and not two—the right on the left, emphasizing the truthful recreation of what is depicted.

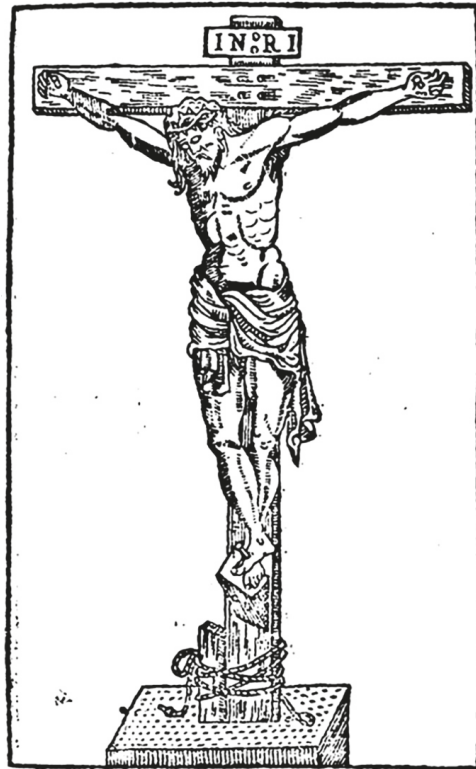


Figure 3. Anonymus. *Cristo en la cruz*, Pedro de Medina: *Victoria gloriosa, y excelencias de la esclarecida Cruz de Iesu Christo . . .*, p. 370.

Medina, in his in-depth study of the cross, approached from very different aspects, configures a whole world of references, he even prefigures the Old Testament, capturing this in many images that become true references. The engraving of the bronze serpent that Moses raised in the desert is really impressive (Figure 4) (de Medina 1604, Libro Tercero, p. 81). As it can be seen, a cross inserted into the ground in a field is depicted. It may be the top of a mountain, where a winged reptile with a long tail is crucified, which the author calls a serpent, but which would resemble a fantastic representation of a dragon. Its wings are spread out and nailed to the lateral sides of the cross; the tail is also nailed to the lower part of the vertical pole. The nails are sumptuous. It has a long neck, and its head is in profile, turned to its right. By its human-like build and proportions, and by its position, intentionally, it immediately evokes the crucified Christ, who, like the serpent for the Israelites in the desert, meant spiritual health for humans: “La hechura desta sierpe . . . fue conforme a la forma y figura de las bivas . . . a imitación de las que matavan a los hombres . . . tenia el color de las sierpes bivas. Estava crucificada en el palo . . . Moysen por mandado de Dios hizo una forma de Cruz de bronze y la levanto derecha cerca del tabernáculo . . . Para mayor conveniencia entre la figura que era la sierpe, con lo figurado que es Christo, se deve considerar . . . que aquella sierpe . . . tenia sus dos alas como las tenían las bivas . . . las tenia estendidas y en forma de Cruz . . . aquella pértiga levantada por orden divino era una Cruz . . . Y todos los que . . . la miravan, quedavan salvos con la vida y sanos con las heridas . . . Nos hemos ocupado en la historia, con que mejor se a de entender el espíritu de la figura . . . [que lo] fue . . . de la Cruz del Salvador del mundo”^{25*} (de Medina 1604, Libro Tercero, pp. 79–84).



Figure 4. Anonymous. *Serpiente de bronce*, Pedro de Medina: *Victoria gloriosa, y excelencias de la esclarecida Cruz de Iesu Christo . . .*, p. 81.

2.2. About the Image of a Saint: St. John of God

We are going to analyse how, from the beginning, the requirements of verisimilitude are combined in the configuration of the image of a saint. We are referring to St. John of God. Here, the distinguishing feature is that John was a well-known person, with a face, appearance, and actions familiar to his neighbours in Granada. For this reason, the image should be easily identifiable, as it begins to be depicted only 30 years after his death. Most illiterate people will have no difficulty, and for the totality, it will be immediately recognizable and will provide mnemonic facilities in the transmission of concepts. This iconographic construction responds to the promotion of the recognition of his sanctity, a circumstance which, in general terms, reached its peak in the period after the Council of Trent (1545–1563), as a response to Protestant rejection of the veneration of saints, as well as their iconic representation. We are going to observe the conformation of the image of Saint John of God (John Ciudad, Montemor-o-Novo, Portugal, 1495, Granada, 1550), from the first moments, that is to say, before he was even considered beatified: The engraved image played a fundamental role in this very early construction. Very early because he was loved and admired by his neighbours thanks to his work in helping the neediest. The iconography was based on his contemporaries' description of John, those who knew him: According to their story, John of God died in the house of the lords who took him in, already ill, the so-called Casa de los Pisa (House of the Pisa), at the foot of his bed, kneeling and holding a crucifix in his hands, the position in which he remained after his death, when they found him. This is how he will be represented, in such a special way, so distinctly and, therefore, identifiable. Before this iconic model, in 1579 the figure of the future saint (Figures 5 and 6) appears in a rudimentary xylographic engraving—according to M. Gómez-Moreno²⁶—in the translation into Spanish of the *Bull Licet ex debito* (given by Pope Pius V in 1571, to confirm the foundation of the Hospital promoted by John in Granada). As the publication of this translation was made in Granada²⁷ (Larios 2006, p. 100) and the iconic references are those given by its neighbours, we assume that the xylography would have been made in that city. Despite its simplicity, it is a very significant engraving; it is the “only [engraving]

that represents him in his miserable clothing” (Gómez-Moreno 1950, p. 6)—it will be this bull (and therefore after his death) which will indicate the corresponding habit for the followers²⁸—, bareheaded, always barefoot, and “rapado a navaja, barva y cabeça”²⁹*, which gives a realism that makes him immediately identifiable among his people, as he is the result of the description made by such witnesses. He is praying in front of the crucified Christ, kneeling, with his basket over his shoulder (in which he kept the donations given to him by his neighbours for his protégés) and his staff; both objects, with which he always walked and with which those who saw him passing through the streets associate him, also identify him and will be his attributes.³⁰ Everything points to the fidelity of this earlier image, which, according to M. Gómez-Moreno (1950, p. 6) and J. M. Larios (2006, p. 100), is the first image of John, only 29 years after his death.

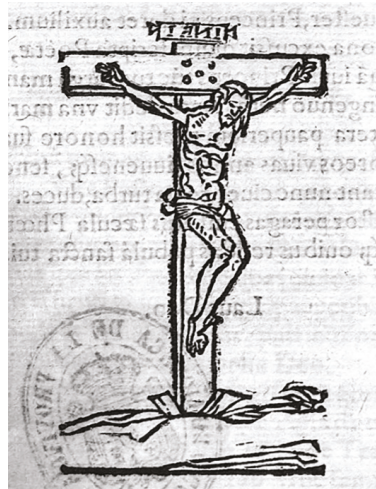


Figure 5. Anonymous. *Cristo crucificado*. Papal bull *Licet ex debito*. In Francisco de Castro: *Historia de la vida y sanctas obras de Iuan de Dios ...* En Granada, en casa de Antonio de Librixa. Año de M.D.LXXXV, n.p.



Figure 6. Anonymous. *S. Juan de Dios frente a Cristo crucificado*. Papal bull *Licet ex debito*. In Francisco de Castro: *Historia de la vida y sanctas obras de Iuan de Dios ...* En Granada, en casa de Antonio de Librixa. Año de M.D.LXXXV, n.p.

However, along with this fidelity, the drawing of this engraving plays with creating an ambivalent situation: the realism of the figure of Christ, the realism of the cross nailed to the ground and fixed with wooden blocks, the same dirt floor that serves as a succinct reference of location for the two protagonists, the complete avoidance of any other reference in either of the two, surrounded by the same environment, all of this makes one imagine that it is a scene in which John sees Christ on the cross. Each one is on a page, facing each other. The size of Christ is smaller than that of John, which can be interpreted by the distance between the two. However, it is also suggested that Christ is a sculptural image: The obvious evocation of the reality of the miraculous vision is nuanced by the fact that John was not yet even beatified.

Shortly afterwards, in Granada (Lebrija's printing house, in 1585), his first biography was published by John's successor, Francisco de Castro,³¹ this xylography³² is again included in it. However, this formula was not sufficiently distinctive: Directly, from the episode of death, which would soon emerge, a more explicit and exclusive formula for John could be specified. Before, and in that primitive iconographic search, perhaps we should look at the reprinting of the same biography, also in Granada, but now in another printing house, that of René Rabut, only three years later, which gives us an idea of the dissemination of the text, in 1588.³³ On its cover appears the visage of God.³⁴ Significantly, we know from the statements of those who knew John—made for the process of beatification—that the neighbours called him John of God³⁵ and Juan de Esperaendios (John Waiting for God) (Gómez-Moreno 1950, p. 196), which is perhaps the interpretative key to this small image (Figure 7), which does not reflect John's own visage. However, the divine image would be an evocation too subtle of the—so far—only admired as a saint, and even allude, in a generic way, to a current that seems to have spread (1570–1575, approximately) of “estos que llaman Juanes de Dios, los cuales andan con unos sacos y descalzos y a cuestras con unas talegas y serones, demandando limosna para sustentar hospitales y niños huérfanos ... En 1378 ... en Cremona ... En nuestro tiempo comenzó en Granada por un sancto varón llamado Juan de Dios, de donde se llamaron después todos ... Joanes de Dios ... ”^{36*}, information that can be linked to that image.

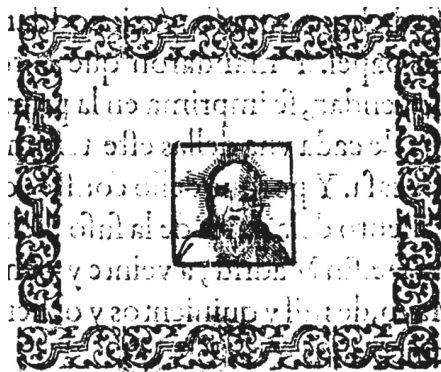


Figure 7. Anonymous. *Rostro de Dios*. Book cover of Francisco de Castro: *Historia de la vida y sanctas obras de Iuan de Dios ... En Granada en casa de Rene Rabut*. Año de 1588.

John's iconography had to be defined and, if the first and most explicit iconographic initiative had come together with a bull, the concreteness in it will also come on the cover of a collection of bulls of 1596,³⁷ where he will be definitively represented in the way that will constitute his essential iconographic typology and of reference: It is an engraving (Figure 8) that represents John kneeling, barefoot, with his habit—already adapted to the typology of the order—with a hood on his back and a scapular, holding a crucifix with both hands at the level of his visage. From his mouth comes an inscribed band that says: IN

MANUS TUAS DOMINE,³⁸ an expression he addressed to Christ and with which he died, according to the account of his life.³⁹ His body is shown in three-quarter length, turned to his right, and his face almost in profile. On the bent elbow of his left arm rests his staff; next to it, on the ground, is his large, braided wicker basket. The space in which he is represented is striking, as the square floor would not extend more than one meter sideways, in comparison with the figure of John. The back and side walls, worked with stripes in the engraving, block the space in an overwhelming way, although there is no ceiling; in the best case, it would give the sensation of a square alcove containing the image of a saint. However, his figure and visage are realistically rendered, emphasizing the expressiveness of his face, with his affectionate and vehement gaze focused on the crucifix. This posture and gesture will constitute his essential iconography. The lower part of the engraving contains the inscription: S. IV^o. DE DIOS,⁴⁰ that is to say: his name with the denomination of saint. We should bear in mind that the beatification did not take place until 1630 and the canonization until 1690.⁴¹ I would like to refer to the crucifix he carries, where the image of Christ is also treated realistically, highlighting the crown of thorns, the bent legs and upright head, as if Christ himself wanted to give John his last look.



Figure 8. Anonymous. *Muerte de S. Juan de Dios*. Book cover of *Bulas apostólicas concedidas por la santidad de Pio V y de Gregorio XIII y Sixto V a los Hermanos de la orden y Hospitalidad de Juan de Dios . . . en Madrid . . . en casa de P. Madrigal*. 1596. (Archivo Histórico Nacional).

Indeed, the less important aspect is to know if that was his death and if his last words were also those quoted. There is a reality that has become unquestionable, confirmed, and legitimized by the image, recognizable without confusion and with a series of elements (crucifix, kneeling posture, alms basket, cane . . .) that not only identify him but also make it possible to memorize his exemplary qualities: poverty, humility, and untiring love for his brothers and for Christ.⁴²

In this way, his image will be codified in successive representations, such as the engraving described by M. Gómez-Moreno (from Rome, 1599), in a biography of the future saint, printed with the privilege of Pope Sixtus V.⁴³ To this central scene are added those that will stand out in his life: “the saint is represented on his knees with a Crucifix in his hands, in the same way he died; at the top, an image of God amid clouds and brightness, which seems to receive his soul; on one side, the beds of the poor; on the other, a staff, from which hang the basket and the collection plate in which he collected the alms. In six ovals on the sides . . . his conversion while hearing Master John of Avila preach; when he received the habit from the Bishop of Tuy; when he converted worldly women; when he was hurled down by the devil; when he was not burned in the middle of the fire of the hospital of Granada, and when he discovered the thoughts of obstinate sinners. All

this accompanied by biblical texts allusive to these representations” (Gómez-Moreno 1950, p. 170).

We should add the curious fact that, in the process of John’s beatification, between 1622 and 1623, there are references to holy cards and medals with his image—these surely “minted, at least, since 1600” (García-Melero 2017, p. 300), through which the popes themselves had already granted indulgences; that is to say: through his image and before he had even been considered beatified. According to the descriptions, there is a predominance of “medallas en las cuales está puesto y figurado el bendito padre Juan de Dios como cuando murió”.^{44*}

2.3. About the Image of the Final Judgment

These are the years in which, through another great Spanish saint, St. Ignatius of Loyola, a methodology of prayer, reflection, and spiritual exercise is being developed, with the image as a central element. This image will be suggested in an absolutely descriptive and plastic manner from the texts or even introduced in them to facilitate such reflection. It will also be expected that such image evokes, beyond pure vision, sensations transmitted—imaginatively—by the other senses. It is the so-called “composition of place”, or exhaustive evocation of the empirical context of an event. The purpose is to engrave the intended concepts in the mind of the exerciser with it. The great proliferation of images that respond to this demand is well known. Especially in view of the themes developed in Ignatian contemplation, specifically those linked to the life of Christ, many of them will form part of this immense group of images that construct realities. However, I would like to focus on one that I find particularly striking in this game of plausibility and evocation: The Jesuit Sebastián Izquierdo (1601–1681), in 1675, wants his reader⁴⁵ to exercise his mind in a “composition of place” that must deal with the moment of the Last Judgment. He needs a known reference, evocative with verisimilitude of the suggested one. The empirical plane that seems most similar to him is that of the evocation of an auto-da-fé, which he establishes as a starting point so that, from it, the senses can reach the plane of transcendence or of what will happen in the future. However, in that gigantic final auto-da-fé, we would all be judged. The emotional impact for people who have known and even lived through, but only as spectators, such an event and who know its real consequences—the terrible condemnation of the stake—is great. Thus, he suggests it to his readers; he says: “Suponese . . . que Christo nuestro Señor el día ultimo del Mundo ha de baxar del Cielo a la tierra, para juzgar vivos y muertos con un Juyzio universal . . . Las circunstancias de aquel ultimo Juyzio han de ser tales . . . que à todos en grande manera nos importa el considerarlas de espacio con frequente, y atenta consideración, a que se ordena este Exercicio”^{46*} (Izquierdo 1675, pp. 63–64). For this, contemplation is initiated: “La composición de lugar [será] imaginar un Teatro amplissimo, en que se celebra un Acto general de Inquisición”^{47*} (Izquierdo 1675, p. 64).

On that last day, “el Sol y la Luna se oscurecerán. Las estrellas caerán del Cielo . . . En el Ayre avrá terribles tempestades . . . Bramará el mar . . . saliendo de sus límites . . . La tierra padecerá . . . terremotos . . . Embiará Dios aquel fuego . . . con el qual sera cubierto . . . este globo del Mundo”^{48*} (Izquierdo 1675, p. 66), and the voice and trumpet of the angel shall sound universally, calling the living and the dead to judgment, and “se abrirán los Cielos y baxará el Hijo de Dios con grande Magestad y potestad, acompañado de todos sus Angeles . . . bibrando la espada de su Justicia con el brazo de su Omnipotencia . . . como Juez riguroso”^{49*} (Izquierdo 1675, pp. 68–69). Even though these terrible and startling aspects concern everyone—living and dead—and the autos-da-fé only concern—although also in a terrible and final way—a group of people, the metaphor has enough points in common and becomes more similar in its two terms when Izquierdo says that, following the events explained, Christ “llega a cerca de la tierra y puesto en debida distancia, sentará su Tribunal en una nube blanca . . . poniendo a su mano derecha à su Santissima Madre la Virgen María y a la izquierda a los Apóstoles y demás varones Apostólicos . . . para que sean como Assessores suyos, ayudándole a juzgar a los demás . . . Luego se abrirán

aquellos Libros . . . en que se verán escritas todas las obras de los hombres, buenas y malas . . . las cuales por Divina virtud se harán allí patentes, y todos claramente verán todas las obras buenas y malas . . . assi las propias como las de todos los otros. Que estraña afrenta, deshonra y confusión padecerán los malos de ver allí manifiestos a todos, todos sus pecados mas ocultos”^{50*} (Izquierdo 1675, pp. 69–70). Afterwards, the righteous will be rewarded with blessedness and the wicked will be sent to eternal fire: “Como acá la Inquisición relaxa los condenados al braço seglar, aquellos mal aventurados serán relaxados y entregados à los demonios . . . [y arrojados] al calabozo del Infierno”^{51*} (Izquierdo 1675, p. 71).

If we compare the image of the anonymous engraving that Izquierdo introduces in his book⁵² (Figure 9) with the well-known engraving by Gregorio Fosman y Medina⁵³ of the auto-da-fé that was held in Madrid in its Plaza Mayor on 30 June 1680⁵⁴ (Figure 10), time after and very close to that of the printing of the text, we can observe not only conceptual but also formal similarities between the contexts represented. If the auto-da-fé requires an adequate and superimposed scenography (configured with a specific and very common ephemeral architecture in all of them, given the identical ritual requirements and the similar places—central squares—always chosen), in which a series of dais and boxes indicate the status of those who occupy them,⁵⁵ the same happens in the upper part of the engraving suggested by Izquierdo, where, in a celestial structure superimposed on the Valley of Josaphat, Christ presides with the Virgin and the saints. In the auto-da-fé, that place is occupied by Charles II of Spain, his wife, and his mother, from the central balcony of the Casa de la Panadería. The different officers of the Inquisition—including the so-called “soldados de la Fé” (soldiers of the Faith), guardians of order in all the terrestrial process, with weapons, artillery salvos and drums—ordering the act would be equivalent to the angels—especially the trumpeters—and the demons of Izquierdo’s engraving. Next to the one holding the sword and the scales, it is remarkable the image of another angel holding the book of the acts of each one, something that some demons also do at ground level, in front of a man who contemplates them pleading, observing a landscape of striking demons and a horizon of fire, in contrast to the path of the blessed ones. These demons, composed of different human and animal parts, would allude to specific sins such as the snake placed in a very significant way in the genitals of one of them. Such man will have to publicly assume his faults, which are recorded in the book, such as those accused by the Inquisition, on a dais, in front of a multitude of people in attendance. Christ, as in Fosman’s engraving King Charles II himself—presiding the act from the central balcony—will separate the blessed to his right (in Madrid, the nobility and the clergy will be seated there); in both cases, to the left of the king or to the left of Christ, the condemned will be seated. The formal and emotional similarity will provide a mnemonic reference of strong impact that we can imagine in those who, having reflected on Izquierdo’s book, witnessed the Madrid auto-da-fé or have witnessed some other: The image of the Last Judgment, to which a multitude of sounds, colors and even smells could be added, would come to an indelible life in their minds. Izquierdo’s engraving is accompanied by this inscription: “Quis poterit cogitare diem adventus eius. Malach”; this corresponds to a quote from Malachi 3:2, where he says, “Who will be able to resist the day of his coming?” This gives the engraving a similarity to the world of the emblematic—adding to it the rest of the explanatory text—and a greater capacity for mnemonic retention.



Figure 9. Anonymus. “Quis poterit cogitare diem adventus eius. Malach.” Juicio Final. The engraving is inserted between pp. 62 and 63. Sebastián Izquierdo, *Práctica de los Ejercicios espirituales de Nuestro Padre San Ignacio . . . En Roma por el Varese*, 1675.

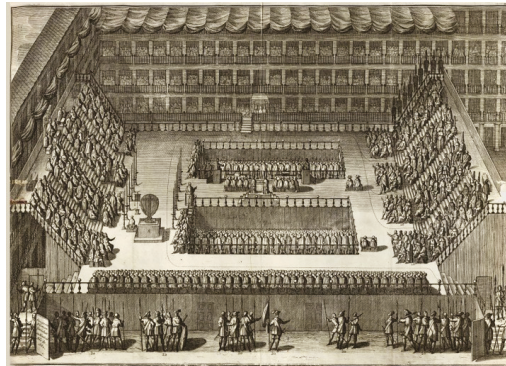


Figure 10. Gregorio Fosman, *Auto de Fe*. Plaza Mayor de Madrid. 1680. *Relación Histórica del Auto General de la Fe . . . Por Joseph del Olmo . . . Impreso por Roque Rico de Miranda, Año 1680*. The engraving is inserted between pp. 138 and 139.

2.4. About the Image of the King and the Pope

Creating realities that never were with characters that are not only real but even recognizable is another possibility in that subtle line I am trying to draw. Since the image, as we are seeing, is never innocent, I am interested in another engraving, the perfect union of the religious and the political, a justification of the actions in this second field by demonstrating, precisely with the image, to be an instrument of the first.

I am referring to the engraving made in 1626 by Alardo de Popma⁵⁶ (Figure 11) on the cover of the book *Primera parte de las noticias historiales de las Conquistas de tierra firme en las Indias Occidentales*⁵⁷ by the Franciscan Pedro Simón (1574–ca.1628).⁵⁸ He was superior of province (Provincial) of his order in the New Kingdom of Granada, therefore, he knew these lands and the importance of the integration of religious preaching in the complex system of governance of these people by the new powers, coming from a distant metropolis. He alludes to this when he makes the following observation: “La Tiara del Sumo Pontifice tiene tres Coronas, con que da a entender ser la Iglesia Católica Romana

absoluta señora de las tres partes del mundo, será también, que por la parte de España se le aumente una quarta Corona, por esta quarta parte del mundo, que se le ha añadido a su jurisdicción, y mando, como lo están estas Indias Occidentales, o Nuevomundo, por la industria de los Castellanos, en virtud del gran poder de sus Reyes . . . ; Se puede añadir a la del Sumo Pontifice, por la parte de nuestra España una quarta Corona . . . aviendosela conquistado a fuerza de usar sus armas, y que sepa el mundo los acrecentamientos que España haze en la dilatación de la Fe”^{59*} (Simón 1627, chp. IX, p. 29). Therefore, there is no doubt that he was the inspiration for the image that appears in the chalcography on the cover.



Figure 11. Alardo de Popma. *Felipe IV entrega la cuarta corona al papa Urbano VIII*. Book cover of Fray Pedro Simón, *Primera parte de las noticias historiales de las conquistas de tierra firme en las Indias Occidentales . . .* En Cuenca en casa de Domingo de la Yglesia, [1627]. (Biblioteca Nacional de España).

It is composed by an architectural structure that combines the form of an altarpiece with that of a great portico or triumphal arch, which introduces us to the great central scene, at the moment when Philip IV of Spain, kneeling before Pope Urban VIII, offers him a crown, and says, as written in an inscribed band that comes from his lips: QUARTUM OFFERO PRO INDIS.⁶⁰ Philip refers to this crown, with which he would govern the West Indies, and which would be the fourth that the pope would add to his tiara—held in his left hand—already composed of three others. Thus, he alludes to the newly enlarged parts of the world: four, with the New World; all of them, fundamentally at the hands of the Spanish monarchy, will be under the Catholic Church. Philip IV of Spain, with features in his portrait that seek to make him perfectly identifiable,⁶¹ shows his loyalty to the papacy: The king’s tufted helmet is on the ground, as a sign of submission, in front of a pope who looks at him and picks up the crown, seated on a throne under a canopy and raised a few steps from the ground on which the king kneels, indicating his hierarchical superiority. The king wears armour—in allusion to his conquests—which he covers with a cape.

It should be noted that, in these games and traps of the image in which we are entering, in contrast to the fidelity required and observed in the king’s face, the fidelity of the pope’s face—who in those years is older than he would appear in the engraving and also wears a

beard⁶²—is indifferent: The pope is identified, in a totally sufficient way, by all the symbolic elements with which he surrounds himself; moreover, in Spain, almost nobody would have ever seen him. In the background, behind a railing that leads to the outside, the majestic dome of St. Peter’s in the Vatican, exactly locating the scene. The fictitious nature of the event does not prevent the image from capturing and translating a situation in a completely truthful and convincing way in the eyes of the viewers. Someone would identify it with reality. If it did not happen, it is the metaphorical image of what one must really believe it to be: It is the convenient construction of history.

On either side of this scene, configuring this altarpiece or triumphal arch—allusive to the triumph of good royal government, presented as a triumph of religion—are two Corinthian columns—reiterating this triumph—on each side, on a protruding pedestal on those sides, on whose dados appear some coats of arms on cartouches of cut and curled leather, referring to the Franciscan order. The entablature supported by the columns also protrudes and holds half-length portraits (in the same type of cartouches) of “the fathers of the evangelizing orders, St. Francis and St. Dominic”.⁶³

2.5. About the Image of the Martyrs: Alonso Navarrete and Alonso Mena, Martyrs of Japan

In 1629, Alardo de Popma⁶⁴ also engraved the chalcography of the cover of *Conservación de Monarquías y Discursos Políticos sobre la gran Consulta que el Consejo hizo al Señor Rey don Filipe Tercero, Al Presidente y Consejo Superior de Castilla*⁶⁵ (Figure 12). The author of the previous drawing was F. Agustín Leonardo,⁶⁶ painter and Mercedarian friar. The author of the text was the Licenciado (Licentiate) Pedro Fernández Navarrete (1564–1632), Canon of the Church of Santiago, Court Chaplain, Consultant of the Inquisition, and holder of other administrative positions;⁶⁷ he was also a humanist and poet. The book deals with “la despoblación de Castilla . . . impuestos . . . problemas financieros . . . los «gastos de conservación y defensa de la monarquía» . . . ”^{68*} (Gómez Urdáñez 1999, p. 128), that is: political, social, and economic issues concerning the governance of the nation.



Figure 12. F. Agustín Leonardo y Alardo de Popma. *Fray Alonso Navarrete y Fray Fray Alonso Mena Navarrete, mártires, con la Sabiduría y la Prudencia*. Book cover of Pedro Fernández Navarrete, *Conservación de Monarquías y Discursos Políticos . . .* En Madrid en la Imprenta Real Año M.DC.XXVI. (Biblioteca Nacional de España).

However, no image of civilian content is chosen for the cover, but rather, and in a way that seems to us absolutely surprising and shocking to support the theoretical approach, the author does not hesitate to place, standing and full-length, the images of his brother and his first cousin, both with the palm of martyrdom since they have been martyred recently (1617 and 1624, respectively), in Japan. Both are Dominicans and wear their habit, a rosary, and an open book; both explicitly show how they were martyred: the brother, with a large cut on his neck, from which he bleeds profusely, and the cousin, burned at the stake. The cover is made up of the triumphal arch and altarpiece, on a high acropodium, whose entablature is supported by four Corinthian columns—always allusive to the triumph, in this case, not only of the Faith but of the values that such martyrs would defend, in connection with the Faith—two on each side. The martyrs are placed between these columns. In the dado of the respective acropodia, the character and his relationship with the author are identified, as well as the circumstance.⁶⁹ On both, an inscribed band with an inscription that varies from one to the other: PRO LEGE ET REGE, on the brother and PRO REGE ET LEGE,⁷⁰ on the cousin. Between them, in the opening of the arch, the inscription with the title and author of the book; in the lower part, an inscribed band linking the two martyrs, with this text: STEMATE RELIGIONE ET CHARITATE CONIUNTIUNTI.⁷¹ If we reflect on these inscriptions, we observe that the indissoluble union between religious and political values, undoubtedly explicit in the books they bear and for which they have given their lives, values that would underlie those exposed by the author of the book whose cover we are talking about, in its pages. The entablature supports the allegories of Wisdom (SAPIENTIA, with an open book in which he points with his left index finger, above the brother) and Prudence (PRUDENTIA, with a mirror and a snake, proper attributes,⁷² above the cousin). In between is the coat of arms of Castile with the royal crown. This inscription, in which that EGO, that I, is identified with good governance, occupies the upper part of the engraving: EGO IN CONSILIO HABITO (over the image of Wisdom); ERUDITIS INTER SU COGITATIONIBUS⁷³ (over Prudence). That is to say, the two martyrs, with the sacrifice of their lives, contribute to the triumph of values synthetically symbolized in two words: law and king, of equal importance, which support good governance, directed by wisdom and prudence—fundamental values for the good ruler, according to contemporary political treatises⁷⁴—and centred in Castile. The author of the text, who undoubtedly inspired the author of the drawing with these images, finds no better support for what he defends than the consideration of what he has supported is reason why his own relatives have given their lives to heretics (who martyred them)*. Such argument is built with images that would reproduce that reality, also impressive due to its temporal proximity to the possible reader. The state, the good governance of the state—whatever the basic points that the author defines—should be based on and defend what his relatives, whom he mentions as an example,⁷⁵ had bravely defended. Even more, the good governance of the state, and the state itself, are based on the principles defended by these martyrs. Thus, this was an argument of unquestionable importance for the citizens, as they were obliged to comply with them.

2.6. *About the Image of the Purgatory*

In contrast to the denial of the belief of Purgatory by Protestant doctrines is the Counter-Reformation affirmation of it. The image will contribute to the mental creation of this area. In a concrete way, among the Carmelites, from the late medieval period with Simon Stock (XIII century), and with the vision of Pope John XXII (XIII–S.XIV century), the belief of the Sabbatine Privilege is spread, by which the Virgin of Carmel frees from Purgatory to the faithful who wear her scapular in life and death on the first Saturday after their death⁷⁶. This translates into a multitude of representations, such as the one that appeared in the book *Cinco palabras del apóstol San Pablo Comentadas Por el Angelico Doctor Santo Thomas de Aquino y declaradas por el menor Carmelita Descalço Fray Francisco de la Cruz ...*⁷⁷ These are not the images that are of interest to us now, but others, which are multiplied in this book, to remind us that Purgatory can be exited with

prayers, masses, suffrages, or alms, which those who suffer in this place ask of their living relatives and friends, if they have not taken the precaution of leaving it foreseen while they were alive. A request, as can be seen, not at all disinterested. We observe the engravings that reflect this request: It is essential to highlight the reality of the place—with its igneous characteristics and the suffering of those who live there—and the need for help expressed by its inhabitants so that their souls may leave and go to blessedness. The reality is accentuated when the requesting souls are known, the requests are from concrete persons, Carmelites—women and men—or their relatives, perfectly identified, with names and surnames, and very close in time, who would have appeared to other people—Carmelites—equally close, concrete and known. The engraving will reproduce with different sequences in a single plate, the different episodes of the life of the chosen person, highlighting those of the apparitions, or the stories of different characters will be reflected, centred on the moment of the apparition, in different boxes also in a single engraving. Each scene is identified with a capital letter that, below the engraving, links to an explanation, in a brief text, about what is exposed there. I would like to point out the similarity that this procedure has with the first engravings⁷⁸ that try to be useful to the Ignatian composition of place, of which we have already spoken, as a way to make the most, mnemotechnically, of the image. When the dialogue between the characters is to be made explicit, it is done by means of inscribed bands or even large, unrolled sheets with the texts, carried by their issuers, reflecting in them the dialogue; in this way, they make the viewer of the engraving a participant in the dialogue, who, without having to read the chapter they illustrate, acquires sufficient news of what is to be transmitted.⁷⁹

The engraver is F. Quart⁸⁰, but the invention of these pieces of chalcography should be attributed to the author of the text. The book consists of a total of 25 engravings, approximately half of which include scenes of these apparitions, always linked to specific people: They are the confirmation of the reality of the evoked world. We will now focus on a few of them. The first one ([Francisco de la Cruz 1724](#), p. 52) (Figure 13) responds to “las revelaciones de la Venerable Madre Francisca del Santísimo Sacramento”^{81*} ([Francisco de la Cruz 1724](#), p. 53), an example of the forgetfulness of the children towards their parents, who, suffering in Purgatory, appear to this religious to ask her to have masses said for them, which the children do not favour: error of those parents for not having thought of their own salvation, while they were alive, by leaving suffrages for those masses. This can be observed in the scene marked with the letter C in the engraving we are studying; in the scene identified with the letter B, the Venerable Mother Catalina de Cristo also appears to Mother Francisca, promising her help for her blessedness. These are the two upper scenes whose theme contrasts the souls of those who await prayers and suffrages to be able to leave Purgatory, suffering in the flames, and the appearance of the Carmelite Mother Catalina, happy and without suffering, from a cloud and pointing to blessedness. These two scenes appear in smaller squares placed in the upper part of the engraving, reproducing the small cell of Mother Francisca; in the one shared with the apparition of Mother Catalina, she is praying kneeling at the foot of her bed with a cross. In the one in which she receives the numerous souls from Purgatory, she is kneeling in front of the door through which they enter, giving them the cross to be kissed.

The figures that occupy most of the engraving correspond to the letters A and D; they are María de la Encarnación, in the civil sphere called Violante de Salazar, and Juana Evangelista, in the civil sphere called Juana de Roph, both ladies of the Empress Isabel of Portugal, who leave their lives in the palace to enter the Disalced Carmelites and free themselves from Purgatory. With them, the closeness of the royalty to the convent in Madrid at the beginning of its foundation is evidenced at the same time that several other women of the nobility are mentioned (such as Doña Francisca de Mendoza; daughter of the Marquises of Almazán, Francisca de las Llagas de Cristo; the daughter of the Counts of Miranda and Valdonoquillo, etc.). It is curious how Juana directs her gaze to the scenes of apparitions located at the upper part, examples of which cause her entry into the order. The latter and Encarnación, with the Carmelite habit and bare feet, flank an architecture

that opens right between them through an arch that begins a vaulted corridor, at the end of which, and with greater illumination, other architectures can be seen flanking what must be a church—the one of their convent—crowned by a dome and a cross. In the background is the countryside with small hills and buildings in the distance. It is a symbolic way of representing the beginning of her journey towards her new life in that convent and of pointing out the help that such kind of life favours to avoid or minimize the pains of Purgatory.



Figure 13. Quart. *Revelaciones de la Venerable Madre Francisca del Santísimo Sacramento; María de la Encarnación y Juana Evangelista.* Francisco de la Cruz, *Cinco palabras del apóstol San Pablo* . . . p. 52.

The following engraving (Francisco de la Cruz 1724, p. 64) (Figure 14) also refers to the apparitions that Mother Francisca had. It is represented in scene C, where this Mother has a vision of a bishop in Purgatory, with his corresponding vestments and surrounded by flames, who, without the help of his relatives, asks her for suffrages to be able to leave, since, in life, he had not responded well to the demands of his position, which, as such, “dignidad . . . si es bien servida, tendrán supremas coronas [quienes la ejerzan]; si mal servida, terribles tormentos”^{82*} (Francisco de la Cruz 1724, p. 71). Formally, the entire engraving is structured like the previous one: smaller scenes on the upper level, and a larger scene shared by the characters on the lower level. The second engraving is subdivided by a large column in the foreground, of Tuscan order, whose capital supports two large arches that open two vaulted spaces with a perspective absolutely forced and contradictory to other spaces that are integrated into the same scene. In the one on the left, identified by the letter A, Father Gabriel de la Asunción appears surrounded by flames, from Purgatory, to Mother Ana de San Agustín—whom he catches praying—and asks her for suffrages to be able to leave that state; the area on the right, identified by the letter B, is a temporal continuation of the previous one: Mother Ana herself is again surprised by an apparition of the Father Gabriel but now glorious—he is even wearing a crown—and accompanied by Saint Teresa—who had been her friend—now from a cloud. From the texts we know that the sin leading to Purgatory had been “aver interpretado una obediencia”^{83*}; Saint Teresa of Jesus, also with crown and luminous halo, explains that “de esta manera son premiadas las Almas que con perfección guardan la regla”^{84*}, in an explicit lesson of the obligatory obedience. If in the first scene the space opens to an undefined exterior through a door, in the second, a porticoed gallery with arcades, through which a landscape of distant hills can

be seen, which would evoke an upper gallery of the conventual cloister. On the upper level, and behind three arches that are opened on the described architecture, three scenes are developed. The two scenes at the ends are identified with the letter D, since they are two sequences of the same story: In the first one, a sick man in bed receives the apparition of an angel who proposes him to exchange two years of his illness for three days of Purgatory, and he accepts. In the second, this character in Purgatory, amidst flames, regrets his choice, since a simple hour in Purgatory seems like years to him: “Ignoramos los que vivimos la terribilidad de aquellas penas, y son tales y tantas, que todos los que han venido del otro mundo a solicitar salir dellas dixeron que es mas un día del Purgatorio que mil años deste mundo . . . ”^{85*} (Francisco de la Cruz 1724, p. 67). The central scene is the one described, identified by the letter C.



Figure 14. Quart. Venerable Madre Francisca del Santísimo Sacramento; padre Gabriel de la Asunción y madre Ana de San Agustín. Francisco de la Cruz, *Cinco palabras del apóstol San Pablo . . .* p. 64.

The following engraving (Francisco de la Cruz 1724, p. 76) (Figure 15) is structured in three levels. The lower one, with the two larger scenes identified with the letter A, depicts Carmelite friars, surrounded by flames, in two apparitions, asking for suffrages. In the scene on the left, they appear to the Carmelite Pedro de la Madre de Dios, who is praying in his cell. The one on the right represents a Carmelite who died shortly before appearing to two brothers of the order, whom he had asked to say masses for him; they fall asleep tired and the deceased wakes them up, as can be seen in the engraving, surrounded by flames, to remind them their promise. On the second level, two other scenes, both identified by the letter B, again represent Mother Frances to whom, while she is praying in her cell, “a Regent and a Judge” appear, on two different occasions, surrounded by flames; the request they make is similar to the ones seen, and their faults are referred to the mismanagement of their positions. In the upper level, there are three scenes, the ones at the ends identified with the letter D, and the central scene with the letter C. The first of those labelled with the letter D depicts the apparition of a woman from Purgatory, amidst flames, to another woman, her neighbour, asking for masses to be said in the convent of the Discalced Carmelites in Puebla de los Ángeles; the neighbour thought she would not be believed, and the deceased stamped her hand on a wooden box—“arquilla de labor”^{86*} (Francisco de la Cruz 1724, p. 86), represented in the engraving—of the said neighbour, marking her hand with the extreme heat that fire produced as a proof of certainty; when the masses were over, she

appeared again in blessedness: “Muchas personas hizieron copiar la mano para tenerla en sus casas, en memoria del suceso y en testimonio de la fuerza que . . . las oraciones . . . tienen para librar las Animas del Purgatorio”^{87*} (Francisco de la Cruz 1724, p. 87). In the second scene labelled with the letter D, another apparition to Mother Francisca of a religious surrounded by flames is shown, also asking for suffrages.



Figure 15. Quart. Padre Pedro de la Madre de Dios; Venerable Madre Francisca del Santísimo Sacramento y vecina de Puebla de los Angeles. Francisco de la Cruz, *Cinco palabras del apóstol San Pablo* . . . p. 76.

Although it is advised that it is better to rely on oneself than on one’s successors for possible help to alleviate the rigors of Purgatory, in general, the emphasis is on the compassionate memory and even the gratitude due and translated into suffrages, to those who, by leaving their goods to their heirs and trusting in them, did not take care of themselves, forgetting their own need and did not pay masses for their own and prompt relief from such possible sorrows; on the day of the souls, they should be prayed for. Thus, in the central scene, C, it is narrated how the desire to pray for the animas, of the woman who was called Aldonça de la Madre de Dios, makes her enter the order. She was the daughter of Mr. Rodrigo Niño and Mrs. Teresa de Guevara, Counts of Añover, sister of Mr. Fernando Niño de Guevara, Cardinal and Archbishop of Seville. She entered the order after being widowed by Garcilaso de la Vega y Guzmán and being the mother of many children, some of them advisors of Philip II of Spain. She was an example for her granddaughter, Mother Leonor of the Blessed Sacrament, who was also very devoted to the souls in Purgatory. In the engraving, Aldonça says goodbye to the children. In the background of this engraving, as if it was a different moment, Francisco de Mendoza, the Bishop of Pamplona, and Leonor’s uncle, put the habit on Leonor.

3. Conclusions

To conclude, in all the images analysed, the starting point is a significant reference in the empirical reality, this first reference leads us to a supposed “reality” of a superior nature. The “reality” provides a situation which, if it was not real, it should have been. It even represents a more “real” “reality”, the one that is only evoked from the material world, or almost a reality whose material would be a shadow: a metaphysical “reality” whose vision is only provided by the image. It is an image carefully chosen for what best suits the purpose: elaborated following the decorum. We return to Plato: In this game of

the evocation of transcendence, of the metaphorical evocation of what he, perhaps, could consider “reality”, and he would not qualify the authors of such images as tricksters but as educators. We, and not Plato, look at images that play with truth and lies—by referring with these concepts merely to the narrated event—that include the lie in the truth or the truth in the lie. These images form another pretended “reality”, the “reality” that they believe it should be, and in any case, the “reality” that should be believed and that they try to make it be believed. Bacon and Descartes, already in the 17th century, place art in the realm of imagination; this is known by the creator—in the case of engraving: the “inventor”—. However, the one who contemplates the image does not know it. In short, no image is innocent: It is always an evocation, an interested, suggestive, and even dangerous game.

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Notes

- 1 “Quando iba a la visita del Alpujarra iba cargado de Rosarios, pilas de agua bendita y imágenes de papel para repartir entre los Moriscos. Enseñavales la reverencia con que se han de tener, y como en ellas no se adora la pintura, sino lo representado en ella”. (Bermúdez de Pedraza 1638, p. 187).
* Translation of old Spanish: “When he went to visit the Alpujarra he was loaded with Rosaries, piles of holy water and paper images to distribute among the Moriscos. He taught them the respect they should have for them, and how the painting is not worshiped, but what is represented in them”.
- 2 Recall the famous engraving he includes in his *Christian Rhetoric* (Perugia, 1579) in which the priest, from the pulpit, preaches while pointing at a series of images of the Passion of Christ, spread out within reach and visible to all, mostly indigenous people. He is referred to in the quotation.
- 3 * Translation of old Spanish: “If . . . I had . . . Twenty or thirty thousand holy cards, all of them will be used, because each one will take a holy card to his own room.”
- 4 This is the text referred to: *Libro de la Primera parte, de la excelencia del Sancto Evangelio, en que se contiene un breve Compendio, de los Misterios de la venida de IESUCHRISTO nuestro Señor al mundo. Con las calidades y condiciones que pertenecen a este tan alto Sacramento de la Encarnación, y de la reparación de la culpa general. Contiene se principalmente en este libro, todo el discurso hystorical, de cada uno de los misterios, de la ultima y soberana Cena, que CHRISTO celebó: y los de su muy sancta Muerte y Passion. Con las circunstancias y claridad, de cada una destas obras, en que la Magestad del muy alto Señor (tan señaladamente) puso la mano. Dispuesto y dividido en quatro libros, para mayor claridad de esta historia. Con un breve y compendioso tractado, de los Misterios que succedieron, desde que CHRISTO espiro en la Cruz, hasta que en cuerpo glorioso, y familiarmente, apareció à la gloriosa Virgen su madre, y a todos los otros Apóstoles y Discípulos (que por dispensación Divina) fueron elegidos, para ser testigos idóneos, destes tan altos Misterios, después que rescibieron la investidura de la predicación del sancto Evangelio. Ahora nuevamente collegido, de los Originales de las scripturas Sanctas de ambos Testamentos. Y de los libros de los mas antiguos y escogidos Doctores de yrrrefragable autoridad, que desta materia tractan. Dirigido à la Serenissima, muy Alta y muy Poderosa señora doña IVANA, Princesa de Portugal, primera deste nombre. Por el muy Reverendo Padre Fray PHILIPPE DE SOSA, Predicador (de la orden de los Frayles Menores, de Observancia, del glorioso padre sant Francisco) de la Provincia del Andaluzia. En Sevilla. En casa de Juan Gutierrez impressor de libros. 1569. Con Privilegio Real de Castilla.*
- 5 For these types of aspects and the representation of the visage of Christ in the different periods, see Labarga (2016, pp. 265–316).
- 6 It is the canon defended by Vitruvius, 1st cent. BC, in his work *Los diez libros de arquitectura (Ten books on architecture)*, (Vitruvio 1991, p. 68). In Spain, the author of the first theoretical text on this classical language, Diego de Sagredo (*Medidas del Romano*, Toledo, 1526), reflects this canon in a drawing of a proportional head dating from 1541. See: Sagredo [1526] (Sagredo [1526] 1986, plate 10).
- 7 It should be remembered that since the beginning of Christianity there have been advocates of beauty (St. John Chrysostom, St. Jerome, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. John of Damascus, Theodoret of Cyrus, Epiphanius of Salamis . . .) who confront those who defend the ugliness of Christ (St. Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian . . .). The concept of the beautiful visage will triumph: “The choice of the physical beauty of Christ is best suited to theological reflection, which has a strong philosophical background, according to which the transcendentals are interchangeable; therefore, if we know that Christ is the

supreme perfection, the supreme truth and the supreme good, then the supreme beauty also logically corresponds to him". This aspect was accentuated in the Renaissance with the appreciation of the classical aesthetic canon, which based beauty on proportion and was translated into the body of Christ. For these aspects, see Labarga (2016, pp. 274–75, 296).

8 It should be remembered that these character peculiarities are assigned on the basis of the resemblance of the characteristics indicated to those of a certain animal, bearing in mind that, in this animal, specific behavioral characteristics are also pointed out; this is the starting point of physiognomy.

9 Essentially Pseudo Aristotle and Adamantius. (Defradas and Klein 1989, pp. 136–88).

10 "Physiognomy is a form of observation by which we can get to know the qualities of souls from their bodily features . . . this rule is reversible . . . we can . . . imagine the appearance of the dead by taking their well-known moral characteristics as a guide" (Gaurico [1504] 1989, p. 158).

11 * Translation of old Spanish: "And as his divine heart began to be occupied by sadness to an excessive degree, he said to the three aforementioned disciples: Sad is my soul until death . . . He suffered truly and not feignedly in this place, so that in the centuries to come there would be a memory of that due sentiment, of his sacred passion . . . Truly he became tired, truly he was hungry . . . truly he shed copious tears and was saddened, as it seems in this place of the garden of Gethsemane."

12 * Translation of old Spanish: "In the human nature of this fair man, there is not only union with the divine nature, but all that the grown understanding can see in a state of perfection . . . And as for the external and visible form, this man exceeds God . . . and is preferred to all men".

13 * Translation of old Spanish: "beautiful in appearance and bodily form".

14 * Translation of old Spanish: "the pain that went through the souls of these holy men [when He was taken down from the cross], remembering the beauty with which they saw that divine visage and that grace and authority . . . distributing . . . gifts . . . of all health and consolation".

15 * Translation of old Spanish: "So that the devotion of the pious reader may be incited; and kindled with greater fervor . . . we place here the actual form and figure of one of those nails with which the holy and sovereign lord was affixed to the cross".

16 The image of the nail is accompanied by this clarification: "Esta es la forma del Clavo, que traspasso una de las manos sanctissimas, de aquel Señor, que formo el Cielo y la Tierra. Ni es mayor, ni menor, porque esta sacado a la medida del propio, que esta en el sobredicho lugar. Esta roblado por dos partes, y faltale la parte de la punta, porque salió con dificultad (según parece) por averlo fixado aquellos crueles ministros, sobre la mano del Salvador, con gran violencia. Y lo segundo, por ser la madera de la Cruz de calidad muy espessa y fuerte, como parece en la cruz, engastada en oro, que esta en la mesma Recamara del sobredicho Rey, que sera de casi un xeme en longura" (un xeme o jeme equivale a la medida de un palmo). Y en el texto se dice: "Este clavo, y admirable reliquia, tiene el Rey don Philippe, segundo deste nombre, Rey de las Españas, entre otras reliquias de grande estimación. Esta al pie de una flor de Lis de oro, debaxo de un viril, con que esta cubierto, la qual en oro, y piedras es de gran valor". "Este clavo esta roblado por dos partes contrarias y parece en una esquina del, la señal que hizo el instrumento común de hierro con que lo sacaron . . . la cabeça del clavo . . . es ancha, profunda y redonda . . . la madera de la cruz parece ser condensa . . . Por esta causa salieron los clavos como parece . . . con trabajo, y alla dentro del madero se quedo parte de la punta deste" (Sosa 1569, pp. 121 y 167).

Translation of old Spanish: "This is the form of the Nail, which pierced one of the holy hands of the Lord, who formed Heaven and Earth. It is neither larger nor smaller, because it is taken to the measure of its original, which is in the aforementioned place. It is riveted in two parts, and lacks the part of the tip, because it came out with difficulty (as it seems) for having been fixed by those cruel ministers, on the hand of the Savior, with great violence. And secondly, because the wood of the Cross is of a very thick and strong quality, as it appears in the cross, set in gold, which is in the same Chamber of the aforementioned King, which will be almost a palm in length". In the text, it is said: "This nail, and admirable relic, is owned by King Philippe, the second of this name, King of Spain, among other relics of great value". "It is at the foot of a golden fleur de lis, under a glass that covers it, with gold and stones of great value". "This nail is riveted on two opposite sides and it appears in one corner of it, the mark made by the common iron instrument with which it was removed . . . the nail's head . . . is wide, deep and round . . . the wood of the cross appears to be thick . . . For this reason the nails came out as it seems . . . with labour, and part of the tip of the nail remained inside the wood".

17 TV ES CRISTVS FILIVS DEI VIVI QVI IN HVNC MVNDVM VENISTI: "You are Christ the Son of the living God who came into this world". IHS XPS SALVATOR MVNDI: "Jesus Christ, Savior of the world".

18 * Translation of old Spanish: "But in the resurrection . . . remaining in the same substance of human nature, [this substance] was surrounded with gifts and great gifts of glory, of impassibility, of subtlety, of lightness and clarity . . . the clarity which consists in the beauty of perfect color, and in a radiance brighter than sunlight."

19 Formula whose roots go back to Classical Antiquity, profuse in the Roman representation and extended by the influence of this in the Renaissance, for portraits of illustrious personages.

20 For a complete study of books of this type of texts and images, see Zafra (2014, pp. 129–43).

21 Its author, Medina, quotes and collects Sosa's arguments throughout his book, even reproducing his engraving of the nail of the crucified hand of Christ, a relic of Philip II of Spain (Primer Libro, p. 370). The book in question is *Victoria gloriosa, /y excelencias de la/esclarecida Cruz de Iesu Christo nuestro Señor.*/por el M. F. Pedro de Medina de la Or/den de N. S. de la Merced Redempcion

de Captivos./Dispuestas en tres Libros./Dirigidos a N. Reverendo P. F. Alonso de/ Monroy, dignissimo Maestro General de toda la misma Orden. Año 1604. Con privilegio. En Granada, por Fernando Diaz de Montoya. Esta Tassado a tres maravedis y medio el pliego.

It is the canon defended by Vitruvius in the 1st century BC (Vitruvio 1991, p. 68), highlighted by Renaissance classicism, to which Pedro de Medina refers (de Medina 1604, Libro Primero, p. 365).

- 22 * Translation of old Spanish: "Christ, which was at least six to seven feet long, being the most common state of a perfect man."
- 23 * Translation of old Spanish: "That the holy body of Christ at the moment of his conception was organized and perfectly adapted for the holy and blessed anima which God infused in him . . . just as the Holy Spirit created a human body in that ineffable [Virgin], the most perfect of all that can be thought of, according to the perfection of the holy soul that had to inform everything to the hypostatic union of the Word with the same humanity, and also because the Word, human and passive, was to be placed, nailed and died on a Cross, it was agreed and it was so, that the Holy Spirit himself, with particular providence, drew it and ordered it to be of the matter and form that it was, in order and for the manifestation of the goodness of God".
- 24 * Translation of old Spanish: "On the cross of the Lord there were four pieces of lumber, which are the right mast, the transverse lumber, the trunk placed at the foot [to fix the cross firmly to the ground] and the title above . . . In addition to this, there was also a wooden block nailed to the Cross under the feet of the Redeemer, where he had them nailed".
- 25 * Translation of old Spanish: "The form and shape of this serpent . . . was in accordance with the form and shape of the living ones . . . in imitation of those that kill men . . . it had the color of the living serpents. It was crucified on the pole . . . Moses, by the command of God, made a form of a bronze cross and raised it upright near the tabernacle . . . For greater interrelationship between the figure, that was the serpent, with the figurative, that is Christ, it should be considered . . . that that serpent . . . had its two wings as the living ones had them . . . it had the wings stretched out and in the shape of a Cross . . . that pole raised by divine order was a Cross And all who . . . looked upon it, were saved in life and healed in wounds . . . We wanted the story to be understood, that the spirit of the figure is related to that of the Cross of the Savior of the world".
- 26 M. Gómez-Moreno: "Wood engraving, already printed in 1579, at the foot of the Spanish translation of the bull of Pius V", *Primicias Históricas de San Juan de Dios*, Provincias Españolas de la Orden Hospitalaria, Madrid (Gómez-Moreno 1950, p. 6).
- 27 We do not know the printing house from which this translated text of the bull came out.
- 28 As for his poor clothing, only "by virtue of the ordinations of 1571 and 1585 the Brothers Hospitalers wore . . . [full-length habit]". (Gómez-Moreno 1950, p. 327).
- 29 This is recorded by his first biographer, Francisco de Castro, who knew him and who echoes those who remember his physical appearance, always emphasizing the poverty of his clothing and his shaven appearance. See: (de Castro 1588, p. 59 for this quote and pp. 18 vo., 29, and 59 for the description of all his humble clothing).
* Translation of old Spanish: "razor shaved, beard and head".
- 30 To this day, they are kept in urns in the house-museum where he died.
- 31 The book referred to is Francisco de Castro: *Historia de la vida y sanctas obras de Juan de Dios, y de la institución de su orden, y principio de su hospital* . . . En Granada, en casa de Antonio de Librixa. Año de M.D.LXXXV.
- 32 Since Castro includes the Spanish translation of the Bull *Licet ex debito*, he also includes the engraving, on a double page and unnumbered, between two laudatory poems and the dedication of the book.
- 33 The book referred to is *Historia de la vida y sanctas obras de Juan de Dios, y de la institución de su orden, y principio de su hospital*. Composed by Master Francisco de Castro, Priest Rector of the same Hospital of Juan de Dios in Granada. Con privilegio. En Granada en casa de Rene Rabut. (de Castro 1588).
- 34 It is a small bust in which the face appears from the front, bearded, with hair extending over the shoulders and nape of the neck, and with the denotative powers of sanctity radiating in triangular form, on the sides and top of the head.
- 35 "Estando Ioan de Dios comiendo un día con un Obispo de Tui (que en aquel tiempo se halló en Granada) le pregunto que como se llama? El le dixo que Ioan, y el Obispo le respondió que se llamasse Ioan de Dios, el respondió, Si Dios quissiere" (de Castro 1588, p. 60 vo.).
* Translation of old Spanish: "When John of God was eating one day with a Bishop of Tui (who at that time was in Granada), he asked him: what his name is? He told him that his name was John, and the Bishop replied that his name was John of God, and he answered, "If God willed it"."
- 36 According to Friar Hierónimo Román (in his *Republicas del Mundo*, Medina del Campo (Román 1575), Libro VI, cap. XXVII, fol. 318). This quotation being collected by Gómez-Moreno (1950, p. 168).
* Translation of old Spanish: "These who are called Johns of God, who walk with sacks and barefoot and on their backs with sacks and baskets, demanding alms to support hospitals and orphan children . . . In 1378 . . . in Cremona . . . In our time it began in Granada by a saintly man called John of God, from which all were later called . . . Johns of God . . .
- 37 *Bulas apostólicas concedidas por la santidad de Pio V y de Gregorio XIII y Sixto V a los Hermanos de la orden y Hospitalidad de Juan de Dios, las quales valen en España, y en las Indias, y en todas las demás partes donde estuvieren los Hermanos de la dicha Hospitalidad*. Impresas en Madrid, con licencia del real Consejo de las Indias y del Comissario general de la santa Cruzada, en casa de P. Madrigal. (Popes et al. 1596).

- 38 *IN MANUS TUAS DOMINE*: “In your hands, Lord”.
- 39 “Pues sintiendo en sí que se llegava su partida, se levanto de la cama, y se puso en el suelo de rodillas, abraçandose con un Crucifixo, donde estubo un poco callando, y de ay a un poco dixo Iesus, Iesus, en tus manos me encomiendo, y diziendo esto con voz rezia y bien inteligible dio el alma a su Criador” (de Castro 1588, pp. 77 r. y 77 vo.).
* Translation of old Spanish: “Then, feeling that his departure was approaching, he got up from his bed, and knelt on the floor, embracing a Crucifixion, where he remained silent for a while, and from there he said Jesus, Jesus, into your hands I commend myself, and saying this with a prayerful and well intelligible voice, he gave his soul to his Creator”.
- 40 S. IV^o. DE DIOS: St. John (Ivan) of God.
- 41 For these dates and the chronological development of the process, see (Martínez-Rojas 2009, pp. 557–65, here: p. 559).
- 42 On the iconography of St. John of God in 17th century religious cards, see: (Moreno 1979, pp. 473–78).
- 43 M. Gómez-Moreno quotes as follows: “Holy card printed in Rome with privilege of Sixtus V in 1599. Title: B. Ioannes Dei lusitanus fundator Religionis fratrum curantium infirmos . . . Below: Romae Iacobus Laurus sculptor. Cum privilegio summi Pontificis ad decenium. Finally, the coat of arms of Sixtus V”. (Gómez-Moreno 1950, p. 170). This author includes such holy card in his book, in an unpaginated plate, between pp. 176 and 177. Note the authorship of the engraver.
- 44 Quote from a witness compiled by García-Melero (2017, p. 299).
* Translation of old Spanish: “medals in which the blessed father John of God is placed and depicted as he was when he died”.
- 45 Autor and work are *Práctica de los Ejercicios espirituales de Nuestro Padre San Ignacio* por el Padre Sebastián Izquierdo de la Compañía de Jesús. En Roma por el Varese. 1675. Con licencia de los Superiores.
- 46 * Translation of old Spanish: “It is thought . . . that Christo our Lord on the last day of the world will come down from Heaven to earth, to judge the living and the dead with a universal Judgment . . . The circumstances of that last Judgment must be such . . . that it is of great importance to all of us to consider them with frequent and attentive consideration, to which this Exercise is ordered.”
- 47 * Translation of old Spanish: “The composition of place [will be] to imagine a very large Theater, in which a general Act of Inquisition is held.”
- 48 * Translation of old Spanish: “the Sun and the Moon will be darkened. The stars will fall from Heaven . . . In the Air there will be terrible storms . . . The sea will roar . . . going out of its limits . . . The earth will suffer . . . earthquakes . . . God will send that fire . . . with which will be covered . . . this globe of the World.”
- 49 * Translation of Old Spanish: “The heavens will open and the Son of God will come down with great power and might, accompanied by all his Angels . . . vibrating the sword of his Justice with the arm of his Omnipotence . . . as a rigorous Judge”.
- 50 * Translation of old Spanish: “he comes close to the earth and placed at a due distance, he will sit his Tribunal on a white cloud . . . placing at his right hand his Holy Mother, the Virgin Mary, and at his left hand the Apostles and other Apostolic men . . . so that they may be his Assessors, helping him to judge the others . . . Then those Books will be opened . . . in which will be seen written all the works of men, good and bad . . . which by Divine virtue will be made evident there, and all will clearly see all the good and bad works . . . their own and those of the others. What a strange affront, dishonor and confusion the wicked will suffer when they see there all their hidden sins made manifest to everyone.”
- 51 “Relaxar” means the act of handing over a death penalty condemned person from the ecclesiastical judge to the secular one.
* Translation of old Spanish: “As here the Inquisition hands over the condemned person to the secular arm, the wretched will be handed over to the demons . . . [and thrown] into the dungeon of Hell”.
- 52 The engraving is inserted between pp. 62 and 63. (Izquierdo 1675).
- 53 Gregorio Fosman y Medina, chalcography engraver and painter from Madrid who lived between 1635 and 1713. He was well known, and his work was extensive and varied. On him, see Aterido (1997, pp. 87–99) and Carrete Parrondo (n.d.). Diccionario de grabadores y litógrafos que trabajaron en España. Siglos XV a XIX. Apéndice. Arte Procomún. (accessed on 23 May 2021)
- 54 Engraving included between pp. 138 and 139 of (Olmo 1680) *Relación Histórica del Auto General de le Fe que se celebrou en Madrid, este año de 1680 con asistencia del Rey N. S. Carlos II y de las Magestades de la Reina N. S. y de la Augustissima Reina Madre . . . Por Joseph del Olmo . . . Impreso por Roque Rico de Miranda, Año 1680*.
- 55 I described this type of ephemeral architectures and their functions, precisely referring to the auto-da-fé reflected in Fosman’s engraving, which took place in Madrid in 1680, in my article “Las estrategias de la imagen y el grabado como crónica de la realidad” (Cuesta García de Leonardo Forthcoming).
- 56 Alardo de Popma, engraver of pieces of chalcography, was born in Flanders and settled in Spain before 1617, where he died in 1641. He had a very large production of pieces of chalcography and of very good quality, especially in book covers. See information about this author and his work in: (Blas et al. 2011, pp. 293–334).
- 57 The book referred to is *Primera parte de las noticias historiales de las Conquistas de tierra firme en las Indias Occidentales*. Compuesto por el padre Fray Pedro Simon Provincial de la Seráfica Orden de San Francisco, del Nuevo Reyno de Granada en las Indias, Lector Jubilado en Sacra Theologia, y qualificador del Santo Officio, hijo de la Provincia de Carthagená en Castilla, Natural de la Parrilla Obispado de Cuenca. Dirigido a nuestro invictissimo y maior monarca del Antigo y nuevo Mundo Philipppo quarto en su Real y supremo Consejo de las Indias. Con privilegio Real En Cuenca en casa de Domingo de la Yglesia, [1627].

- 58 Friar Pedro Simon “was sent as a missionary to America and left ... towards the New Kingdom of Granada ... in 1604, together with ... other eleven Franciscans”. From 1605 he practiced “*el lectorado de Artes y Teología de la Orden* (lectureship of Arts and Theology of the Order) in the capital of New Granada”; “he was named superior of the religious of a province (*Provincial*) of his Order. From then on, he dedicated himself to writing his historical work, *Noticias históricas de las conquistas de tierra firme en las Indias Occidentales*. At the end of the triennium of his ministry as superior of province, he was assigned to the San Diego Convent in Ubaté, where he was probably surprised by death”. He traveled and “got to know ... the Andean regions of Tolima and Huila and the cruelties of the war that were made against these natives to reduce them”; he also traveled “between 1612 and 1613 and his objective was to gather historical data for his work, something that his superiors asked him to do ... to write the history of the inhabitants of the territories that had been called *Tierra firme* in the 16th century, that is, Venezuela and Colombia ... consulting all the existing bibliography ... searching for other sources as well. He read and re-read the memorials of the conquistadors, collected oral accounts of many of those who were still alive and finally did a research work in the archives”. (according to Manuel Lucena Salmoral (n.d.), on the Real Academia de la Historia page <http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/18074/pedro-simon>, accessed on 17 April 2021).
- 59 * Translation of old Spanish: “The Tiara of the Supreme Pontiff has three Crowns, which implies that the Roman Catholic Church is the absolute mistress of the three parts of the world. Also, a fourth Crown should be added, for Spain, which has been added to its jurisdiction, and command, as are these West Indies, or the New World, by the industry of the Castilians, by virtue of the great power of their Kings ... ; a fourth Crown can be added to that of the Supreme Pontiff, on the part of our Spain ... having conquered it by force of arms, and that the world may know the increases that Spain has made in the expansion of the Faith”.
- 60 *QUARTUM OFFERO PRO INDIS*: “I offer the fourth for the Indians”.
- 61 See the similarity of the portrait of Philip IV in this engraving with the portrait in oil of the same king, painted by Velázquez in 1624 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), or with the bust portrait that Velázquez also painted of him between 1626 and 1628, dressed in armor (Museo del Prado, Madrid). It could be said that, considering the numerous portraits that Velázquez painted of the king during this period, one of these may have served as a model for the engraving in question.
- 62 See the portrait in oil of Urban VIII, painted by Pietro da Cortona in 1624 (Capitoline Museums, Rome).
- 63 See the comment on this engraving, its author, Alardo de Popma, and the rest of his work, in (Blas et al. 2011, pp. 293–384; for the above quote: p. 320).
- 64 See references to this engraving in (Blas et al. 2011, p. 321) and in (Gómez Urdáñez 1999, p. 128).
- 65 The book referred to is *Conservación de Monarquías y Discursos Políticos sobre la gran Consulta que el Consejo hizo al Señor Rey don Filipe Tercero, Al Presidente y Consejo Superior de Castilla*, por el Licenciado Pedro Fernández Fernández Navarrete (1626) Canónico de la Iglesia Apostólica de Señor Santiago Capellan y S. de sus Magestades y Altezas Consultor del Sto. Oficio de la Inquisición. Con Privilegio. En Madrid en la Imprenta Real Año M.DC. XXVI.
- 66 F. Agus. *Leonardo Inven. Alardo de Popma Sculp.* (as added on the cover). Agustín Leonardo was a Mercedarian friar and painter of the first half of the XVII century.
- 67 Among his various positions, he was: “solicitor of the *mesa capitular* (chapter table), secretary, mayor of the *Cabildo* (Chapter), vicar of the dean, archivist, reliquary and visitor of the Chapter Treasury. All this administrative work allowed Navarrete to know firsthand the main complaints of the peasants who cultivated the lands of his possessions and to confirm the importance of agriculture for the State. He combined these tasks in the Chapter with academic work at the University of Santiago de Compostela, first as ordinary visitor (1595) and later as vice rector ... At the end of 1599 Navarrete left the city of Santiago de Compostela to offer his services to the Crown. His career in the Court was at the service of the Cardinal Infante Fernando, younger brother of Philip IV of Spain, to whom he was chaplain and personal secretary. During that period, he made a trip to Rome as ambassador of Philip III to manage matters related to the Royal Chapel”. In his work, he intends to comment on remedies to confront the problems the kingdom was facing: “Depopulation and poverty, laziness and idleness, were different components of a central social problem: the abandonment of ancestral and traditional virtues. His solution consisted in a change of attitudes: “temperance and frugality, which is the mildest, best known and most experienced medicine in other provinces that suffered the same accidents” ... “. Nieves San Emeterio Martín (n.d.), text taken from the page of the Real Academia de la Historia. <http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/21417/pedro-fernandez-de-navarrete>, accessed on 17 April 2021.
- 68 * Translation of old Spanish: “depopulation of Castile ... taxes ... financial problems ... the ‘expenses of conservation and defense of the monarchy’ ... ”.
- 69 On the dado of the left acropodium, the one holding the brother, it says: “Venerable Father Friar Alonso Navarrete protomartyr of the religion of St. Dominic, brother of the author, suffered in Japan in the year 1617”). On the right: “Venerable Father Alonso Mena Navarrete religious of St. Dominic cousin brother of the Author suffered in Japan year 1624”.
- 70 *PRO LEGE ET REGE*: “For the law and the king”; *PRO REGE ET LEGE*: “For the king and the law”.
- 71 *STEMATE RELIGIONE ET CHARITATE CONIUNTI*: “United by the crown, religion and charity”.
- 72 Wisdom is a young woman holding a lighted lamp filled with oil and a book, and Prudence is represented by a woman who “must be looking at herself in a mirror, seeing a snake wrapped around her arm”. According to C. Ripa, in his *Iconologia*, Rome, 1593 (Ripa [1593] 1987, vol. II, pp. 279 and 233 respectively).

- ⁷³ *EGO IN CONSILIO HABITO: "I inhabit in reason"-ERUDITIS INTERSUM COGITATIONIBUS: "I am in the wise reflections".*
- ⁷⁴ See, for example, Diego Saavedra Fajardo (Munich, 1640) in his *Empresa 28*: "Prudence is the rule and measure of the virtues; without it, they become vices This virtue is what gives governments the three forms of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, and constitutes their parts proportionate to the natural nature of the subjects, always attentive to their conservation and the main goal of political happiness. Anchor is the prudence of the States, the ship's compass of the prince. If this virtue is lacking in him, the soul of government is lacking" Saavedra ([1640] 1976, vol. I, p. 286).
* Translators note.
- ⁷⁵ Curiously, it is in *Discurso XLIII*, where he defends "that they could not practice under twenty years of age, nor be received under sixteen years of age", in relation to the excessive and very early entry of young people into religious orders, one of the reasons for the depopulation of rural areas, he speaks of the maturity required for this vital option, which will bear excellent benefits, such as that of his brother and cousin: "Notable men, to propagate and spread the Catholic Faith, planting it with much work in remote provinces and watering it with their own blood, as did my glorious brother Friar Alonso Navarrete Provincial Vicar of the Dominican Order, in the Philippines, who after having made a pilgrimage of more than eleven thousand leagues in search of martyrdom, obtained it in the Island of Tacaxima, one of the islands of Japan, in the year of 1617, being the protomartyr of his Religion in those Provinces, in whose imitation Friar Alonso de Mena Navarrete, my cousin brother, son of the same religion of Saint Dominic, was burned alive on a slow burn in the city of Vomura, with many other martyrs, in the year 1622" (Fernández Navarrete 1626, p. 290).
- ⁷⁶ It is the theme that integrates the delivery of the scapular by the Virgin to Simon Stock (XIII century) and the so-called Sabbatine Privilege for those who wore it, according to the vision of Pope John XXII, both episodes with a wide Carmelite iconic representation. See: (Pinilla 2016, pp. 483–98).
- ⁷⁷ The original late 17th century textbook referred to is *Cinco palabras del apóstol San Pablo, Comentadas Por el Angelico Doctor Santo Thomas de Aquino y declaradas por el menor Carmelita Descalço Fray Francisco de la Cruz. Con Doctrina de su Madre Serafica Santa Teresa de Jesus y exemplos de su Orden que dispiertan para vivir y morir bien. Tomo segundo. Contiene dos palabras, credenda, speranda. Impresso en Napoles por Marco Antonio Ferro año 1680. Y reimpresso en Valencia por Antonio Balle año 1724*. This book is a continuation of the first volume of the same title, only different in: "Tomo primero. Contiene tres palabras, agenda, timenda, vitanda" and in: "Y reimpresso en Valencia por Antonio Balle año 1723".
- ⁷⁸ Recall, for example, the book by Jerónimo Nadal (1595), *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia quae in sacrosancto missae sacrificio toto anno leguntur: cum Evangeliorum concordantia historiae integritati sufficienti: accessit & index historiam ipsam evangelicam . . . excudebat Martinus Nutius, Amberes*. With engravings by Hieronymus Wierix.
- ⁷⁹ The similarity with the structure of contemporary comic is clear, of which, undoubtedly, this type of engraving is a precedent.
- ⁸⁰ He signs as *Quart fet. Val^o* (which would indicate that he did his work in Valencia); as *F. Quart fet.* or just *Quart fet.* In the second part of the book, with images that allude to the afterlife, another engraver intervenes in at least 2 engravings, very similar in everything to those of Quart, and with an illegible name (perhaps *Phaer F.*). Curiously, the times it appears, it is crossed out, as if the name had been erased deliberately on the chalcography plate. Opinions differ on F. Quart: according to the (Biblioteca Nacional n.d.) <http://datos.bne.es/persona/XX1524892.html> (accessed on 24 April 2021), he is an 18th century engraver; however, according Carrete Parrondo et al. (1981, pp. 76–77), in the catalogue *Estampas. Cinco siglos de Imagen impresa*, Ministerio de Cultura, Madrid, he is a Valencian engraver from the 17th century.
- ⁸¹ * Translation of old Spanish: "the revelations of Venerable Mother Francisca of the Blessed Sacrament".
- ⁸² * Translation of old Spanish: "dignity . . . if it is well served, they will have supreme crowns [those who exercise it]; if badly served, terrible torments."
- ⁸³ * Translation of old Spanish: "to have interpreted an obedience".
- ⁸⁴ * Translation of old Spanish: "in this way, the souls that keep the rule with perfection are rewarded".
- ⁸⁵ * Translation of old Spanish: "Those of us who are alive are unaware of the terrible nature of those pains, and they are so terrible and so many that all those who have come from the other world to ask to get out of those pains, have said that one day in Purgatory is more than a thousand years in this world"
- ⁸⁶ "Wooden box with flat lid".
- ⁸⁷ * Translation of old Spanish: "Many people had the hand copied to have it in their homes, in memory of the event and in testimony of the strength that . . . prayers . . . have to liberate the Animas from Purgatory".

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Article

Hybridity in the Colonial Arts of South India, 16th–18th Centuries

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Abstract: This study examines the multiplicity of styles and heterogeneity of the arts created on the southern coasts of India during the period of colonial rule. Diverging from the trajectory of numerous studies that underline biased and distorted conceptions of India promoted in European and Indian literary sources, I examine ways in which Indian cultural traditions and religious beliefs found substantial expression in visual arts that were ostensibly geared to reinforce Christian worship and colonial ideology. This investigation is divided into two parts. Following a brief overview, my initial focus will be on Indo-Portuguese polychrome woodcarvings executed by local artisans for churches in the areas of Goa and Kerala on the Malabar coast. I will then relate to Portuguese religious strategies reflected in south Indian churches, involving the destruction of Hindu temples and images and their replacement with Catholic equivalents, inadvertently contributing to the survival of indigenous beliefs and recuperation of the Hindu monuments they replaced.

Keywords: colonial art; Indo-Portuguese art; South India; hybridity; Goan art

1. Introduction

The multiplicity of styles and heterogeneity of the arts created on the southern coasts of India during the period of colonial rule is a complex issue. The intellectual foundations of the colonial construction of knowledge in the perception of intercultural encounters have been questioned by several leading authors. Partha Mitter, author of the pioneering work *Much Maligned Monsters* (Mitter 1992) has referred to those who “have tried to ‘correct’ Eurocentrism by writing, as it were, ‘value-free’ world art history, seeking to balance different traditions, while questioning Eurocentrism (Moxey 2013) Mitter further explains: “Colonial discourse represents cultural intersections as a linear process. It’s like a waterfall, ideas forever flowing downward from the West to the Rest, even though multidirectional flows of cultures have been a known fact of history” (Moxey 2013). Diverging from the trajectory of numerous studies that investigate negative conceptions of Indian culture and religions in European literary sources, I aim to examine ways in which Indian cultural traditions and religious beliefs found substantial expression in visual arts that were ostensibly geared to reinforce Christian worship and colonial ideology.

Theoretical interpretations of the term hybridity have been controversial. Laura Fernández-González and Marjorie Trusted, for example, have argued that “hybridity—which is the marking of particular kinds of difference—is generated out of intolerance, out of the need to distinguish and come to terms with unacceptable, conditionally acceptable, or uneasy mixes. That we need a term such as ‘hybrid’ for certain things and practices betrays the exercise of discrimination—the creation of what belongs and what doesn’t belong, usually with the implicit devaluation of the latter. Hybridity thus describes exceptions within a system that is at once exclusivistic and dependent upon the recognition of difference” (Dean and Leibsohn 2003). My reservation towards this judgmental approach stems from its assumption that certain standards are assumed to be correct or normative, while exceptions are the source of discrimination. In discussing colonial hybridity, this interpretation is appropriated for the discourse of Eurocentricity and implies the inferiority of anything that threatens its cultural norms. As stated by these authors, “because hybridity entered into (post)colonial scholarship largely in the context of subaltern studies, the term

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and its associated concepts emphasize structures of power that center and marginalize”. This is not the conception I wish to adopt. These ideas are associated with highly charged political connotations, which are not the prime issue in the case of Portuguese strategies in South India, as will be illustrated below. Contrasting with these conceptions, hybridity is used in this study as a comprehensive umbrella term, for which I would adopt Wendy Doniger’s definition: “Hybridity defies binary oppositions and understands reality as a fluid rather than a series of solid, separate boxes” (Doniger 2009). The particular cases presented here represent different phenomena and diverse approaches to the complexities of intercultural encounters.

This investigation will be divided into two parts. Following a brief overview, my initial focus will be on Indo-Portuguese polychrome woodcarvings executed by local artisans for churches in the areas of Goa and Kerala on the Malabar coast (Figure 1). I will then relate to Portuguese religious strategies reflected in south Indian churches, involving the destruction of Hindu temples and images and their replacement with Catholic equivalents, inadvertently contributing to the survival of indigenous beliefs and recuperation of the Hindu monuments they replaced.



Figure 1. Map of south India.

Cultural diversity of the Goa region had preceded the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498. Following Islamic rule and monopoly of the spice trade on the Malabar coast¹ the Portuguese infiltration and the creation of their *Estado da Índia*, with Goa as capital in the first decade of the sixteenth century, enabled them to initiate trading activities, interacting with Asian markets and commissioning products for export to Europe. In his study of south India through European eyes, Joan-Pau Rubiés stated that “the ideology of crusade, common to all western Christianity, had a very special importance in the Iberian Peninsula, as a result of the process of *reconquista*...the whole of society could be directly implicated in a providential plan and conceive itself as having recovered a lost country from the infidel rather than having just taken it...” (Rubiés 2002). Grand churches were constructed as part of an attempt to create a global Christian empire. An Italian Jesuit reported in 1545 that there were no more Hindu temples on an island of Goa, and laws issued between 1549 and 1566 explicitly ordered the destruction of temples and prohibited the repair of existing ones. It has been estimated that several hundred Hindu temples were destroyed. In response to the Protestant Reformation and resulting Catholic theological reforms, the Catholic Church propagated the radical suppression of all aspects of so-called idolatry and issued restrictions on the use of images in Catholic churches and practice. One result of this renewal was the violent campaign, executed by the forces of the Portuguese crown and the Catholic orders, that led between 1540 and 1580 to the destruction of most temples, mosques, and religious iconography of the native population in the districts of the Island of Goa, Bardez, and Salcette (Henn 2014). The full-scale Portuguese inquisition began in 1560, promoted by concurrent proceedings of the Council of Trent. As Alexander Henn pointed out, “the campaign thus effected a war between images rather than a war against images” (Henn 2014). The destruction of Hindu temples and images and their replacement with Catholic equivalents “triggered paradoxical consequences that counteracted the iconoclastic thrust and, ironically, allowed the Catholic images to contribute to the memory, survival, and, in the long run, even recuperation of the Hindu monuments they replaced” (Henn 2014). As explained by Wendy Doniger, “building a shrine on the site where a shrine of another tradition used to stand is thus both a metaphor of appreciation and an act of appropriation in India, unhindered by any anxiety of influence” (Doniger 2009).

Between 1580 and 1640 the entire Iberian Peninsula, as well as Spanish and Portuguese overseas possessions, were under the Spanish Habsburgs, leaders of the Catholic Reformation. As Hindu worship and tradition were suppressed by the Portuguese, ecclesiastical arts were appropriated to convey the Christian message to the new converts. During the sixteenth century, Christian religious sculptures, carved in ivory from African elephant tusks, together with Indian spices, textiles, gemstones, and various precious objects, were transported by vessels to Portugal (Figure 2) (Malekandathil 2012, 2019).

These ivories were adapted by local artisans to the tastes of European consumers. By fusing art objects with their own technical methods and forms, Indian artisans created new hybridized styles for export that were highly successful in Europe. The iconography of the Good Shepherd statuettes, for example, for which there are no pre-existing examples in Europe, was produced by local carvers under the patronage of the missionary orders and the Portuguese colonial elite between the late sixteenth and the eighteenth century (Gusella 2019). It has been shown to share several common features with the doctrinal literature developed by the Jesuits in India. The doctrinal work *Onvalleancho Mallo* (Garden of Shepherds) by the Jesuit Miguel de Almeida, published in Goa in 1658, presented a detailed interpretation of pastoral images as seen in the statuette’s iconography. It is presumed to symbolize the eschatological role of the missionary clergy and the Catholic Church through the didactic use of a pastoral allegory (Gusella 2019). An engraving of Jerome Wierix (1553–1619), possibly created in the 1580s, provided the original model that was reproduced by other Flemish engravers and was the source of Flemish wood statuettes, popular items in Portugal between the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. By the seventeenth century, the iconography was appropriated by carvers in workshops

of the Portuguese settlements on the Western coast of India, who may have specialized in both wood and ivory techniques².



Figure 2. Indo-Portuguese Ivories from Goa; (a) Madonna and Baby Christ, 17th century, 300 mm., Antonio Costa Collection, Lisbon; (b) Christ Child as the Bom Pastor, 17th century, 230 mm., Heirs of Bernardo Ferrão, Oporto.

Concurrent with the production of ivories and other precious objects for export, Indian sculptors in Goa and coastal Kerala carved and painted wooden statues for local church furnishings, altarpieces and retables (Figure 3).

Although there is extensive scholarship dealing with the exportation of Indian artworks and various goods to Europe³, these polychrome wooden sculptures created for churches of the Malabar coast have been largely neglected. Unlike the carved ivories, they have not been accessible to scholars in western museums and art collections. Moreover, the unsophisticated simplicity of their rustic style and workmanship, as compared with the delicate ivories and other refined artworks designated for a European clientele, probably rendered them allegedly unworthy of scholarly attention.



Figure 3. Gilded Carved Altar in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi (1661), detail, Old Goa.

2. Polychrome Wooden Sculpture in Goan Churches

Although the iconography of these sculptures was dictated by Christian models, woodcarving and painting techniques, figurative norms, sculptural style and decorative elements generally reflected traditional aesthetics of Hindu, Buddhist and indigenous tribal sculpture (Figure 4).

An example of authentic stone temple sculpture can still be seen in the Śri Mahadeva Temple of the twelfth or thirteenth century, one of the rare examples that survived the Portuguese ravages in the territory of Goa and remained intact due to its inland forest location on the border of Karnataka (Figure 5).



Figure 4. Wooden Hindu statues of Kerala: (a) Garuda, Kerala Folklore Museum, 17th/18th century; (b) Tribal Woman, Kerala Folklore Museum; (c) Durga, Polychrome relief, ca.18th century, Thrikkuratti Mahadeva Temple; (d) Shiva as Bhikshatana Murti (beggar), Kerala Folklore Museum.

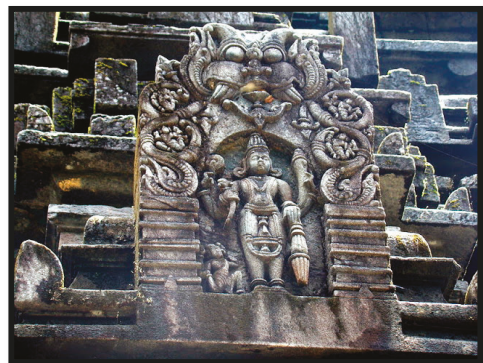
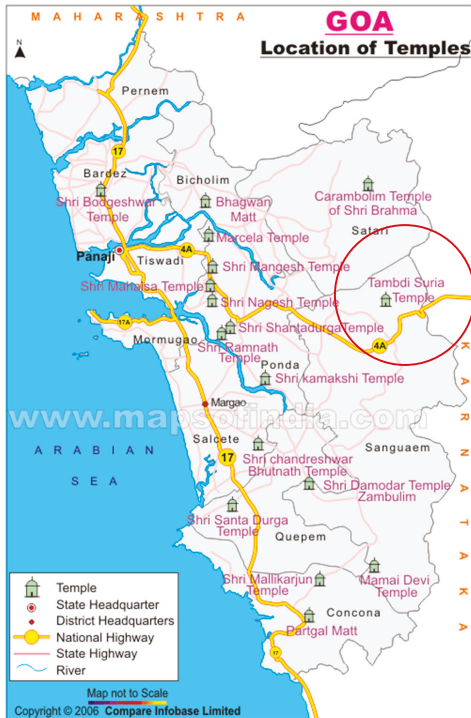


Figure 5. Sri Mahadev Temple, Tambdi Suria, Goa, Kadamba dynasty 12th/13th c.

The abundance and diversity of timber in the extensive forests of Kerala and Goa facilitated the traditional use of wood as the principal material for the construction of homes, temples and religious idols. The polychrome wooden sculptures presented are examples of unique ecclesiastical Goan art that unfortunately has been neglected by scholars (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Polychrome teak statues from Goa, h.1.57 cm., w. at base 54 cm. Late 16th or 17th century, author's collection.

They were carved out of solid teak logs, which later tended to split due to fluctuations of temperature and humidity. By hollowing out the interior core, the damage could be reduced⁴. Like most of the solid wood statues of Goa, these life-size candle bearers have a rugged and rigid simplicity, lacking the fine details of delicate ivories that were created for European taste. Their sculptural style was clearly derived from indigenous Goan tradition

and they have little in common with contemporary Portuguese art. The colors were periodically repainted, using the standard traditional pigments⁵. They were commissioned by the Church from local sculptors for altars and retables and often revealed extremely fine workmanship. Similar statues of candle bearers, ecclesiasts and saints, originating in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, can still be seen in Goan churches (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Indo-Portuguese statue, polychrome teak, h.1.57 cm., Church of St. Francis, 17th century, Goa.

Unfortunately, recent restoration undertaken under the auspices of the Museum of Christian Art in Goa has entirely obliterated the original character and beauty of the wooden statues by superimposing synthetic materials and plastic finishes (Figure 8)⁶.



Figure 8. Polychrome teak statue on altar, Church of Santa Monica, late 16th or 17th century, Goa. (a) Before Restoration; (b) After Restoration.

3. Human–Serpent Hybrids on Goan Pulpits

Another example of polychrome wood carving executed by local artisans are the pulpits of Goan churches that exemplify the unique synthesis of Christian ecclesiastical artforms imported from Europe with indigenous iconography. Among elements that were re-embodied in Christian objects are the human–serpent hybrids carved on the base of pulpits (Figures 9–11).

The basic structure of Goan pulpits derives from European precedents. Notable is the Portuguese pulpit of the Church of Santa Cruz in Coimbra, where figures of bizarre female hybrids with bared bosoms and bat ears, supposedly supporting a ledge, are superimposed above a hybrid dragon with huge bat wings on the lower section (Figure 12). Bats as nocturnal and liminal creatures appeared as attributes of demons and devils and were associated with sin, spiritual blindness and heresy in medieval and Renaissance art⁷. How is this Portuguese pulpit related to those in Goa? Hypothetically, we may assume that a design of the famous pulpit reached Goa with precious liturgical objects that were actually shipped there from this church in Coimbra.

In a study of the Goan pulpits by Ines Zupanov, the human–serpent hybrids were described as products of an intercultural encounter between Indian *nagas* (mythic serpents) and hybrid European creatures, such as mermaids or sirens that convey negative meanings (Zupanov 2015a). It is well known that Medieval sirens symbolized lust, avarice and deception, and survived into early modern western art as images of idolatry (Figure 13) (Dale 2001).



Figure 9. Polychrome wooden pulpit, Basilica of Bom Jesus, 17th century, Goa.



Figure 10. Pulpit in Igreja de Nossa Senhora (Church of Our Lady), 17th century, Goa.



Figure 11. *Cont.*



Figure 11. Teak pulpits from the Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Monte in Velha Goa, 1710 Casa-Museu Medeiros e Almeida, Lisbon and the Santana Church (Saint Anne), 17th century, Talaulim, Goa.



Figure 12. Renaissance stone pulpit, Church of Santa Cruz, Coimbra, Portugal. Probably carved by Nicolas Chantereuse (b. Normandy), ca.1485–1551.

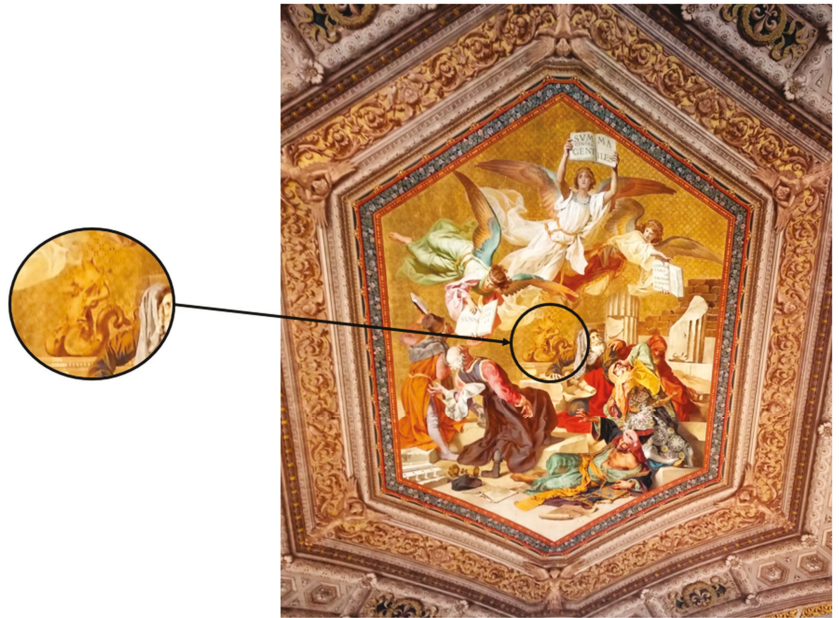


Figure 13. Angels holding the *Summa contra Gentiles* by St. Thomas Aquinas, Vault Fresco Gallery of Maps, Vatican, 1580s.

Although the lower extremities of mermaids and sirens were usually represented as fish tails, they were sometimes depicted in the form of a serpent, as seen in a medieval manuscript illustration of the Greek *Physiologus* (Figure 14).

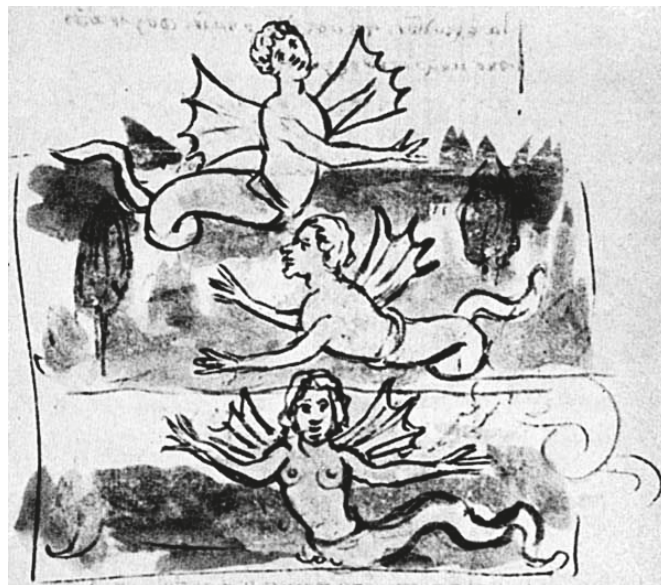


Figure 14. Winged sirens with snake-like tails, bestiary, England, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. gr. 438, folio 26r.

The most notorious human–serpent hybrid in western art was the devil that tempted Eve and perpetrated Original Sin (*Genesis* 3: 1–19). There was no equivalent of the alluring fish-tailed mermaid or siren in Indian art. By contrast, the Indian *naga* hybrids were conceived as benevolent marine creatures, associated with the potency of water, producers and guardians of a multitude of auspicious creations and protectors of fertility. In view of these incompatible conceptions, I agree with Zupanov’s observation that the iconography of the Indo-Portuguese pulpits “meant different things to different audiences precisely because they organized a ‘complex field of visual reciprocity’ between the image/object and the beholder” (Zupanov 2015a). Noting the tradition of placing monsters in the interior of churches and on their facades, and subsequently on the bases of pulpits, she concluded that the monstrous Goan *nagas* represented “the celebration of colonial power over all chthonic creatures” (Zupanov 2015b). My reservations regarding this line of interpretation will be presented below.

An alternative explanation of this hegemonic theory was set forth by Alexander Henn, who stated: “Goa’s culture focuses on the postcolonial reappraisal of Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony and subalternity. This approach essentially draws from Antonio Gramsci’s argument that hegemony, due to its far-reaching cultural aspirations, can never be complete and uncontested, and thus—withstanding its totalitarian character and readiness for coercion—always faces opposition and is forced to make compromises with subaltern forces” (Henn 2014). A related theoretical approach has been set forth by Sanjay Subrahmanyam, who criticized the Subaltern School for perceiving the Indian role as one of largely reacting and adapting to European initiatives (Subrahmanyam 2004). In the case of the pulpit hybrids, we have seen that scholars concentrated on the Eurocentric viewpoint, focusing on interpretations of colonial hegemony. In accordance with Henn’s theoretical assumptions, my aim is to identify these so-called “subaltern forces” covertly embedded in the colonial artistic products on the Malabar coast. Turning from the global discussions to the focused viewpoint of this case study, I suggest that art-historical studies, as exemplified here, suitably illustrate the validity of these perceptions. In other words, rather than interpret the pulpit hybrids from a Eurocentric viewpoint, as demonstrated by Zupanov, I am questioning the meaning of these composite creatures for the new converts and the Indian artisans who carved them, thereby reconsidering the broader implications underlying this cultural interaction. This line of investigation will suggest that there is no evidence to justify the claim that the pulpit hybrids were conceived as propogandist expressions of colonial power over chthonic creatures, as concluded by Zupanov.

It is my contention that the pulpit creatures, deriving from highly charged indigenous iconography, were not perceived by Indians as monsters. *Nagas* and *naginis* (their feminine counterparts) were divine or semidivine serpents, often shown as half human with multiheaded serpentine hoods (Figure 15).

As protectors of the element of water and guardians of treasures buried under the earth, they were associated from earliest times with myths of creation, as mediators of fertility and protectors from evils and illness. *Naga* worship was one of the most ancient religious nature cults in India (Figure 16)⁸.

They were evoked in legendary accounts of the origin of Malabar as its first inhabitants and guardians of underground treasures (Tarabout 2015). In the sacred groves of Kerala, equated with wild untouched forest, worshipers still present serpent deities with milk and other offerings to ensure protection and avert misfortunes. Most Kerala temples have a subshrine for *Naga* worship. The largest temple in Kerala specifically dedicated to the serpent cult is the Mannarassala Śrī Nagaraja temple, frequented by women suffering from infertility (Figure 17).



Figure 15. *Naga and nagini* (detail), *Descent of the Ganges*, stone relief, total length 25.5 m./height 12 m., Mahabalipuram, Pallava dynasty, Tamil Nadu, 7th century.

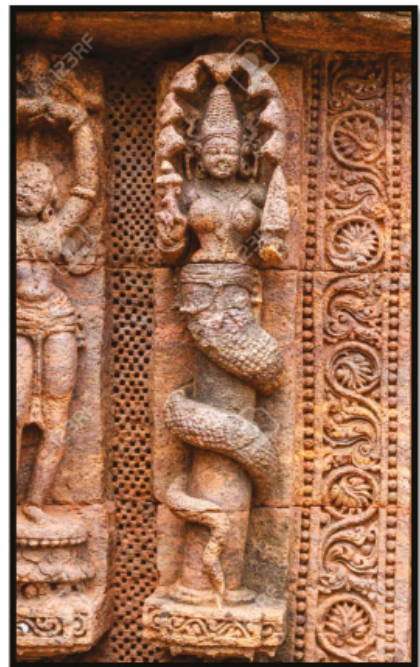


Figure 16. *Nagini* on the Sun-Temple, chlorite stone, Konark, Odisha, ca.1250 CE, Eastern Ganga dynasty.



Figure 17. *Naga* Stones, Mannarasala Śrī Nagaraja Temple, Kerala.

Nāga or *nagini* sculptures were salient as protectors of the entrance to the temple and its sanctum (*dvārapālakās*) (Figures 18–20).



Figure 18. *Nāginis* as *dvārapālas*, protectors of the entrance, sandstone, Rajaraja Temple, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, ca. 950–1000 CE.

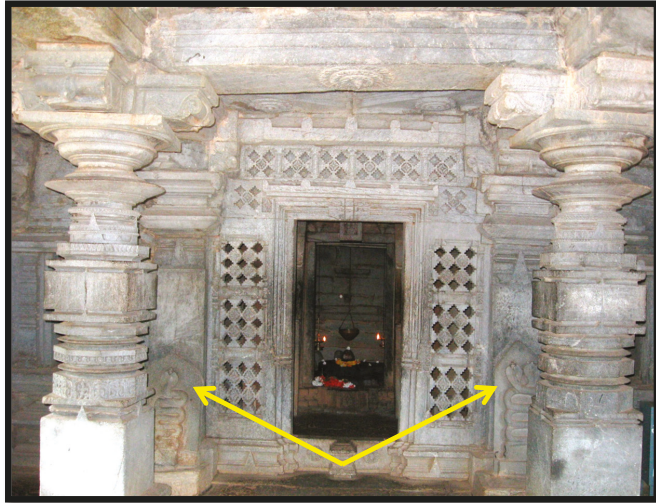


Figure 19. Śrī Mahadev Temple, Goa, entrance to sanctum with protecting *nagas*, Kadamba architecture in basalt stone, 12th–13th Century CE.



Figure 20. Pambummeckatu Mana, entrance gate to *kavu* (sacred grove), Thirissur, Kerala and detail of anthropomorphic serpent goddess *Manasā*.

Nagas were also represented on wooden brackets but were rarely depicted as supporting figures as they seem to appear in the pulpits⁹. This function was appointed to the rearing *yālis* or *vyālas* (Sanskrit), theriomorphic hybridizations of the crocodile, lion, horse, antelope and other animals, which were described in the *Purāṇas* and South Indian *Vastu-Śilpa* texts on Hindu iconography, and were ubiquitous in southern Hindu temples (Figure 21).



(a)



(b)



(c)

Figure 21. (a,b) Wooden Vyali corbels from Hindu temples in Kerala and c. detail of Vyali corbels of Napier Museum, Travancore, Kerala designed by Robert F. Chisholm, 1873.

Like the *nagas*, *vyālas* were perceived as apotropaic guardians and protectors of the temple (Dhaky 2013). The Portuguese, who were horrified by what they saw as Indian idol worship, had no hint of their meanings and regarded these hybrid creatures as monsters. Only in the eighteenth century would the *vyāla* motif be adopted in south-Indian British architecture, together with other indigenous formal elements.

4. Colonial Architecture and Indigenous Traditions

We have noted several examples that illustrate the survival of Indian material traditions and preservation of their iconic associations. Another facet of this phenomenon relates to the destruction of Hindu temples and images and their replacement with Catholic equivalents, inadvertently contributing to the survival of Hindu traditions, practices and imagery they intended to replace. To quote Henn: “The newly established Catholic churches were also meant to replace the Hindu temples in all possible respects: physically, economically, socially, and, to some extent, even liturgically. A result of this radical replacement strategy is that Goan churches, on the one hand, operate very much like Hindu temples in

a historically grounded Indian village organization and, on the other hand, represent a distinct Catholic culture that reflects Portuguese social traditions” (Henn 2018). In some cases, as illustrated below, the primordial sanctity of demolished temples, and the ground upon which they were constructed, was still preserved by indigenous sacred imagery in the churches.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Portuguese were constructing Neo-Renaissance, Neo-Classical and Baroque churches designed by European architects in Goa and other trading ports. Goa was the first Jesuit province outside Europe and some of the oldest Jesuit structures were erected there, some preceding the Gesù in Rome (1568–1575) (Osswald 2011). Italian influences were pre-eminent in ecclesiastical art of the sixteenth century, and many Goan churches reflected Italian architectural concepts in the design of their facades and the proportional systems of their interiors. These were largely based upon architectural treatises by Leon Battista Alberti, Giacomo da Vignola, Sebastian Serlio and Andrea Palladio, disseminated throughout the Portuguese overseas missions from the second half of the sixteenth century¹⁰.

The Jesuit Basilica of the Bom Jesus (1594–1605) (Figure 22), for example, has the typical Jesuit facade, with a three-part pediment, voluted sides and a curved center.



Figure 22. Basilica of Bom Jesus, Goa, 1594–1605, and Mauro Codussi, San Michele in Isola, Venetian Lagoon, 1469–78.

The Lombard–Venetian motif of conch shells framing the gable were a Lombard–Venetian motif introduced by Mauro Codussi in Michele in Isola (1469–1478). Designs by Alberti are reflected in the arched doorway flanked by paired columns and *occuli*. Although interior woodcarving in the Basilica of the Bom Jesus, as noted above, was largely executed by local artists, some major works were executed by Italians¹¹. Most famous is the mausoleum of Francisco Xavier (d. 1552), co-founder of the Jesuit Order and instigator of the Inquisition. When the body arrived in Goa in the seventeenth century, it was placed in a casket made by Goan silversmiths who combined classical architectural motifs and Indian filigreed decoration (1636–1637). The marble mausoleum, designed and created in Florence by the sculptor Giovanni Battista Foggini, was subsequently shipped in pieces to the Goan basilica by the Grand Duke Cosimo III de’ Medici and reconstructed *in situ* by the Italian architect Placido Francesco Ramponi (1697). As in the case of the pulpit (Figure 9), nevertheless, the basilica’s polychrome woodcarvings represent Indian workmanship. Na-

tive artisans and labor were involved in its construction, and much of the material with which the Bom Jesus was built, such as the laterite stones and timber, came from local sources. The façade, originally plastered in white, was built with the granite stones of Hindu temples that had been razed in Bassein (Maharashtra) for the construction of a Portuguese fort. As previously noted, the Portuguese practice of constructing churches and public buildings on rubble of destroyed temples is a testimony of their iconoclastic strategy (von Mitterwallner 1983). The recollection that the façade of Bom Jesus was constructed with stones of destroyed temples probably contributed to the fact that it became a pilgrimage site not only for Christians, but also for those of native religions (Xavier 1961).

Italian influence is again exemplified by the Theatine façade of Nossa Senhora da Divina Providencia (São Cajetan, 1656–1672), constructed under the supervision of the Italian architects, Carlo Ferrarini and Francesco Maria Milazzo. Although the plan is thought to derive from that of the sanctuary of the Madonna della Ghiara, in Reggio Emilia, it is famous for the façade that derives from Carlo Maderno's façade for St. Peter's Basilica (Figure 23)¹².

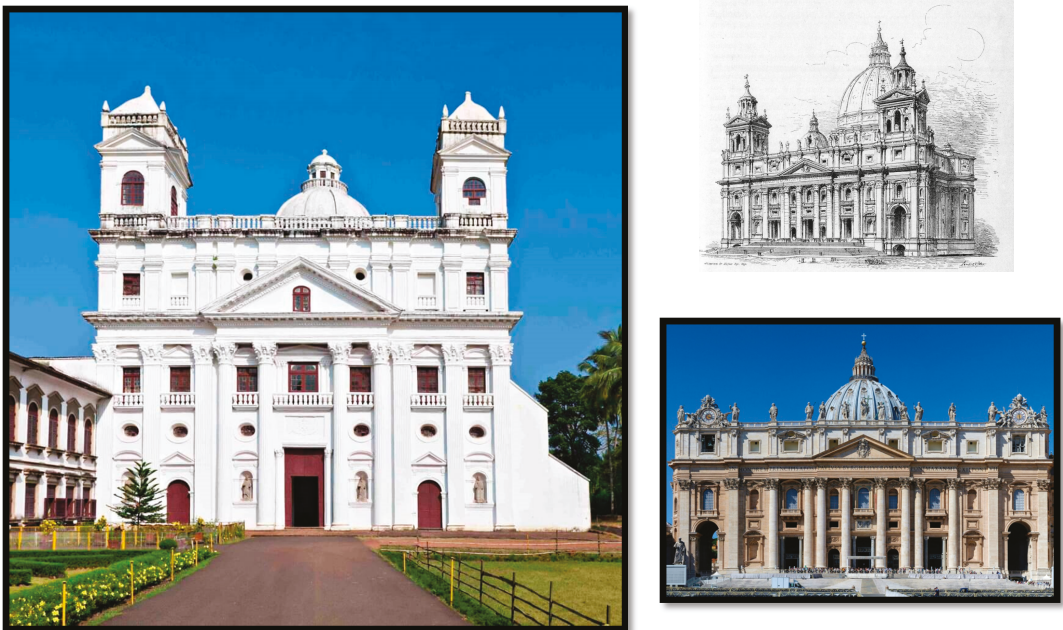


Figure 23. Church of Nossa Senhora da Divina Providencia, Goa, 1656–1672; Carlo Maderno, design for façade of St. Peter's Basilica, with towers (right above) and executed façade (below), Vatican, 1608–1614.

The architects worked from a design that included bell-towers on the extended façade, as seen in projects submitted by Carlo Maderno, Carlo Rainaldi and Gian Lorenzo Bernini. They were unaware that one of St. Peter's towers had been partially constructed and then demolished due to the marshy foundations of the façade. Less obvious is the adoption of minor decorative elements derived from Hindu temple architecture. The church of Nossa Senhora da Divina Providencia has several large, rectangular windows with balustrades on the second floor of the façade, which are formed by Hindu amalaka-shaped projections¹³. Another unusual feature of the church is a deep well located directly beneath the dome and marked by a raised square platform. This has led to the belief that the site was once occupied by a holy temple tank traditionally built as part of a Hindu temple complex.

We have seen that indigenous traditions and sacred imagery were not forgotten. The ground upon which temples had been constructed was considered sacred by Indian worshippers, and they encouraged the conservation of their traditional beliefs and rituals *in situ*. The primordial sanctity of demolished temples was therefore preserved by the survival or revival of indigenous imagery in the churches.

5. The St. Thomas Christians: Cultural Inheritance and Artistic Hybridity

In the Mylapore district of Chennai, a monument was constructed over demolished temples in the sixteenth century to commemorate the martyrdom and supposed interment of St. Thomas the Apostle (d.72 CE)¹⁴. Mylapore, site of the sacred shrine of St. Thomas, became an inter-religious site revered by Hindus, Muslims and Christians. When it was first documented between the third and sixth century CE, its original name was Mayilapuram (city of the peacock) derived from *Mayil*, the Tamil word for peacock. Although it was a Christian apostolic shrine, it was also the object of devotion for Muslims, as documented by the Venetian merchant Marco Polo (1296) and other medieval writers¹⁵. By the early fourteenth century, the St. Thomas shrine had become a popular destination of Muslim pilgrimage. The Portuguese captured the sacred shrine from the Thomas Christians of the East Syrian Church and built the original edifice of San Thome in 1547. It was rebuilt in 1893 in a Neo-Gothic style by the British. As a pilgrimage site for Christians and Hindus, San Thome adopted Hindu rites and incorporated traditional Buddhist and Hindu symbolism in the art of its interior (Figure 24).



(a)



(b)



(c)

Figure 24. (a,b) Nineteenth-century altar of the Church of San Thome, Mylapore (1893), Chennai, and (c) Bishop Theodore's sarcophagus (5th century), Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna.

Despite transformations of the original shrine, it also preserved iconographic elements that originated with the St. Thomas Christians, preceding the arrival of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. Their churches amazingly resembled temples, both in architecture and sculpture. The pedestal of the St. Thomas cross is similar to the sacrificial stone found inside brahminical temples. It is placed in front of the *garbhagriha* (*sanctum sanctorum*) of the temple. These structures have a moulding similar to that of the temple. Some of the central niches have the *ghanadvara* (false door) which is topped by the typical Hindu *makara torana*, an arch formed by mythical zoomorphic hybrids that is ubiquitous in Indian temple architecture (Varghese 2018). Although this fascinating theme goes beyond the scope of this paper, some brief references will exemplify its relevance to the present discourse on intercultural hybridity. On the main altar of the church of San Thome, the crucified Christ is shown rising above a lotus and flanked by peacocks. This iconography does not appear in Latin churches but has precedents in Indo-Syriac art of the Thomas Christians. On the granite pedestals of monumental free-standing crosses, such as that of the Kaduthurthy Mahadeva Temple (Kottayam, Kerala), for example, peacocks and peahens are prominently depicted and lotus flowers are carved below the empty cross¹⁶. Scholars have suggested that the pre-Portuguese Churches of St. Thomas Christians had wooden crosses in front of them, but most of the existing Indo-Syrian stone crosses were constructed after the 16th century.

The lotus (*padma*), as Indian symbol of fecundity, purity, creation and rebirth, was ubiquitous in Indian art. It was held by the Bodhisattava Padmapani (“lotus in hand”), who embodied Buddhist compassion, and it was ubiquitous as an attribute of major Hindu deities, particularly the fertility goddess Lakshmi—often identified with the personification of Padma herself. Another notable piece in this context is the traditional image of Brahma seated on the lotus pedestal, as deity of creation and cyclical rebirth following endless repetitive cosmic dissolutions.

The sacred peacock was often conceived as a symbol of purity in Indian myths. In his enlightening study of ostrich eggs and peacock feathers in Mediterranean cultures, Nile Green explored the nature of cultural inheritance and exchange between Christianity and Islam (Green 2006). He noted that “the peacock feather fan serves as an important ritual object among the long-established Indian Christian community in Kerala on the Indian Ocean littoral, where it is known as an *aala vattam*”. He likewise mentioned that the peacock played a central role in the South Indian cult of St. Thomas the Apostle, who was said to have been killed mistakenly in the form of a peacock (Green 2006). In another local legend that was diffused in medieval Islamic texts and survives in popular oral tradition, the peahen was said to conceive from the tears of the peacock in his ecstatic mating dance, thus representing its purity in a myth of immaculate conception (Green 2006). Green also mentioned that “the feathers of the peacock were well-known for their medicinal uses and featured in numerous popular beliefs and customs, including their use as bookmarks for the Qur’an” (Green 2006). The latter custom is still practiced by Muslims in India. Peacocks, as an early Christian symbol of eternal life, were associated with the ancient belief that the flesh of the peacock does not decay¹⁷. In Latin paleo-Christian art, they were figured in pairs flanking the cross, the Chi-Rho (XP) symbol, or a symbol of paradise, such as a *kantharos*, tree of life or fountain. Although the image of the Crucified Christ was not portrayed together with the Indian bird, even on the traditional St. Thomas cross, the concept of the peacock’s sanctity would not be strange to a Christian worshiper, for whom it represented immortality and Christ’s resurrection. This conflated iconography beautifully demonstrates how Muslim, Hindu and pre-colonial Indo-Syriac Christian imagery could be metaphorically interrelated, while still preserving their original meanings.

6. Conclusions

As explained in my introduction, hybridity is used in this study as a comprehensive umbrella term. The particular cases included represent different phenomena and diverse approaches to the complexities of intercultural encounters. It should be underlined, how-

ever, that most of the artistic encounters discussed here were not a product of intentional reciprocity and did not involve deliberate multidirectional flows of cultures. The wooden sculptures of Goa exemplified the fusion of local materials, native styles and traditional artistic techniques with Christian themes. The human-serpent hybrids on Goan pulpits, on the other hand, reflect a coalescence or conjunction of unrelated and even conflicting iconographic perceptions. The Portuguese, motivated primarily by religious fanaticism, rather than political aspirations, rejected all forms of indigenous vernacular art and constructed churches that were European in style, but embodied local materials and rubble of destroyed churches. Only in the eighteenth century, with the flowering of Victorian architecture and orientalist fashions, did British architects adopt indigenous architectural elements in the so-called Indo-Saracenic architecture. This “iconic turn” typically demonstrated that any aesthetic appreciation of Indian art and architecture depended on a purely formalistic approach, entailing a modernistic separation of form and content that is divorced from political, religious and cultural experience (Moxey 2008).

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Notes

- ¹ Goa was ruled by Muslim invaders of the Deccan from 1312 to 1367. The city was then annexed by the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar and was later conquered by the Bahmani sultanate, which founded Old Goa on the island in 1440. Arabs had the monopoly of trade in the Malabar Coast until the arrival of the Portuguese. The Southwestern Coast of India was known as “Malabar” (a mixture of Tamil Malai and Arabic or Persian Barr, most probably) to the West Asians. Persian scholar al-Biruni (973–1052 AD) appears to have been the first to call the region by this name.
- ² Ivory was commonly used in the local production of inlaid furniture, see: Pedro Dias, *Mobiliário indo-português* (Coimbra: Moreira de Cónegos, 2013).
- ³ See note 13 and John Irwin, “Indian Textile Trade of the Seventeenth Century,” Part 4, Foreign Influences,” *Journal of Indian Textile History* 4 (1959); K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean*, Cambridge, 1985; James Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade in Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580–1640* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Hugo Miguel Crespo, *Jewels from the India Run*, Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, Catalogue of the Exhibition at the Museu do Oriente Lisbon 2015.
- ⁴ Early Indian texts on architecture such as the Vishnudharmottara Purana (6th c. CE) and the Brihat-samhita of Varahmihiri (7th c. CE) laid down details regarding the choice of suitable wood and the ceremony of procuring timber from the forest.
- ⁵ The standard pigments were malachite, terra verte, red ochre, red lead, deep red lac dye, yellow ochre, ultramarine and kaolin or chalk. See O.P. Agrawal, “A Study of Indian Polychrome Wooden Sculpture Agrawal, *Studies in Conservation*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (May, 1971), pp. 56–68.
- ⁶ This has been discussed, for example, in the 15th Triennial Conference, New Delhi: 22–26 (September 2008): Preprints, by ICOM Committee for Conservation. Meeting, Vol. II, p. 933.
- ⁷ Simona Cohen, “Animal Heads and Hybrid Creatures: The Case of the San Lorenzo Lavabo”, in *Animals as Disguised Symbols in Renaissance Art*, Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2008, pp. 195–239.
- ⁸ Jean Philippe Vogel, *Indian Serpent-lore: Or, The Nāgas in Hindu Legend and Art*, Probsthain, 1926; Indological Book House Edition, 1972. Esteban Garcfa Brosseau’s, “Nagas, Naginis y Grutescos: La iconografía fantástica de los pulpitos indoportugueses de Goa, Daman y Diu en los siglos XVII y XVIII” (PhD. Diss., UNAM, Mexico City, 2012). See Zupanov, “The Pulpit Trap”, pp. 298–315. and Midhun C. Sekhar, “Naga cult in Kerala”, in *Kerala Naga Worship*, Deccan College Post Graduate and Research Institute Thesis, chp. 4, 2015: <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/nagacultinkerala> (accessed on 20 July 2021).
- ⁹ Naga representation is seen also in the wooden brackets of balikkal- mandapa of the Thiruvanchikkulam Śiva Temple in Kerala (9th & 12th centuries).
- ¹⁰ See Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Art in the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America*, Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2001; regarding the ‘Jesuit Style’, pp. 43–51; De Azevedo, “Churches of Goa”, pp. 3–6; António Nunes Pereira, “Re-naisance in Goa: Proportional Systems in Two Churches of the Sixteenth Century,” Presented at Nexus 2010: Relationships Between Architecture and Mathematics, Porto, 13–15 June 2010, *Nexus Network Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (2011), pp. 373–96; Osswald, “Jesuit Art in Goa,” 263, pp. 274–76; L.B. Alberti (*De re edificatoria*, written between 1443 and 1452, published 1485);

- Sebastiano Serlio (Tutte l'opera d'architettura et prospettiva, Venezia, 1537), and Andrea Palladio (Le Antichità di Roma, Roma, 1554 and I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura, Venezia, 1570).
- 11 e.g., The original ceiling was painted by the Florentine Bartolomeo Fontebuoni between 1613 and 1617.
- 12 Seventeenth century travelers Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri (Viaggi per Europa, 1693) and Pietro Della Valle (Viaggi, 1650–63) also likened the church to Sant'Andrea della Valle, which is the seat of the Theatine order. Regarding their writings on India, see Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters, A History of European Reactions to Indian Art*, Chicago & London, University of Chicago Press, (1977) 1992, 28–30, 40 and Nathalie Hester, *Literature and Identity in Italian Baroque Travel Writing*, Routledge, (2016): chp. 2.
- 13 An amalaka (Sanskrit) is a segmented or notched stone disk, usually with ridges on the rim, located on the top of a Hindu temple's shikhara or main tower.
- 14 Portuguese records mention the demolishing of pagodas (temples) of Meliahpor. A shiva temple had been constructed there in the 7th century.
- 15 The Franco-Venetian *Livre des Merveilles du Monde* or *Devisement du Monde*, written in 1298–1299, was a collaboration between Marco Polo and a professional writer of romances, Rustichello of Pisa; Among the early translations was the Latin *Iter Marci Pauli Veneti*, made by the Dominican brother Francesco Pipino in 1302. See Louis Hambis (ed.), *Marco Polo, La Description du Monde*, Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1955, 256; E. R. Hambye, "Saint Thomas the Apostle, India and Mylapore: Two Little Known Documents," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 23, Part I (1960), pp. 104–10, esp. 108 for English translation of the quotation. See also Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1939), pp. 364–65. See Nile Green, "Ostrich Eggs and Peacock Feathers: Sacred Objects as Cultural Exchange between Christianity and Islam," *Al-Masaq*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (March 2006), esp. 42–47, 56–57.
- 16 See Varghese, "Plaza Crosses of St. Thomas Christians," 4 and Carlo G. Cereti, Luca M. Olivieri and f. Joseph Vazhuthanapally, "The Problem of the Saint Thomas Crosses and Related Questions: Epigraphical Survey and Preliminary Research," *East and West*, Vol. 52, No. 1/4 (December 2002), pp. 285–310.
- 17 See e.g., St. Augustine, *Civitate Dei*, Book 21 Chapter 4. trans. H. Bettenson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 968. It is also associated with the resurrection of Christ because it sheds its old feathers and grows new ones each year.

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