

Medieval Church Studies 12

# Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing

*Textiles and their Metaphors  
in the Late Middle Ages*



Edited by

Kathryn M. Rudy and Barbara Baert





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MEDIEVAL CHURCH STUDIES



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2. Virgin of the Sun, prefacing Alanus de Rupe's commentary on the Rosary, single-leaf miniature stitched to fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, Leuven, Maurits Sabbebibliotheek van de Theologische Faculteit, MS Mechelen 15, fols 2<sup>v</sup>–3<sup>r</sup>. Reproduced with permission of the Maurits Sabbebibliotheek van de Theologische Faculteit.
3. Cornelia van Wulfschkercke. Tripartite rosary, Book of Hours, London, Sotheby's, 17 November 1999, Lot 3, fol. 82<sup>v</sup> (present whereabouts unknown). Bruges, *c.* 1500–10. Reproduced with permission of the Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.
4. The Holy Family in an enclosed garden with a Tertiary, hand-coloured woodcut sewn into a prayer book, London, British Library, Add. MS 14042, fol. 61<sup>v</sup>. Mariënwater, *c.* 1500. Reproduced with permission of the British Library.
5. The Holy Family in an enclosed garden with a Birgittine, hand-coloured woodcut, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-P-1955-328. Mariënwater, *c.* 1500. Reproduced with permission of the Rijksmuseum.
6. Domenico Ghirlandaio. Virgin and Child enthroned with saints (tempera on panel), Lucca, San Martino. *c.* 1473–74. Photograph courtesy of Ghilardi.

7. St Martin sharing his cloak, Statuti della confraternita di San Martino, Ferrara, Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea, MS C1 I, 346. 1494. Reproduced with permission of the Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea.
8. Rogier van der Weyden. Altarpiece of the Seven Sacraments (detail of children with 'chrisom' bands across their foreheads), Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten. c. 1440–45. Reproduced with permission of Art Resource, New York.

## INTRODUCTION: MIRACULOUS TEXTILES IN *EXEMPLA* AND IMAGES FROM THE LOW COUNTRIES

Kathryn M. Rudy

### *Unveiling Devotion*

The curtain opens. It reveals a scene that is itself a revelation: St John the Evangelist transcribing the Book of Revelation while seated on a promontory of the Island of Patmos (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> The image appears in the Hours of Philip of Cleves, painted around 1485.<sup>2</sup> Among the multiple layers of meaning is the act of opening a book and discovering what is inside, in this case, the illuminated, decorated, and inscribed page. A second layer involves an angel pulling back a curtain. A third is that the saint is experiencing a divine revelation. The objects of the revelation — seven candlesticks — appear in the

<sup>1</sup> In the context of seventeenth-century paintings depicting illusionistic curtains parting to reveal a fictive image, see Christopher Heuer, 'Picture Curtains and the Dutch Church Interior, c. 1650: Framing Revelation in the Golden Age', *Chicago Art Journal*, 7 (1997), 15–33 (esp. pp. 23–25), and Martha Hollander, *An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 69–79, in which she discusses the 'drape and curtain' in the context of Gerard Dou's niche paintings.

<sup>2</sup> Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS IV 40. Book of Hours, in Latin and French. Manuscript, 145 folios on vellum; 127 × 91 mm (73 × 48); written in a single column, with fifteen lines/folio, shortly before 1485, in Flanders (Ghent?), with sections added later. I thank James Marrow for bringing the fictive curtain in this manuscript to my attention. The original owner was Philip of Cleves, and contains his coat of arms on fol. 15<sup>v</sup>. The Master of the Older Prayer Book of Maximilian painted some of the illuminations, with marginal illustrations, possibly by Joris Hoefnagel, added around 1600.

cloudy sky in the form of a gauzy haze that functions as a kind of thought balloon. These layers pull us even deeper into the fictive space of the page, but we are at once tossed back to the shore of Patmos and to the surface of the vellum by the text, which does not present the Book of Revelation at all, but rather the beginning of the other Biblical text attributed to John: his Gospel. 'In the beginning', it proclaims, 'the Word was spun into Flesh'. The Word was made manifest and revealed to humankind, as if a curtain had been opened onto salvation. It is this thread that the essays in this volume trace.



Figure 1. St John on Patmos, Hours of Philip of Cleves, Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS IV 40, fol. 15<sup>v</sup>. Flanders, c. 1485.

Textiles formed a strand of Christian history even before the infancy of Christ. The Virgin spun and wove purple cloth when she was a child in the temple. Consequently, spinning and cloth-making are associated with virginity, although there is a paradox as these activities are likened to virginity's very opposite: the production of a life line.<sup>3</sup> A German panel from around 1400, for

<sup>3</sup> Bonnie Effros discusses weaving as a symbol of humility and chastity in 'Symbolic Expressions of Sanctity: Gertrude of Nivelles in the Context of Merovingian Mortuary

example, depicts the Virgin spinning a thread that passes over the homunculus-Jesus visible through her dress. Spinning and flesh making are allied visually: the thread passes directly over (through?) her womb as she spins it. She metaphorically clothes Jesus while he is still *in-vitro* (Plate 1).<sup>4</sup> In a mid-fifteenth-century miniature prefacing a prayer called the *Obsecro te*, the Virgin appears sitting on a piece of furniture that is at once a loom and a throne, as she weaves cloth across her womb: cloth comes into being as it passes over her belly, while the Christ child, a toddler, reaches up to sit on this enchanted lap, and angels help to wind wool, showing that the process is divinely inspired (Figure 2).<sup>5</sup>

In another scene from Christ's infancy, the Virgin, equipped with multiple knitting needles, knits the seamless garment for her son.<sup>6</sup> The resulting clothing is miraculous (especially to those who do not knit). This garment wraps around both the infancy and the Passion stories, and engenders a number of recurring metaphors invoking themes of unity and protection. We can trace this and other threads through the infancy and Passion, and also through the *vitae* and martyrdoms of the saints. The thread is pervasive and multivalent, wrapping around sacred history and tying it to the domestic and familiar. Textiles often mediate between the secular and the divine, between the down-to-earth and the otherworldly. Threads, cloths, and vestments mark, absorb, and transmit holy status.

Custom', *Viator*, 27 (1996), 1–5. Apocrypha related to the Virgin are recorded in the second-century Protoevangelium of James and the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, for which see *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. by E. Henneke and W. Schneemelcher, trans. by R. McL. Wilson, 2 vols (London: Lutterworth Press, 1963–65), 1, pp. 370–88. See also Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion, Volume 1: From the Beginnings to the Eve of the Reformation* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1963).

<sup>4</sup> In her thoughtful discussion of 'incarnational aesthetics', Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), includes several images, most of them German, describing the Virgin weaving and Joseph cutting his socks to construct swaddling clothes. Christ's diapers, which loom large in several images, are holy in this context.

<sup>5</sup> The Collins Hours, Philadelphia, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, MS 1945-65-4, fol. 173<sup>v</sup>. Manuscript from Amiens or Tournai, c. 1440, for composite Use. 188 leaves on vellum. See *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life* [exhibition catalogue], ed. by Roger S. Wieck (New York: Brazillier, 1988), p. 95, cat. 37.

<sup>6</sup> The panel, which depicts Mary Knitting the Seamless Tunic and Angels Announcing the Passion, comes from the Buxtehude Altar (c. 1410) and is now in the Kunsthalle, Hamburg. See Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, p. 158, in which this image is reproduced.



Figure 2. The Virgin weaving, *The Collins Hours*, Philadelphia, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, MS 1945-65-4, fol. 173<sup>v</sup>. Amiens or Bruges, c. 1440.



One of the ways to understand the specific charge surrounding textiles and articles of clothing is to look at *exempla*, moralizing and entertaining stories that circulated in large quantities from the twelfth century on.<sup>7</sup> These often describe textiles in the context of miracle-working sculptures of the Virgin. In these stories, the Virgin's image talks, eats, and pleads with her son on behalf of desperate votaries. Of the several hundred medieval miracle legends, a large portion of them mention cloth or clothing, such as a nun's habit, a sculptor's greatcoat, or the Virgin's mantle. These objects mediate between the natural and supernatural worlds. The readership (or aural audience) of *exempla* counted both lay and religious. And at least in some circles, *exempla* were considered appropriate gifts: in 1448 Johannes van Leyerdam, a Canon Regular at the Monastery of Marienkamp in Ezinge (a province of Groningen), neatly copied some ascetic treatises and a large selection of *exempla*, then sent the book as a gift to his friend Alardus Symonis in Amsterdam.<sup>8</sup> That such a book constituted an

<sup>7</sup> Claude Bremond, Jacques Le Goff, and Jean-Claude Schmitt, *L'Exemplum*, *Typologie des Sources du moyen âge occidental*, 40 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), identify the various origins and history of *exempla* and provide full bibliography. The current essay would not have been possible without the scholarship of Cornelis G. N. de Vooy, former Professor of Middle Dutch literature at Utrecht University, who published a large collection of Middle Dutch Marian legends. His scholarship remains the best source for the Netherlandish material, including *Middel nederlandse legenden en exempelen: Bijdrage tot de kennis van de prozalitteratuur en het volksgeloof der middeleeuwen* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1926), which employs a Roman numeral system to number all the Marian *exempla* (also adopted in this article), which refers to Cornelis G. N. de Vooy, *Middel nederlandse Marialegenden*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1903).

<sup>8</sup> Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, I G 18. Contains ascetical tracts and *exempla*, in Middle Dutch. Manuscript on vellum; 169 folios; 145 × 106 mm (96 × 64); written in one column of littera textualis, with eighteen lines/folio. Inscription dated 1448, written by another hand (fol. 160<sup>v</sup>: 'In den jaren onses heren dusent vier hondert ende achte ende viertich screef dit bokeken broder Johannes van leyerdam profest broder ende priester des cloesters marienkampe in oestfriesland by esynghen ghelegen van der regeliere oerde. ende sandet den eersamen ende wysen manne Alardo symonis in Amsterdamme synen alre liefsten vrende in christo'). The manuscript, therefore, was copied by Johannes van Leyerdam for Alardus Symonis, a Canon Regular at Marienkamp bij Esens. For the dating, see Gerard I. Liefstinck, *Manuscripts datés conservés dans les Pays-Bas; catalogue paléographique des manuscrits en écriture latine portant des indications de date*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1988), of which the see the second volume by J. P. Gumbert, *Les manuscrits d'origine néerlandaise (XIV<sup>e</sup>–XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles) et supplément au tome premier* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), no. 304. See also Cornelis G. N. de Vooy, *Middel nederlandse stichtelijke exempelen* (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1953), pp. 126–27, in which he transcribes one of the legends, 'Een schone parabel', about a king's daughter who resides in a garden, protected from her suitors by thorny rose bushes that function like razor wire; the

appropriate gift suggests that the transmission of *exempla* was wrapped in some pleasure.

The stories also circulated orally, and were subsequently compiled into several collections, including, most famously, the *Dialogo Miraculorum* written by the Cistercian monk Caesarius of Heisterbach (c. 1180–c. 1240).<sup>9</sup> Caesarius was to the miracle story what Jacobus de Voragine (c. 1229–98) was to the saint's Life. Caesarius, like Jacobus, peregrinated throughout western Europe, lodged in monasteries, and interrogated the monks dwelling there about miracles they had heard. Consequently, monks loom large as the recipients of grace in Caesarius's tales. Middle Dutch miracle stories, which often contain a higher proportion of stories from the Low Countries, were copied with cumulative additions through the late Middle Ages. They circulated in the fifteenth century, especially among convents, but they also entered lay reception because sermonists peppered their sermons with miracle tales. For that reason, miracle legends have been called one of the first mass media.

In this essay, I examine several of these stories in order to tease out the particular charge of clothing and textiles. From the vast catalogue of Middle Dutch miracle stories, I have selected some that shed light on the prohibitions, promises, and powers woven around dress. The legends illuminate the reception of the Virgin as the premier weaver, miraculous clothier, blessed knitter, and seamstress in late medieval northern Europe. Miracle stories first circulated orally and were only later written down, but they returned to an oral format, since sermonists relied on miracle stories to infuse their sermons with testimonials to the power of prayer and to the power of faith in the Virgin.

This is a two-ply essay. It is in one sense a miracle play in three acts, each one featuring an aspect of the role of textiles in Middle Dutch miracle stories and images from the Low Countries, specifically their role in mediating between the natural and supernatural worlds. Secondly, these acts unfold to reveal the themes at play in the remainder of this volume.

one who climbs through the roses, ripping apart his clothing and flesh, wins her hand.

<sup>9</sup> Several editions of Caesarius of Heisterbach's Latin compilation have been published, including *Fasciculus moralitatis venerabilis fr. Caesarii Heisterbacensis monachi*, ed. by Joannes Andreas Coppenstein, 4 vols (Cologne: P. Henningium, 1615). More accessible is *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Josephus Stange, 2 vols (Cologne: Heberle, 1851); with an index, *Caesarii Heisterbacensis Dialogum* (Koblenz: Confluentiae, 1857). The text, along with the index, were republished in *Caesarii Heisterbacensis Dialogum*, 2 vols (Ridgewood, NJ: Gregg Press, 1966).

*Act I: Investiture*

A pontifical, one of the various liturgical books produced in the Middle Ages, contains the ceremonies performed by a bishop. It provides both the stage directions and the ritual words to be uttered when a bishop sanctifies a new church or altar, graduates a group of young monks, blesses an image of the Virgin, confirms vows for nuns or monks, or indoctrinates new priests, to name but a few examples. Ceremonial clothing, which bestows upon its wearer status or authority, often plays a role in these initiations.<sup>10</sup> In a series of historiated initials within the pontifical he illuminated in around 1440, the Master of Catherine of Cleves depicts several of these ceremonies, beginning with the celebrant ritually washing his hands before mass and prior to donning the



Figure 3. Master of Catherine of Cleves. Historiated initial depicting a bishop washing his hands before Mass, The Utrecht Pontifical, Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 400, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>. Probably Utrecht, c. 1450.

<sup>10</sup> Discussing the *Rationale for the Divine Offices* by William Durandus (d. 1296), see Dyan Elliott, 'Dressing and Undressing the Clergy: Rites of Ordination and Degradation', in *Medieval Fabrications: Dress, Textiles, Cloth Work, and Other Cultural Imaginings*, ed. by E. Jane Burns (New York: Palgrave, 2004), pp. 55–69, in which Elliott explores the implications of both 'taking the cloth' and 'being defrocked'.

ceremonial outer garments and mitre (Figure 3).<sup>11</sup> He appears in those garments as he presides over ceremonies in the remainder of the initials.

Throughout the codex, the illuminator reiterates the multifold role of dress in both historiated initials and in marginal illuminations. Not only does the bishop wear garments appropriate to his office in order to perform the rituals, but some of the rituals themselves involve blessing the garments before they, in turn, can function in subsequent ceremonies. One historiated initial, for example, shows the bishop and an acolyte blessing a dalmatic and a chasuble (Figure 4). The acolyte sprinkles holy water with an aspergillum, while the bishop, clutching an evangeliary — the book on which oaths are sworn — blesses a chasuble with two outstretched fingers. The gilt letter *O* has become a vestuary; the liturgical garments hang on the walls of the letter that initiates the words to be said for their own benediction.

The textile theme continues in the bas-de-page, where two virgins sit behind looms, weaving a great swathe of cloth of gold that stretches across the width of two columns of text. They labour behind gossamer warp threads, filling them in with opaque weft, which will increasingly hide them from view. They work behind a cloth of honour in its inchoate stages, while they themselves are framed by fluttering swathes of acanthus. As a pair, each under a column of ritual Latin, they mediate between text and textile; the sanctity of Catholic ritual is to be found at the intersection of these two terms, as the pontifical would have it. As Margaret Goehring asserts in her contribution below, such textiles, often represented around miniatures or borders, connote richness and opulence. This

<sup>11</sup> Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 400. Pontifical, probably made in Utrecht, around 1450. Manuscript on vellum; 134 leaves; 380 × 274 mm (243 × 167); two columns, twenty-six lines/folio. Written in a littera textualis in Latin. Contains fifteen historiated initials, decorated initials, painted border decoration, pen-flourishes. Made for the Mariakerk (church of St Mary) in Utrecht. Transferred to the Universiteitsbibliotheek before 1670. See A. W. Byvanck and G. J. Hoogewerff, *Noord-Nederlandsche miniaturen in handschriften der 14e, 15e en 16e eeuwen* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1922–25), p. 32, no. 72, plates 11–12, 31–32, 130; A. Hulshof, *Utrechtsche parelen. Kostbare handschriften en zeldzame boekwerken in de Universiteitsbibliotheek* (Utrecht: [n. pub.], 1944), p. 180, figs 21, 31; *Handschriften en oude drukken van de Utrechtsche Universiteitsbibliotheek*, ed. by Koert van der Horst and others (Utrecht: Universiteitsbibliotheek, 1984), pp. 140–43, no. 56; Koert van der Horst, *Illuminated and Decorated Medieval Manuscripts in the University Library, Utrecht: An Illustrated Catalogue* (Maarssen: Schwartz, 1989), pp. 16–17, no. 57, plate K, figs 255–99; *The Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting* [exhibition catalogue], ed. by Henri L. M. Defoer, Anne S. Korteweg, and Wilhelmina C. M. Wüstefeld, with intro. by James H. Marrow (Stuttgart: Belser, 1989), pp. 160–61, no. 48, plate 48, figs 77, 87.

was true in the Burgundian Netherlands, as well as in the northeastern Netherlands, where the Master of Catherine of Cleves, who was particularly mindful of the textures, colours, and patterns of represented fabric, was active. In the Utrecht Pontifical, the artist is constructing weavers who are themselves constructing a textile in the bottom margin.

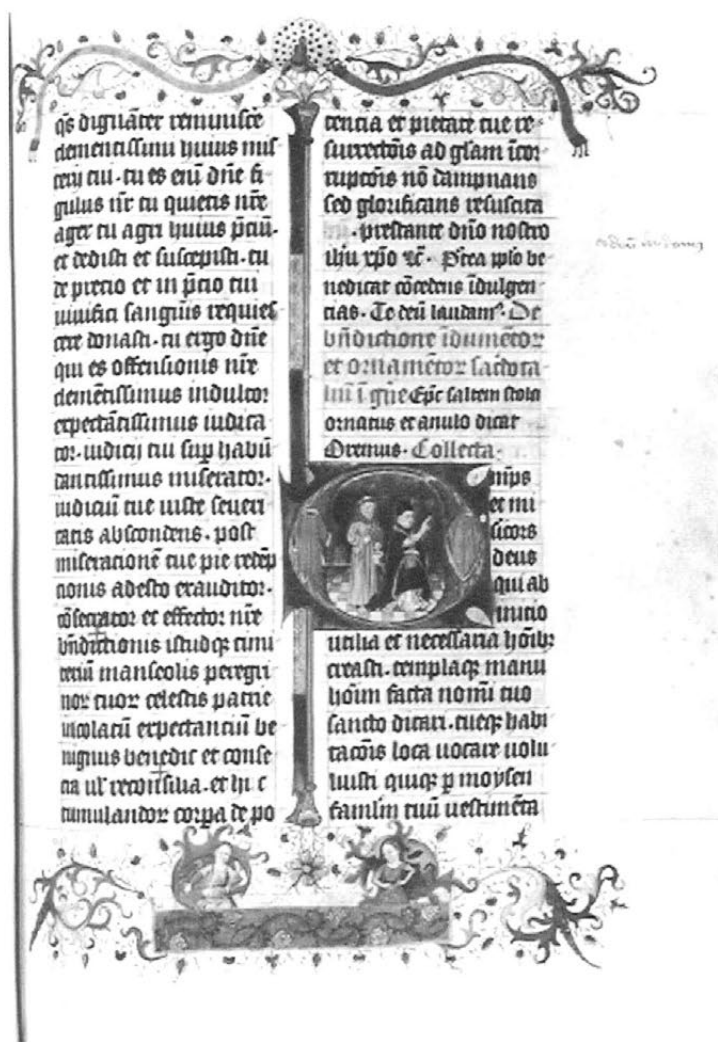


Figure 4. Master of Catherine of Cleves. Historiated initial depicting a bishop blessing liturgical vestments, and marginal illumination depicting women weaving, The Utrecht Pontifical, Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 400, fol. 99r. Probably Utrecht, c. 1450.

The bishop wears his full regalia in a later initial to mark the ceremony of ordaining a group of deacons (Figure 5). The various articles of clothing appear suspended in the margins of the manuscript. A dalmatic hangs from an acanthus hook near the top of the folio, while arms wearing liturgical sleeves extend from behind the screen of text/textile to proffer a stole and an evangeliary. The screen

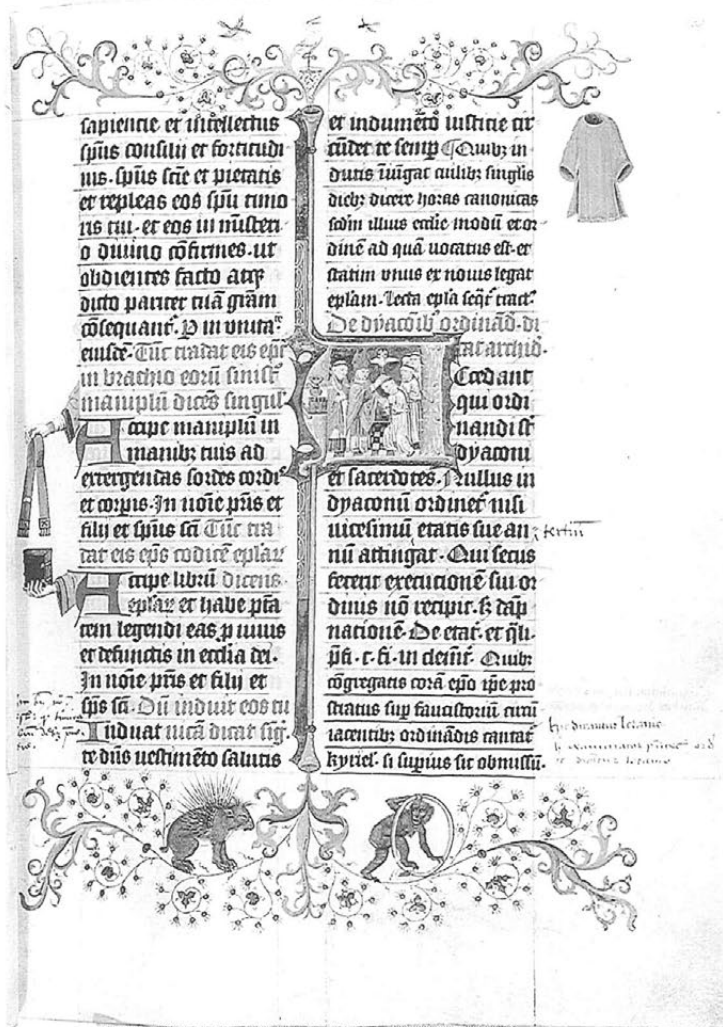


Figure 5. Master of Catherine of Cleves. Historiated initial depicting a bishop consecrating a group of deacons, with liturgical vestments in the margin, The Utrecht Pontifical, Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 400, fol. 17r. Probably Utrecht, c. 1450.

of text has therefore provided all the objects necessary for the completion of the ritual, and the illuminated letter at the centre of the folio provides the altar, the consecrated bishop, the soon-to-be deacons, and the Holy Spirit, crystallized in the form of a nose-diving dove. As the Master of Catherine of Cleves reiterates throughout the folios of the Utrecht Pontifical, many of the ceremonies of the medieval church were centred upon textiles, clothing, and altar cloths.

The higher the rank an officiate achieves in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, the more vestments he acquires, so that the clothing of a pope subsumes all the orders beneath. Analogously, in the Utrecht Pontifical, the long section providing instructions for clothing begins with the lowest rank and proceeds up the pallium, which, as Barbara Baert discusses in her article in this volume, is made from white wool, is rooted in the symbolism of female chastity, and transforms its wearer into the shepherd of the Christian flock (Figure 6). The miniaturist dangles the pallium, carefully inscribed with six crosses, in the margin of the relevant section. The terminology of taking on a religious profession reflects the centrality of the clothing in the ceremonies described in

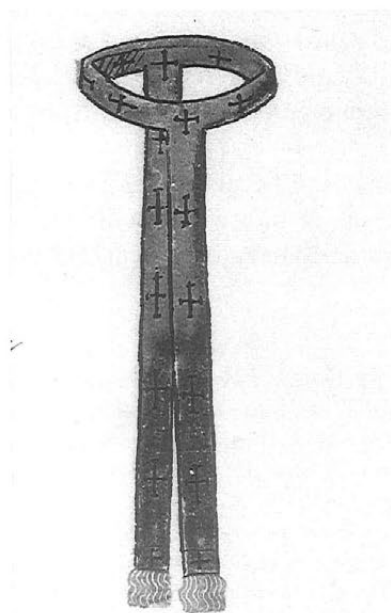


Figure 6. Master of Catherine of Cleves. Detail of a marginal image depicting the pallium, The Utrecht Pontifical, Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 400, fol. 36<sup>r</sup>. Probably Utrecht, c. 1450.



the pontifical. Investiture means to 'take the cloth' or to 'don the habit or vestment'. The analogous terminology also operates in Dutch, as we see in a late fifteenth-century copy of instructions for some unidentified nuns of St Clare to profess their vows: according to the rubric, 'This is the way the sisters of the Order of St Clare take their habits, which is taken from the Minderbrothers' general statutes'.<sup>12</sup> The habit becomes not just what the nun adopts when she takes the vow, but synonymous with the vow itself. It is not surprising, then, when the habit adopts part of the personality of the nun herself. Clothing takes on the identity of its wearer, or vice versa, in a spiralling series of reciprocal relationships.

An event from the investiture of Katharina van Naaldwijk on 6 September 1412 illustrates the connotative charges of worldly clothing in contradistinction to the habit. Shortly after 1400, Johannes Brinckerinck founded the convent of Diepenveen to accommodate the rich women and widows who were excluded by statute from the Meester-Gertshuis in Deventer. Brinckerinck, questioning whether Katharina van Naaldwijk, who was particularly wealthy, possessed the fortitude to live according to strict piety and labour, demanded that she tread upon her richly fur-lined mantle, which was spread over the steps of the altar as she received her new clothes and recited her vows.<sup>13</sup> To don the vestments of holy orders was to hang up — or even more decisively, to trample — the clothing of a secular life.

To be stripped of rank is to be stripped of clothing, and to wear clothing poorly, in a haphazard way or in a way that reveals what it should conceal, confers scandalous disgrace. Martha Bayless, in her essay below, analyses the

<sup>12</sup> Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 16512. Manuscript; six folios on paper; 16.5 × 11 cm; written in littera hybrida, in two columns, at the end of the fifteenth century. Contains statutes for nuns of St Clare to take their habits. Fols 1–3: rub: 'Hier beghint een manier die susteren van sinte claren oerde to cleden, dat hier na volget is ghenomen wten minre broeders generale statuten'; fols 3–6: rub: 'Hier beghint die manier den susteren tot professi te ontfangen'. See Jan Deschamps and Herman Mulder, *Inventaris van de Middelnederlandse handschriften van de Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België*, currently 7 vols (Brussels: Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, 1998–), I, p. 31, with further bibliography. For a fuller study of nuns' clothing ceremonies, see Desiree Koslin, 'The Robe of Simplicity: Initiation, Robing, and Veiling of Nuns in the Middle Ages', in *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture*, ed. by Stewart Gordon (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 255–74.

<sup>13</sup> Recounted in Wybren Scheepsma, *Medieval Religious Women in the Low Countries: The 'Modern Devotion', the Canonesses of Windesheim, and their Writings*, trans. by David F. Johnson (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), p. 40.



moral charge behind the revelation of the lower body, which can be seen through the poorly draped clothes of fools, sinners, swindlers, executioners, and other marginalized folk. Furthermore, this theme runs through several saints' Lives, notably those of St Catherine of Siena and St Martin of Tours, as Philine Helas discusses in her essay: saints confer their sanctity through the self-abasing ritual of shedding or refusing clothes.

In a telling miracle story about a nun who decides to quit the convent in pursuit of a sexual affair, the protagonist clearly becomes identified with her habit.<sup>14</sup> Before her escape, she must take off her habit, thereby stripping herself of her vow. As she is about to exit the convent, she leaves her habit draped on an image of the Virgin. When her affair turns sour and she returns to the convent, she finds that the Virgin, while wearing the habit which had been draped on her image, has been 'covering' for the prodigal nun by performing her duties. Far from being chastised, the nun returns to find that she has become the model nun. The nun's habit, which mediates between the nun and the Virgin, seems to animate the image. Liturgical clothing, blessed and imbued with meaning, continues to be a protagonist in many other miracle stories.

The ultimate stripping of rank appears in an image depicting Thomas Becket of Canterbury, the English bishop who was martyred at the altar. On an intentionally damaged manuscript leaf, textiles mediate between Thomas and his authority. Many manuscripts were damaged during the iconoclasm of the sixteenth century, and English manuscript owners often scratched out or mutilated references to popes and indulgences. In the so-called Hours of Catherine of Aragon, written in Flanders around 1460 for the Use of Sarum (and therefore made for export to England)<sup>15</sup> and illuminated by Willem Vrelant, a full-page miniature depicts the martyrdom of Thomas of Canterbury (Figure 7).<sup>16</sup> Soldiers have stormed into the church where the bishop is performing mass

<sup>14</sup> As with many miracle stories, this one appears multiple times in several variations, including De Vooy's, *Middel nederlandse Marialegenden*, I, pp. 42–51, miracle no. XII; and II, pp. 106–10, miracle no. CCCIV, where the nun is identified as a certain Beatrix, who gives not only her habit, but also her keys to the image.

<sup>15</sup> Nicholas J. Rogers, 'Patrons and Purchasers: Evidence for the Original Owners of Books of Hours produced in the Low Countries for the English Market', in *'Als ich can': Liber Amicorum in Memory of Professor Dr. Maurits Smeyers*, ed. by B. Cardon, J. Van der Stock, and D. Vanwijnsberghe (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), pp. 1165–81.

<sup>16</sup> The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 76 F 7. So-called Hours of Catherine of Aragon. Use of Sarum. Made in Flanders, c. 1460, with illuminations (thirty-three miniatures and twenty-one historiated initials) by Willem Vrelant (illuminator). Manuscript on vellum, 195

at an altar, and they prepare to behead him. But his life is not all that was to be negated: someone has scraped the paint from the image in order to erase the soldiers' swords, or in one case, to erase the hand that is wielding a sword, as if



Figure 7. Willem Vrelant. Martyrdom of Thomas of Canterbury, the so-called Book of Hours of Catherine of Aragon, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 76 F 7, fol. 20v. Flanders, c. 1460.

folios; 230 × 164 mm; eighteen lines/folio, written in Latin. For the sixteenth-century binding, see Jan Storm van Leeuwen, *De meest opmerkelijke boekbanden uit eigen bezit* [exhibition catalogue] (The Hague: Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1983), pp. 20–21, no. 9, fig. 9. The inscription with the name of Queen Catharine of Aragon is fake.

to deny the fact that Thomas was martyred at all. The one object most effectively expunged, however, is the bishop's mitre, which had been resting on the altar until someone scraped it away, as if to take away Thomas's authority, connoted by the hat. Finally, as if to make one final negating gesture to deny the saint his martyrdom, and the image as a whole, an iconoclast has taken a pen filled with dark brown ink and inscribed a violent and expunging *X* through the entire image. It is difficult to tell whether the same hand performed these various acts of iconoclasm, since the connoisseur usually evaluates the hand of creation, not the one of erasure. What is clear, however, is that the manuscript leaf bears witness to layers of negation. It is noteworthy in this context that the iconoclast(s) also cut out the folio originally facing the image, which would have contained a prayer (suffrage) to St Thomas. Did this iconoclast hesitate to remove a precious page with an illumination by Willem Vrelant, or did this person think that Thomas could live with greater ignominy in his dismantled state — taunted with his mitre erased — in perpetuity?

While the iconoclasts destroyed Thomas's clothing and authority, clothing also played an important role in the construction of his authority. The story of Thomas's investiture appears within collections of Marian legends and reveals aspects of Mary's relationship to clothing. According to legend, the saint interacted with Mary more than once through the medium of textiles:

In his younger days, Thomas of Canterbury lived a chaste life, for he had vowed chastity to Our Lady Mary. Among his companions, he was like a lily among thorns. Once he heard his companions brag about the lovely love-tokens their girlfriends had given them. At last, Thomas told the others in jest: 'None of your love-tokens is worthy of praise. I have a girlfriend who surpasses all your girlfriends, who has given me a love-token without equal'. He meant this in a spiritual way, but they all took it in a worldly sense. They began to urge him to show them the love-token and they kept bothering him about it.

When he could no longer stand it, he went to the church to the statue of Our Lady, fell on his knees, and prayed for mercy for his wrongdoing by having spoken so presumptuously of her to his companions. As Thomas was thus lying in prayer, the pure Virgin Mary appeared and comforted him and said: 'Do not be afraid, you have boasted rightly to your companions of your girlfriend's great nobility and dignity, for she indeed surpasses all mankind'. She then gave him a beautiful love-token, a small box. Having received this, he came to himself after his prayer and went home. His companions came round and urged him to show his girlfriend's love-token. In the end, they took the little box he had received from Our Lady Mary from him. When they opened the box, they saw a little piece of red purple. They drew it out, and an astonishing chasuble and another beautifully adorned mass vestment followed it. When word of this miracle reached the Bishop of Canterbury, he sent for Thomas and asked him how he had come by the box. Thomas told him the truth, about how Mary,

Mother of God, had given it to him. When the Bishop heard from Thomas, who was poor at the time, how much Mary loved him, he bestowed upon him as much of his own property and income as he would need every year to learn and study. He put the desire into Thomas's heart to become bishop after him, and he ordered it as well, so that it indeed happened after his death. This is how Thomas became bishop, and he governed the bishopric [well]. He lived very piously and very devoutly and fervently served Mary, Mother of God, all his life.<sup>17</sup>

The 'red purple' (*purper*) does not only refer to colour, but also to a particular kind of cloth, *pellén*, derived from the Latin *pallium*, used for garments for important clergymen. The legend positions Thomas as a braggart who taunts his friends and then subsequently repents by prostrating himself before an image of the Virgin. Merciful as always, the Virgin does not chastise her lover, but rather approves of his boasting and rewards him for it with a gift. His vision of her seems to have occurred in a trance-like state, from which he emerges to find himself holding an extraordinary gift: a box full of fine silk. His relationship with his 'girlfriend', the Virgin Mary, is mediated through clothing: she bestows upon him a set of luxurious vestments. This gift both confirms the solidity of his vision and confirms the Virgin's approval of his future office as bishop, since she is, in effect, providing him a purple bishop's cloak. The story provides a miniature *Bildungsroman*: the wise-cracking young monk has an intimate experience with his girlfriend and emerges as a fully cloaked man.

The legend continues with a second chapter in the life of Thomas of Canterbury, in which textiles again play a key role:<sup>18</sup>

Later he [Thomas of Canterbury] was expelled from England and his diocese because he would not consent to breaches of the Holy Church's rights.<sup>19</sup> He spent some time in a monastery under the Order of St Bernard in France. As one can read about him, he used to wear a hairshirt instead of a linen one. Everybody assumed that a religious woman, a recluse [in England], used to make and wash these for him. But because he had suddenly and unexpectedly been expelled from England and had not packed enough of that kind of clothing, eventually his shirt needed mending. Because he did not know anyone in whom he could confide his problem, he once secretly went and sat in the monastery sewing and mending his shirt, but it caused him much grief that he could not do this task properly. Then the glorious Virgin Mary, who helps those who serve her, appeared to the bishop and comforted him. Greeting him, she said, 'Do

<sup>17</sup> De Vooy, *Middel nederlandse Marialegenden*, 1, pp. 144–47, miracle no. LXXVII.

<sup>18</sup> Some manuscripts present the following under a new heading: *Of St Thomas bishop of Canterbury*.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas eventually repudiated the so-called Constitutions of Clarendon, made by Henry II.

not fear'. Sitting next to him, she took the garment from the bishop's hand and sewed it with her own blessed hands. When the task was completed, she vanished from the bishop's sight. He thanked her with great devotion and fervour, and in his amazement, he pondered the loveliness and sweetness of the glorious Virgin Mary.

Once again, the Virgin has appeared to save Thomas from his humiliating distress, thereby showing her satisfaction with his set of choices, specifically to wear the penitential shirt. What is telling here is the gendered nature of sewing: Thomas is so embarrassed to use a needle and thread that he must do so in hiding. To make matters worse, he experiences frustration stemming from his inability to sew. Clearly, he had not received training in sewing as a young monk, but the Virgin, heavenly handmaiden, learned to sew as a child. According to the *Golden Legend*, Mary's parents sent her to the temple when she was three, and she spent the next eleven years praying and doing needlework. In this miracle, which is also a fantasy and a vision, she has become Thomas's silent seamstress, arriving in time to darn his tattered garment. Mary is not the only woman who becomes enmeshed with textiles, and the gendered nature of textiles runs as a thread through many of the essays in this volume, including those by Barbara Baert (most clearly in her treatment of the pallium and its miraculous origins, which were tied up with the legend of St Agnes' youthful and virginal martyrdom), and by Philine Helas, who, by analysing three miracle legends, teases out the complex gendered nature of clothing the poor as an act of mercy.

## *Act II: Torturing Textiles*

Just as saints' martyrdoms reify Christ's Ur-martyrdom, Thomas's hairshirt recalls the torturing textile that Christ wore. The seamless garment played a role in the affective devotion of the late Middle Ages, and was even counted among the instruments of the Passion that inflicted harm on his body, since it had become attached to Christ's open wounds after the flagellation. When his executioners stripped him of his garment before nailing him to the cross, his gown, coagulated into the blood and pus, reopened his wounds. The textile was therefore a locus of a miracle and an instrument of torture. Christ's garment appears frequently among late medieval depictions of the *arma Christi*. For example, in a prayer book illuminated around 1390, the empty garment stands up in its frame, sharing the page with the wounds of Christ (Figure 8). These two objects, folded into a series of Instruments of the Passion, each receive an

eight-line rhyming prayer.<sup>20</sup> The three dice lined up on the garment's empty torso refer to a further torture: once Christ had been stripped, the guards gambled for the garment by casting lots, but their game disintegrated into an

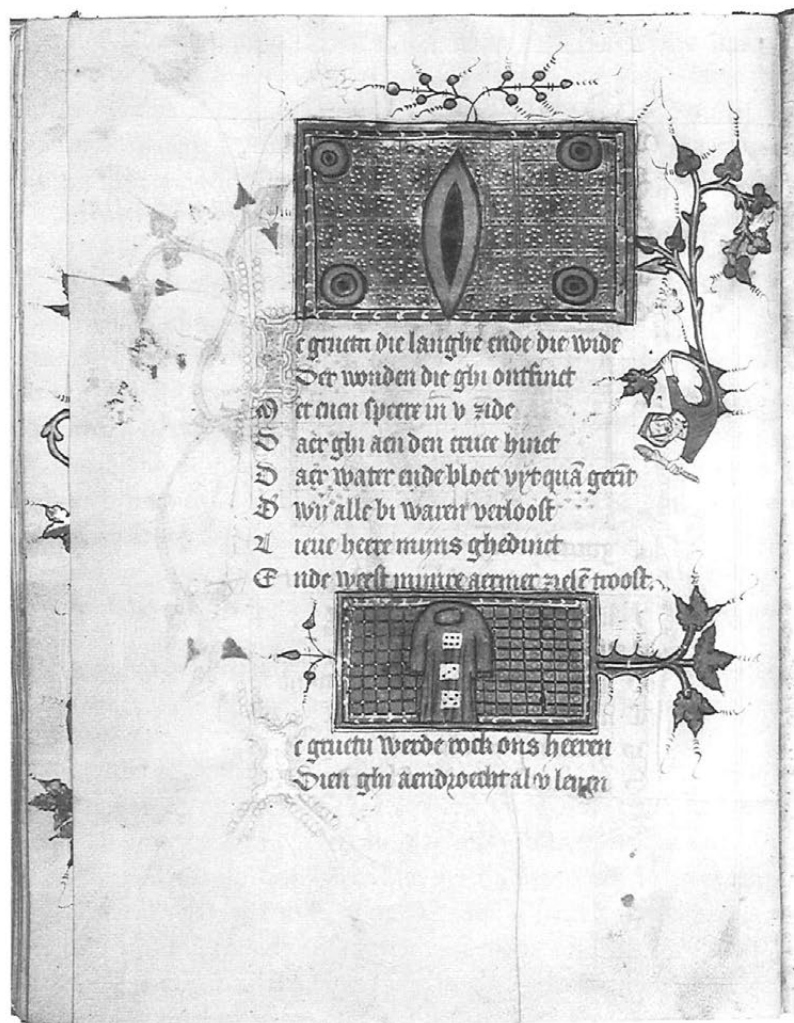


Figure 8. Christ's seamless garment and the five wounds of Christ, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, KA 36, fol. 76v. Brabant, c. 1390.

<sup>20</sup> See Kathryn M. Rudy, 'An illustrated mid-fifteenth-century primer for a Flemish girl: London, British Library, Harley MS 3828', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (forthcoming).

argument in which the seamless garment was torn, thereby creating a fissure in something that had been whole in its unity. The garment becomes a metonym for the man, since both Christ and his miraculous garment are ripped asunder. By extension, the event echoes the torn temple cloth often represented in early Christian art.

A miniature in a manuscript from Tours or Bourges, made around 1510–20, depicts a hairshirt seen through a torn curtain, a strange if not unprecedented image, all the more odd because it appears in multiple variations throughout the manuscript.<sup>21</sup> The hairshirt functioned as a device for self-torture, for continual low-level mutilation, for remaining mindful of Jesus and his sacrifice. The image appears on fol. 7<sup>v</sup> to preface the Gospel Lessons, then throughout the codex with small visionary images seen alongside the hairshirt through the torn curtain. For example, the Virgin and the hairshirt appear on fol. 15<sup>v</sup> to preface Matins of the Hours of the Virgin (Figure 9). The curtain, which hangs illusionistically from a curtain rod over the framed image, has been clawed into tatters to reveal the underside of the striped silk curtain, as well as the scratchy punishing garment beneath and a diminutive image of the Virgin in a burst of radiant light and clouds. The curtain, like those covering manuscript leaves and important altar pieces (as Christine Sciacca and Victor Schmidt discuss in their respective contributions below), conceals the visionary, the special, but opens according to the dictates of timing to reveal and to temporarily open the boundary between public and private, between the secret and the divinely revealed.

A second torturing textile, related by analogy to the sartorial accoutrements of the bishop, is Christ's blindfold, an object which, by virtue of its opacity, shrouds the vision of its wearer. The blindfold itself is featured in a small marginal image typical of Delft manufacture from the fifteenth century (Figure 10).<sup>22</sup> To be denied vision is a form of torture, just as to be given sight (and

<sup>21</sup> Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W. 446, Hours of Jean Lallemand le Jeune, made in Tours or Bourges, c. 1519–20, with a Franciscan calendar and Hours for the Use of Rome. Manuscript, ninety-six leaves on vellum, with fourteen large and six small miniatures. See *Time Sanctified*, ed. by Wieck, cat. 75, cat. 206; Lilian M. C. Randall, *Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Walters Art Gallery; France, 1420–1540*, 3 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992–97), II, Part 2, pp. 540–49, cat. 211; p. 634, fig. 380.

<sup>22</sup> The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 135 F 2. Book of Hours with a calendar for Utrecht, made in Delft, c. 1460–80. Manuscript on vellum, 228 folios, 172 × 120 mm (103 × 59); twenty lines/folio, littera textualis. Contains fourteen pen and ink marginal illustrations; penwork initials with pen-flourishes in a Delft style.



insight) is a form of grace. In contradistinction to the iconic and frontal Christ, this image of Christ cannot meet our gaze.



Figure 9. The Virgin in a radiant sunburst,  
seen through a torn curtain beside a hairshirt,  
The Hours of Jean Lallemant le Jeune,  
Baltimore, The Walters Art Museum, MS  
W.446, fol. 15<sup>v</sup>. Tours or Bourges, c. 1519–20.

The shroud would also become an object that symbolized Christ's resurrection: having witnessed his death and borne the bloodied marks of violence, the shroud collapsed back into a formless cloth once the body had resurrected itself, but it still carried the marks of mishandling that would set the shroud into the liminal space between relic and representation. A miniature by the Masters of the Gold Scrolls captures the sheer formlessness of the shroud (Figure 11). Its shape is given entirely by the sepulchre we imagine to be underneath it; the sepulchre gives it both context and physical form. The formlessness of textiles is precisely what makes them so multivalent. Like liquids, they take on the forms of solids that contain or define them. Other properties of textiles, furthermore, contribute to their multivalence: textiles report traces



and marks (sweat, blood, mutilation). They are usually opaque, a fact that makes them candidates for performing functions of ceremonial concealing and unveiling.

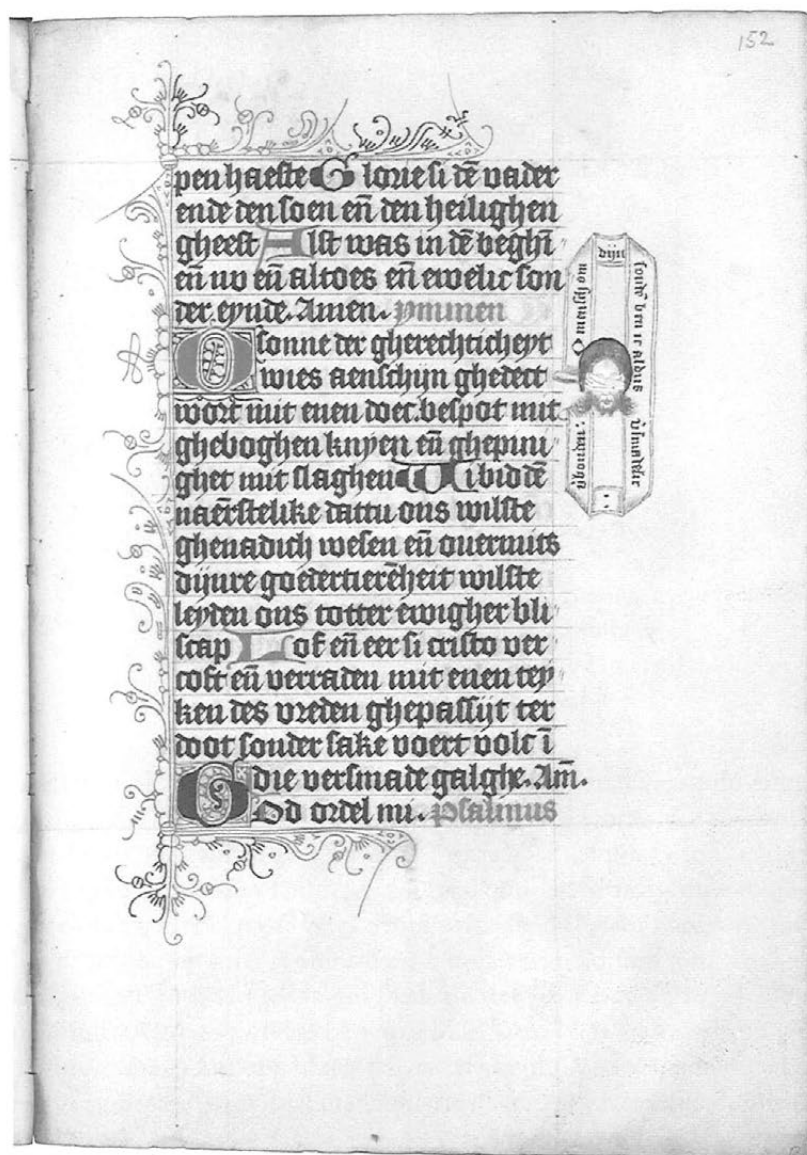


Figure 10. Blindfolded Christ, Book of Hours, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek 135 F 2, fol. 152r. Delft, 1460–80.



Figure 11. Masters of the Gold Scrolls. Christ's winding cloth as one of the instruments of the Passion, London, British Library, MS Harley 3828, fol. 69r. Bruges or environs, c. 1445.

Textiles often mediate between the personal and the social. For that reason, textiles, which can define the liminal passage toward sanctity, often shrouded saints' Lives. For example, St Martin bestowed part of his robe to a beggar, a personal act with great social implications. And St Francis, the son of a cloth merchant in Assisi, made his decisive move away from riches by entering the piazza naked, in a humble reversal of a ceremonious entry swaddled in colour and textile. Francis's nudity signals his shedding of the riches of the family cloth industry. Furthermore, the *Vita* of St Martin relates how potentially humiliating partial disrobement was. Conversely, artists could use the coded signifier for depicting fools and miscreants by depicting them with torn, revealing, or partial clothing, as Martha Bayless shows.

Cloth and clothing also feature in saints' martyrdoms. According to legend, the executioners of St Cunera of Rhenen strangled her with a scarf. Pilgrims'

tokens depict two figures pulling on the scarf looped around her neck, and the scarf itself — a linen textile with an unusual weave, made in Egypt in the fourth or fifth century — has been preserved as a relic.<sup>23</sup> To convey that a beast swallowed St Margaret — and that she was borne from his ruptured belly and survived his digestive tract — the beast usually has a piece of Margaret's dress in

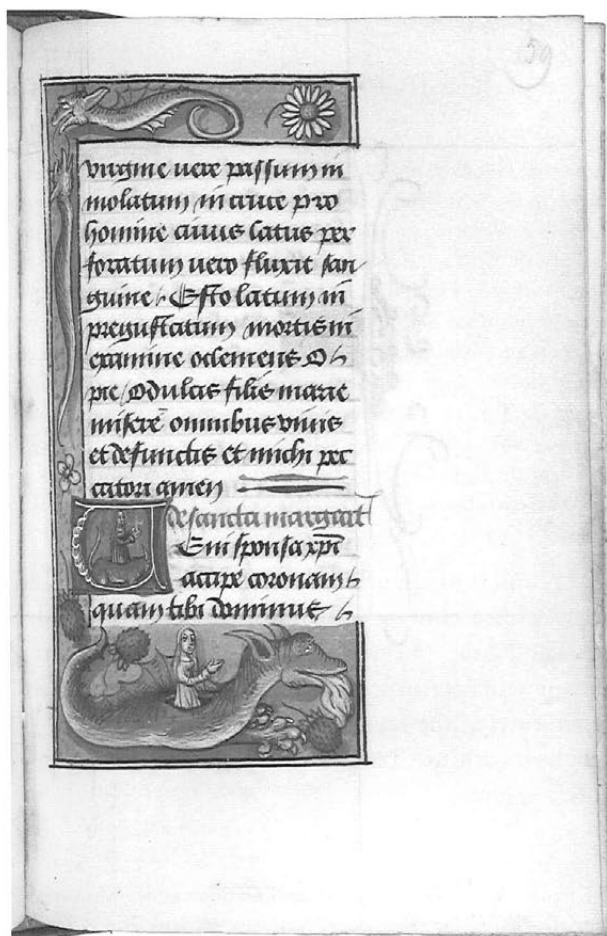


Figure 12. Historiated initial with St Margaret, and marginal illumination with St Margaret and the Dragon, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 133 E 14, fol. 59<sup>r</sup>. Flanders, c. 1500–10.

<sup>23</sup> Henk van Os, *De weg naar de hemel: Reliekverering in de Middeleeuwen* [exhibition catalogue] (Baarn: De Prom, 2000), p. 172, figs 201–02, provides illustrations of both Cunera's strangulation scarf and the pilgrim's badge.

its maw.<sup>24</sup> In a decorated border illuminating a suffrage to Margaret in a Flemish book of hours from the early sixteenth century, for example, an oversized dragon seems to ruminate on Margaret's skirt, unmindful of the fact that the saint has emerged through a gap in its torso (Figure 12).<sup>25</sup> Once again, textiles bear witness to the miraculous, as Margaret, Jonah-like, is summarily swallowed and resurrected.

The story of St Peter the Martyr unexpectedly implicates textiles, not once, but twice. The first of these describes an event surrounding a cloth relic of the saint:

A young man named Geoffrey or Godfrey, who lived in the city of Como, had a piece of cloth that was cut from St Peter's mantle. A certain heretic laughed at him and said that he would believe Peter was a saint if the youth threw the cloth into the fire and the cloth did not burn. This would prove beyond any doubt that Peter was a saint, and the heretic would adhere to his faith. So the young man threw the cloth on burning coals, but the cloth bounced high out of the fire, and then on its own power jumped back upon the coals and extinguished them completely. The unbeliever said, 'So! My own cloak would do the same thing!' They lighted another fire and a piece of the heretic's cloak was laid on one side and the cloth from St Peter's on the other. The minute the heretic's cloth felt the heat of the fire, it went up in flames, whereas Peter's patch prevailed over the fire and put it out, and not a thread of the cloth was as much as scorched. The heretic observed this, returned to the way of faith, and told everyone about the miracle.<sup>26</sup>

The story tells of a contest of sanctity: cloth that acts like cloth and burns, versus a sanctified fabric whose contact with the holy has imbued it with a flame-retardant shield. The fabric, an extension of the saint, is submitted to a trial-by-fire, from which it emerges unscathed. The miraculous cloth bears witness because it has encountered the sacred, and those who come into contact with it will then, in turn, bear continued witness. The saint's powers grow geometrically through the cloth's agency.

<sup>24</sup> Wendy R. Larson, 'Who Is the Master of This Narrative? Maternal Patronage of the Cult of St Margaret', in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 94–104.

<sup>25</sup> The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 133 E 14. Book of Hours for the Use of Rome, in Latin. Made in Flanders, c. 1500–10. Manuscript on vellum, 189 folios; 157 × 108; fifteen lines/folio; eighteen miniatures and eight historiated initials, decorated borders, marginal illustration, and penwork.

<sup>26</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 1, p. 260.

A second story in the life of Peter the Martyr features textiles that once again verify their sanctity in the public arena. The saint's powers, having blanketed all of western Christendom, ensure that, this time, the setting has shifted from northern Italy to the Low Countries:

At Utrecht in the Teutonic province, some women sat at streetside, spinning and watching a great concourse of people going to the church of the Friars Preachers to honour St Peter the Martyr. 'You see?' they said to people standing around, 'those friars know all about raising money! Now they want to pile up a lot of money to build big palaces, so they've invented a new martyr!' While they were saying things like this, suddenly all the thread they were spinning was soaked in blood and their fingers were covered with blood. They were astonished at the sight of this and wiped their hands carefully to see if perhaps they had cut themselves. But when they found that their fingers showed no cuts, and that it was the thread itself that was running with blood, trembling and repentant they said, 'Truly it's because we said bad things about the blood of the precious martyr that this stupendous miracle of blood has happened to us'. They ran therefore to the house of the friars and told the story to the prior, presenting the bloody thread to him. After much urging the prior convoked a solemn preaching service, at which he related what had happened to the women, and showed all present the bloodstained thread.<sup>27</sup>

The story showcases textiles drenched in blood. The textiles in the spinners' hands suddenly become the weapons mysteriously joined to the saint, who punishes disbelievers. The thread they spin becomes the thread of a moralizing narrative.

### *Act III: The Virgin's Mantle*

Various medieval texts also draw an analogy between textile and blood: in the story of St Catherine of Siena, Christ pulls a miraculous red garment from his side wound, invisible to all but St Catherine. Several legends and miracles attest to the metaphoric equivalence between praying and textile manufacture. And as Hanneke van Asperen asserts, images sewn into a prayer book suggest an analogy between Christ's red blood and the red cross stitches that bind the image to the prayer. Anne Margreet As-Vijvers discusses a legend that implicates the origin of the rosary and the mythology wound around it. Reciting repeated *Ave Marias* becomes synonymous with constructing a garment for the Virgin: the more devoutly and repeatedly a votary prays, the more luxurious the garment becomes. The votary embroiders the cloak with words.

<sup>27</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 1, pp. 262–63.

Such is also the case in the miraculous vision of the Virgin reported by Mechtild of Hackeborn (Helfta, 1241–99), and recorded in the *Liber specialis gratiae*. The legend, describing the rewards for reciting the *Ave Maria*, paraphrases Mechtild's vision, thereby making Mechtild's somewhat hermetic text available to a broader audience. According to a Middle Dutch rendition (translated here into English):

Whoever desires to be devoted to the glorious Virgin Mary, will often pray with devotion the angelic greeting.<sup>28</sup> I believe no praise in words can be offered that is more pleasing to her than this angelic greeting. For in a book of revelations of the holy virgin Mechtild, we can read [the following]. One Saturday, when the Mass '*Salve sancte parens*'<sup>29</sup> (this means 'Greeted art thou, Holy Mother') was being sung, Mechtild said in her prayer: 'O Mary, Queen of Heaven, if only I could greet you with the sweetest greeting to you that man's heart has ever thought of and that was pleasing to you, I would do so most gladly'.

Immediately the glorious Virgin Mary revealed herself to her. Across her chest, the angelic greeting *Ave Maria* was written in gold lettering. She said: 'No one has surpassed this greeting, and no one can greet me more sweetly than one who greets me with the honour with which God the Father greeted me by means of the word *Ave*. He strengthened me so with his omnipotence that I was free from all retribution. The Son of God enlightened me so with his divine wisdom, that I am a very bright star that lights up heaven and earth. This is indicated by the name Mary, which means 'Star of the Sea'. The Holy Spirit, too, has permeated me with all his divine sweetness. With his grace he has made me so powerful that whosoever seeks mercy from me shall find mercy. This is indicated by the words 'The Lord is with thee'. By these words, I am reminded of the inexpressible unity and of the workings that the whole of Trinity has wrought in me, when they united in one person the substance of my flesh with human nature, so that God became man and man God. What joy and sweetness I felt at that hour, no man can experience! By means of the words 'Blessed art thou among women', all creatures in awe declare and attest that I am blessed and elevated above all creatures of heaven and earth. By means of the words 'Blessed is the fruit of your womb', the sweetest and most useful fruit of my womb is blessed and elevated, (he) who has made all creatures alive and holy and has blessed them into eternity. For this reason St Augustine says that when you pray *Ave Maria*, Heaven laughs, Earth blooms, angels

<sup>28</sup> The Annunciation by the archangel Gabriel: 'Ave, Maria, gratia plena: Dominus tecum: benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus. Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis, peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen', which translates as: 'Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen'. The second line is a fifteenth-century addition.

<sup>29</sup> Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary, said on Saturdays and as Votive Masses according to the different seasons. Latin orthography requires *Salve Sancta Parens*.

celebrate, and devils are driven out. Hearing this little prayer *Ave Maria* is like a kiss to you, O, holiest Virgin Mary. Therefore, go to her statue, bend your knees, begin kissing and pray *Ave Maria*. As Bernard says: 'O Thou sweetest Virgin Mary, you are kissed as often as you are greeted devoutly by *Ave Maria*'.<sup>30</sup>

The framing of the text is such that the speaker is not Mechtild, but rather a narrator (sermonist?) who describes Mechtild to a vernacular audience, one that needs to have '*Salve sancte parens*' translated. The (presumed) preacher has palpably communicated the enthusiasm and physicality of this story, one that underscores the power of the *Ave Maria* and describes Mary's radiant glee when she hears the words uttered. The devotion forms an expansion or gloss on the *Ave Maria*; in fact, the text exuberantly embroiders the brief prayer. In the context of this essay, two things are particularly striking: first, the narrator urges listeners to pray in front of an image of the Virgin, a practice that would bring the Virgin into close tangible proximity with the devotee; second, the visionary Virgin has the letters A-V-E M-A-R-I-A embroidered across her dress. We can follow the thread of embroidered letters to related stories.

As is the case with many legends, the story circulated in mutable forms. The form was unstable, owing partly to its circulation in oral culture, and consequently the theme reappears in another monastic context, but without mentioning Mechtild. The *exemplum*, headed 'About a monk', recounts:

A Cistercian monk used to pray fifty *Ave Marias* to Our Lady Mary before meals. One time the abbot had given him leave to visit his parents. As he was sitting at the table about to eat, he realized he had not said his usual prayers: fifty *Ave Marias* to Our Lady. He then rose from the table, went to the other room, and devoutly prayed his *Ave Marias* to honour Our Lady. When he had finished his prayers, Our Lady Mary, looking pleased, appeared before this brother in great splendour. She was wearing a beautiful cloak. *Ave Maria* was written in gold lettering all over this cloak, so that there was very little space left that was not filled up with words, except on the seam. When the monk saw this, the vision frightened him. But Mary, sweet Mother of God, said to him: 'Brother, have no fear. For all the greetings you have prayed for me have been written on my cloak'. And Mary continued: 'Look, when this part of the cloak is filled with *Ave Marias*, I shall lead you to the eternal joy of life [*enallage*]. There you shall eternally rejoice with my son and me for the service you have bestowed upon me'. The brother was glad, and he rose and returned to his monastery. He laboured to fill the cloak with *Ave Marias* in order to obtain what Our Lady Mary, who rewards her faithful servants, had promised him.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> De Vooy, *Middel nederlandse Marialegenden*, I, pp. 298–300, miracle no. CXLVI.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 227–28, miracle no. CXI.



One can visualize the garment covered in a busy and dense pattern of letters spelling out the angelic greeting, except for the seam and a small amount of unlettered cloth. The themes are clear: initial fright, followed by delight, and newfound devotional vigour and commitment.

In these two *exempla*, prayer is drawn out into an extended textile metaphor, which manifests itself in various places in the visual culture of devotion. One example appears in an image depicting the Annunciation, painted by the Master of Catherine of Cleves (Figure 13).<sup>32</sup> The event takes place in an intimate chapel within a church, where the Virgin of Humility is seated on the floor in front of a magnificent carved throne, revealed through a canopy of parted drapery. The angel Gabriel unfurls his ribbon-like banderol, which declares 'Ave Maria, [gratia] plena, dominus tecum'. The words, some concealed in the folds of the unruly ribbon, float around his staff, which he extends like a magic wand as Mary becomes miraculously impregnated. The Virgin looks up demurely from her book, which is swaddled in a white cloth as her ribbon declares, 'Ecce ansilla [sic] domini' ('behold the handmaiden of the Lord'). As viewers, we behold her against her backdrop of canopy, a textile sign of her pre-eminence. Moreover, she bears signs of the miraculous annunciation on her person, with the letters *A* and *M* worked into the fabric of her dress and sleeves. The representation suggests that her mantle is constructed from repeated *Ave Marias*, the rehearsed words from the angel which delight Mary. The metaphor reappears in the legend of the three sisters who weave clothing for the virgin out of their prayers: as As-Vijvers discusses in this volume, the sister who has prayed with the greatest constancy and devotion constructs for the virgin the most elaborate gown, whereas the more devotionally lazy sister only manages to spin a simple dress of sackcloth for the Virgin.

The metaphor uniting text and textile is played out in a different way in a genre of prayers called the 'Mantle of Our Lady', which closely echoes a related prayer, the 'Mantle of Jesus'. The prayers present words that the votary spins, and by doing so, receives protection under the greatcoat of the Virgin or, less often, her son. The prayers find a visual parallel in early Christian images, beginning with the construction of a church in Constantinople to honour the

<sup>32</sup> Master of Catherine of Cleves. Hours of Catharina van Lochorst, Münster, Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte, MS. 530. Utrecht?, c. 1440–50. Paul Pieper discusses this manuscript in 'Das Stundenbuch der Katherina von Lochorst und der Meister der Katharina von Kleve', *Zeitschrift Westfalen, Hefte für Geschichte, Kunst und Volkskunde*, 44 (1966), 97–163.





Figure 13. Master of Catherine of Cleves. Annunciation, with the Virgin wearing a letter mantle, Hours of Catharina van Lochorst, Münster, Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte, MS 530 LM, fol. 16<sup>v</sup>. Utrecht?, c. 1440–50.

relic of the mantle in the fifth century.<sup>33</sup> The concept of Mary's mantle gained popularity in the West and, by the thirteenth century, we find Italian paintings depicting an immense Mary wearing a great blue cape, such as in Simone Martini's *Madonna della Misericordia* (Figure 14). Her outstretched arms give it



Figure 14. Simone Martini. *Madonna della Misericordia* (Virgin of Mercy), Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale. Siena, c. 1308.

<sup>33</sup> Christa Belting-Ihm, 'Sub Matris Tutela'. *Untersuchungen zur Vorgeschichte der Schutzmantelmadonna*, Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, 3 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1976), provides a history of the Schutzmantelmadonna.

form as she widens it enough to accommodate legions of people below: royalty, clergy, monks, nuns, and the laity, who all mediate between the space under Mary's mantle and the world outside. The Virgin's cloak defines a place of supernatural protection.

In the north, in Holland, these concepts reappear in images representing the 'mantle Madonna'; one example is found in a manuscript illuminated around 1480 by the Assumption Master, in which a full-page miniature prefaces the 'Mantle of Our Lady' prayer (Figure 15).<sup>34</sup> The image, apparently designed for its specific devotional role in the manuscript, depicts the Virgin flanked by four female saints, each with her attribute demurely tucked into the image. Two angels, wings and gowns a-flutter, hover just above the garden wall to hold the Virgin's rich red mantle aloft. The Christ child, nearly leaping out of Mary's arms, strains toward the red fabric that the angel proffers. The child therefore draws attention to the real theme of the image: a metaphorical mantle that can expand and protect. Both the accompanying prayer and the image feature this garment. Defined by angels, the cloth offers a pavilion of prayer within the garden of paradise, which the elect can enjoy in perpetuity.

According to various stories describing noteworthy sanctity, a votary offers real and/or metaphoric clothing. In a Middle Dutch legend, for example, we read of a soldier who chances upon an image of a Virgin in a tree and drapes her with part of his mantle.<sup>35</sup> The idea of clothing the Virgin as a form of devotion was also borne out when confraternities or other organizations would construct or commission new robes for miracle-working images of the Virgin. These images were holy, and had been sanctified by a bishop (according to instructions found, for example, in the Utrecht Pontifical). To clothe the image of the Virgin was to put on a colourful public display, while at the same time to show private veneration. A 400-odd-line rhyming poem recounts the early history of a particular cult image in 's-Hertogenbosch: when an image of the Virgin was installed in the Church of St John in the mid-fourteenth century, everyone considered the image ugly, and for that reason, no one asked that particular Virgin to perform any miracles. Despite the Virgin's lack of pulchritude, one

<sup>34</sup> Compare this with an image depicting the 'Mantelmadonna' in a Book of Hours from Rouen, made c. 1480, in which clergy and laypeople all gather under the Virgin's wide cape, as a preface to the 'Obsecro te' in Latin. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, W. 224, fol. 10<sup>v</sup>, pictured in *Time Sanctified*, ed. by Wieck, p. 96, fig. 61. See also Randall, *Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts*, II, Part 1, pp. 308–13, cat. 165; II, Part 2, pp. 609, figs 287–89.

<sup>35</sup> De Vooy, *Middelnederlandse Marialegenden*, I, pp. 167–72, miracle no. LXXXV.



Figure 15. The Assumption Master. Mantle Madonna, Book of Hours, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 135 K 40, fol. 175<sup>r</sup>. South Holland, c. 1460–80.

desperate woman approached the image, and was graced immediately with a miracle. As a votive offering to the image, the cured woman had the image painted so that she better conformed to standards of beauty. Seeing the sculpture's refurbishment, others asked the Virgin to grant them miracles, and each recipient bestowed upon the virgin some new paint (red lips, white cheeks), some trinket, or some new garment. As the Virgin grew in radiant splendour, her popularity — and consequently her gifts — increased geometrically. The laudatory versified origin myth of the cult image, along with a running catalogue of the miracles she continually performed, were subsequently copied into a 'Book of Miracles'. The image and the townspeople of 's-Hertogenbosch, all magnificently clad for the occasion, still process the image through the streets annually in May, and various civic groups continue to give the image new clothes.

These metaphors reunite in a genre of images known as the Virgin in Sole, which depict Mary wearing a miraculous cloak made 'of the sun' as she stands on the moon, according to John's Revelation.<sup>36</sup> Such an image prefaces a manuscript filled with miracle stories of the Virgin who has bestowed grace upon those who honour her with the rosary devotion (Plate 2). The image depicts the Virgin with a book in abeutel binding and the infant Jesus, as they sit within a mantle of flames that emanate from her gown. The flames, painted in yellow gold against a blue background, inscribe a fiery halo around her. A Canoness Regular from Brussels owned the manuscript in the sixteenth or early seventeenth century, and it is possible that the book had been handed down from one sister to the next and originated at the convent. Perhaps, then, it was a fifteenth-century Canoness who attached the image, a single leaf, probably produced by a convent in the diocese of Liège.<sup>37</sup> The user never glued the image

<sup>36</sup> Sixten Ringbom, 'Maria in Sole and the Virgin of the Rosary', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 25 (1962), 326–30.

<sup>37</sup> Leuven, Theologische Faculteit, MS Mechelen 15 (the manuscript was recently transferred from the Groot Seminarie in Mechelen). Contains Alanus de Rupe's *Van der werdicheit des souters Marien*, a group of stories about the benefits of the rosary devotion, in Middle Dutch. Manuscript on vellum, 133 folios; 151 × 110 mm (108 × 75); written in one column, of twenty lines/folio. The manuscript and its binding date from the end of the fifteenth century; the binding (panel stamped leather over boards) is from the Rooklooster (Canons Regular of St Paul) in Oudergem by Brussels. By the sixteenth or seventeenth century it was in the possession of the Canonesses Regular of St Elisabeth in Brussels, as per the inscription on fol. 2<sup>v</sup>: 'Desen boek hoort toe [Elisa]beth op [Sion] binnen Brussel.' For its monastic provenance, see Karl Stooker and Theo Verbeij, *Collecties op Orde*, Miscellaneous

into the book; rather, he — or more likely, she — sewed it onto the page, attached by six thread tacking stitches at the corners and at the top and bottom. As Hanneke van Asperen shows in this volume, stitching was closely aligned to prayer and to the rosary in particular. Furthermore, as Christine Sciacca shows, other objects stitched into manuscripts — namely curtains — help to enshroud the Word of God. In the case of the Dutch book of miracles, the object bound to the page by threads is not a textile, but rather a miniature depicting a miraculous textile. In this image we find that the owner sewed the image of the miraculously clothed Virgin to the preface of her book, which chronicles the benefits of praying the rosary. The metaphors all mingle at the site of this image.

Another cult image of the Virgin defined primarily by her garment was the Ährenkleid Madonna, also known as the Virgin of the Corn. Her mantle bears the repeated design of grain (corn or wheat). This image corresponds to a miracle-working image in Milan, which gained considerable fame north of the Alps. The image appears, for example, in a brief travelling manuscript, made for Philip the Good around 1450, and depicts the duke kneeling in reverence before the image.<sup>38</sup> This image accompanies an extensive, multi-folio rubric indicating that the accompanying prayer honours the Virgin of Milan. The illuminator has carefully represented the Virgin's blue mantle bearing repeated designs, showing the edible part of the grain stalk.

These three Marian manifestations — the Virgin clothed in the Sun, the Mantle Madonna, and the Ährenkleid Madonna — define the Virgin in terms of her clothing. While the Virgin of the Sun has a visionary origin, and the Ährenkleid Madonna probably replaces a pre-Christian fertility image and is

Neerlandica, XV–XVI, 2 vols (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), I, no. 254. The legends of the Virgin contained in this manuscript form part of the corpus of De Vooys, *Middel nederlandse Marialegenden*, II, pp. liii–lvi. Henk van Os, 'Coronatio. Glorificatio en Maria in Sole', *Bulletin Museum Boymans-van Beuningen*, 15 (1964), 22–38, published the image when it was still in the Mechelen collection; I thank Klaas van der Hoek for this reference. See also Kathryn M. Rudy's forthcoming study of a group of single leaves representing the Virgin of the Sun, all made in the same convent, of which the leaf now in Leuven is an example.

<sup>38</sup> The codex, which takes the form of a small altar, exists in facsimile: *Das Buchaltärchen Herzog Philipps des Guten von Burgund. Codex 1800 der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien*, 2 vols (Lucerne: Faksimile Verl., 1991). The first volume comprises a facsimile of the manuscript, including its unusual diptych binding; the second includes a full transcription and translation of the texts (into French and German), and a commentary by Otto Mazal and Dagmar Thoss. The unusual diptych-binding was probably made around 1430, and the codex written around 1450.

anything but visionary but rather quite tangible, one thing that unites these images is that the draped clothing that defines them makes them larger, more voluminous, and, of course, more powerful.

### *The Curtain Closes*

Many of the themes discussed in this article unite in a legend headed 'About a pious bishop', a story that recalls Thomas of Canterbury's travails with textiles, as well as the 'letter mantle' and the Virgin's protective cloak. Despite its multiple themes, the *exemplum* itself is quite brief:

There was a pious bishop who loved Mary, mother of God, very much and who served her devoutly. Once upon a time, Mary, Virgin and mother of God, came to him and said 'Dear friend, out of love I want to give you a new alb. I want you to wear it when you perform mass for me. You will find it on your seat'. And when he awoke, he found the alb lying there, made without seams, as Mary had told him. The bishop was very pleased and performed mass in the alb as long as he lived. After his death, another bishop came and said that, like his predecessor, he would also wear the alb. He said that he too was worthy of this. But when he had donned the alb, he immediately fell over and dropped dead because of his audacity.<sup>39</sup>

The Virgin emerges as a character who bestows favours upon a bishop who serves her, and who acknowledges his piety with a gift of liturgical garb. No bishop needs to bless this alb with the aid of a Pontifical, since the garment is heaven-sent, miraculous, and blessed by the Virgin herself. The pious bishop becomes a type for Christ, since Christ's mother is also making him a seamless — and therefore miraculous — garment, which she delivers through miraculous means. In this brief story, textiles adopt the ultimate power: the alb is clothing that kills.

In this essay, I have tried to expound a number of themes through which clothing made meaning in fifteenth-century northern Europe. Some of these themes are also valid for the findings in earlier periods, and in southern Europe, as the essays below recount. In their multivalence, textiles often mediate between categories, between the physical and the visionary, between the sacred and the secular. Although not explicitly stated in the title, many of the articles in this volume also address gender: sewing, not to mention weaving, veiling, and dressing, often have a gendered dimension. Furthermore, textiles play a mediating role from the highest heaven to the lowliest filthy street. The power of vestments — complete with colour symbolism and sacred etiologies — make

<sup>39</sup> De Vooys, *Middel nederlandse Marialegenden*, 1, pp. 94–95, miracle no. XLVI.



textiles a particularly useful tool of inquiry into the specific workings of the medieval supernatural world.



## Part One: Weaving



## WEAVING

Barbara Baert

Perhaps no single handcraft is as primordial as weaving. The artifact that results from the repetitive back and forth movement of the hands reflects the mystery of the act of creation itself. In Berber communities, where weaving lies rooted in a feminine culture that goes back to the Neolithic period, textiles are mirrors of cosmogony and anthropogeny. The warp threads also connect the here with the hereafter, as well as linking the beginning and the end of an individual life: angels move back and forth on this *axes mundi* while they sing the fate of humanity. The loom, which is the medium of hierophany, must therefore be manufactured with ethos. The hands that touch the threads are always praying hands.

The connection between weaving and meditation is unmistakable. This is certainly the case during the era of Christianity. If the textile has increased *in mentis spiritu*, then it has simultaneously served many generations, which will handle and contaminate it, and ultimately, wear it out. In brief, the medieval textiles that have survived carry the fingerprints of salvation history and intense devotion. In this way, fabric is connected to the other material that fingertips love to touch: parchment. If one were to describe the material culture of Christianity, one would surely find fabric and skin.

The first section in the present volume treats the intersection between textiles and the manuscript. Fabric and parchment are intimately interwoven because of their common function: they are both most important vehicles of prayer. Based on case studies, the three authors below investigate their metaphoric, material, and iconographic relationships.

Anne Margreet W. As-Vijvers examines how the use of the rosary is affiliated with the activities of weaving. She fathoms these complexities by interrogating Marian legends, historical sources concerned with the devotional property of the

rosary, and their manifestations in representations. The rosary is not only a devotional exercise, but also an object. Moreover, just as the rosary strings 'roses' together, it laces together the spoken greetings to Mary. The repetitive and constructive pattern of the *Aves* unlocks a special engagement with the analogous activity of weaving. The medieval mind narrativized this engagement in legends and made it explicit in miniatures, so that the women praying the rosary *de facto* work together with the manufacture of Mary's divine robe. The author has discovered unique iconographical material, which she traces in this article.

The relationship between praying and weaving did not just occur at an allegorical level; at the same time there were witnesses to a material amalgamation of textile and manuscript. Hanneke van Asperen further traces the track of the rosary, based on a sixteenth-century Netherlandish prayer book now housed in London. She concludes that this codex reveals a particular kind of 'illumination': threads that are twisted or pulled through the woodcut prints as a decorative motive, or rather, 'sewn images'. The author looks at how the stitching supports the function of the book, in the threading together of the words and images that accompany the prayer. In this way the destination of the prayerbook — perhaps for a convent of nuns — is, in its most intense form, anchored in the text-textile duality. The article bears fundamentally on the play between feminine devotion and feminine visual culture.

Margaret L. Goehring's research asks new questions in relation to the representation of *textilia* in manuscripts. It is well recognized that Franco-Flemish manuscript illumination distinguishes itself in the minute representation of luxurious textiles, but could the phenomenon also provide insight into relation to the symbolic values of the textiles and the designs woven into them? The author not only goes deeper into the concept of the 'cloth of honour' in the iconography of saints and prosperous patrons, but she also develops a new methodology for the interpretation of textile borders in miniature painting. Moreover, the article surveys the pedigrees of textiles and their importation from the Mediterranean world by the Flemish and French courts, before they were immortalized as religious objects in miniature painting.

Translated by Kathryn M. Rudy

## WEAVING MARY'S CHAPLET: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE ROSARY IN LATE MEDIEVAL FLEMISH MANUSCRIPT ILLUMINATION\*

Anne Margreet W. As-Vijvers

According to a medieval Marian legend, three sisters who lived together in devotion set themselves to prepare Our Lady 'a fine mantle, with a gown and an undergarment, and with other precious "jewels", like a headdress, and shoes, and the other things one wears'. From St Stephen's day (26 December) onwards they worked on the manufacture of these clothes by reciting 150 *Ave Maria* prayers every day — fifty for each garment — and fifteen *Pater Nosters* for the decorative accessories.<sup>1</sup> In other words, they prayed the rosary.

\* For their critical reading of this paper I would like to thank the editors of this volume, Dr Kathryn M. Rudy and Dr Barbara Baert, as well contributors Dr Margaret L. Goehring and Drs Hanneke van Asperen. The illustrations in this article are reproduced with kind permission of the copyright holders. Plate 3 is from the collection of the Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, London. I would like to thank Dr Bodo Brinkmann for the reproduction in Figure 25, and Dr James H. Marrow for Figure 26.

<sup>1</sup> '[...] eenen mantel met eenen tabbaert ende onder rocke Ende ander costelijke iuweelen als doeke des hoefs ende scoen ende behoefelicheit der andere leden Ende dat soude zijn doer III. L Ave mariën recht als om die III cleedere voerscreven Ende met XV pater noster recht als voer die ander cyerheit'. With thanks to Dr Johan Oosterman, who confirmed that the Middle Dutch word 'iuweelen' ('jewels') may refer to 'very precious items' in general; in this sense the word occurs in descriptions of precious clothes and textiles. For the full story, here rendered in abridged form, see Cornelis G. N. de Vooys, *Middel nederlandse Marialegenden*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1903), II, pp. 213–16, miracle no. CCCXLIII. De Vooys transcribed the text from Leuven, Theologische Faculteit, MS Mechelen 15 (Alanus de Rupe, *Van der werdicheit des souters Marien; Exempla*), fols 88<sup>v</sup>–92<sup>v</sup> (cf. *Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta* (BNM): [www.bnm.leidenuniv.nl](http://www.bnm.leidenuniv.nl)). On the interpretation of the story see also F. H. A. Van den

On the night of Candlemas (2 February), the Virgin Mary appeared in their room, clad in a radiant and beautiful mantle, embroidered with the words of the *Ave Maria* in golden letters.<sup>2</sup> The Queen of Heaven, accompanied by St Catherine and St Agnes, went to the bed of the eldest sister. She greeted her with the words of the *Ave* prayer and thanked her for the clothes she had prepared for her. The sister corroborated that her only aim had been to please Mary and to receive Mary's gratitude. The saints also offered thanks for the dresses they had obtained simultaneously with the Virgin's garment; then the holy company ascended to heaven. An hour later the Virgin returned, this time alone, to appear to the second sister; she was now dressed in a precious green cloth, but this one was without gold or sparkles.<sup>3</sup> Though Mary gratefully acknowledged her dress, the second sister noticed with sadness its difference from the first one, and she begged the Virgin to grant her a sufficiently long life so that she could offer a more splendid garment. The Virgin favoured her request. The next hour Mary appeared for the third time, now clad in a shabby dress that fitted like a sack.<sup>4</sup> Although the Virgin expressed her gratitude to the third sister, the youngest sibling felt very much ashamed and also begged for a second chance.

After a year of intense rosary prayers by the sisters, Mary re-appeared on the night of Candlemas, in the same garment she had worn when she first addressed the eldest sister, and again in the company of St Catherine and St Agnes. When Mary and the saints conferred a crown to each of the sisters and promised them that the next day they would enter heaven, the sisters all rejoiced and fell immediately ill. The following day after compline, the heavenly party returned in ineffably beautiful clothes, and draped all three sisters in radiant dresses.

Oudendijk Pieterse, *Dürers Rosenkranzfest en de ikonografie der Duitse rozenkransgroepen van de XV<sup>e</sup> en het begin der XVI<sup>e</sup> eeuw* (Amsterdam: De Spieghel, 1939), pp. 557–58. The *Ave Maria* prayer reads: 'Ave Maria, gratia plena, dominus tecum, benedicta tu in mulieribus, Et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus' ('Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus'); Christ Himself introduced the *Pater Noster* prayer to God the Father, according to Matthew 6. 9–13 and Luke 11. 2–4.

<sup>2</sup> 'Als dese drij sliepen inder nacht van onser liever vrouwen kerc ganc dach Doen quam Maria in die slaepcamere der drij susteren met lichte ende sueten roeke [...] Ende op Mariën mantel was ghescreven met guldenen letteren zeere vercyert Ave maria gratia plena dominus tecum': De Vooy, *Middel nederlandse Marialegenden*, II, pp. 214–15, miracle no. CCCXLIII.

<sup>3</sup> 'in groenen cleederen seere ghecyert / maer sonder gout oft blinckende': *ibid.*, II, p. 215, miracle no. CCCXLIII.

<sup>4</sup> 'met snoeden lakene ghecleet als een sac': *ibid.*, II, p. 215, miracle no. CCCXLIII.

Angels sang to welcome the brides of Christ, who would now receive their crowns of eternal glory.<sup>5</sup>

As this story indicates, to pray the rosary is to clothe Mary with beautiful garments, to offer her jewels, to make her a crown, to weave her a chaplet, and to wreath her a garland of roses. The Van Hooff Prayer book, made in Flanders around 1500, includes a miniature depicting the rosary prayer and the prayer chains that were used to keep track of the repetitive prayers, such as those the three sisters recited to earn their heavenly garments and salvation (Figure 16a).<sup>6</sup> From the centre of a golden celestial sphere, Mary emerges, holding the Christ-child and standing on the crescent moon, while sun-rays radiate on the back wall of a red niche. Three concentric circles comprising red 'Ave beads' are painted on the golden background to frame her. These chains are each interrupted by five medallions (the 'Pater Noster beads'), which represent Marian and Christological events for meditation. Above this schematic unity, we see God the Father in heaven flanked by angels holding chains, the adult Christ, and Mary, who is showing her breast.

This miniature forms the starting point for a consideration of the depiction of the rosary in late medieval Flemish illumination. The study interrogates the relationship between texts and images in books of hours, the function of these images within the devotional practices of their owners, the 'textile' metaphors connected with the rosary devotion, the influence of printed illustrations, and the representation of the actual prayer beads and their use in the miniatures and

<sup>5</sup> De Vooy, *Middel nederlandse Marialegenden*, II, p. 216, miracle no. CCCXLIII. It is yet to be established more precisely why St Catherine and St Agnes accompanied the Virgin; however, their presence might be explained by the fact that many female religious houses, including the one in which the presumed audience for this particular legend lived, were dedicated to either the Virgin Mary or one of these saints (this was kindly pointed out to me by Dr Judith Oliver). Both saints were seen as counterparts because of their mystic marriages to Christ; as such they were appropriate companions for Mary as well as exemplary models for nuns striving to become Christ's brides (I owe this latter observation to Dr Stan Weed).

<sup>6</sup> Amsterdam, Bibliotheek van de Vrije Universiteit, MS XV.05502.-, fol. 56<sup>v</sup>. On this manuscript: Anne Margreet W. As-Vijvers, 'Randversiering in Gents-Brugse manuscripten. De Meester van de Davidscènes en andere verluchters als specialisten in margedecoratie' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2002 [to be published in English by Brepols in 2008]), pp. 296–99, 350–52, 445–52. On late medieval Flemish (or 'Ghent-Bruges') manuscripts in general, see *Illuminating the Renaissance: The Triumph of Flemish Manuscript Painting in Europe* [exhibition catalogue], ed. by Thomas Kren and Scot McKendrick (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003), with extensive bibliography.

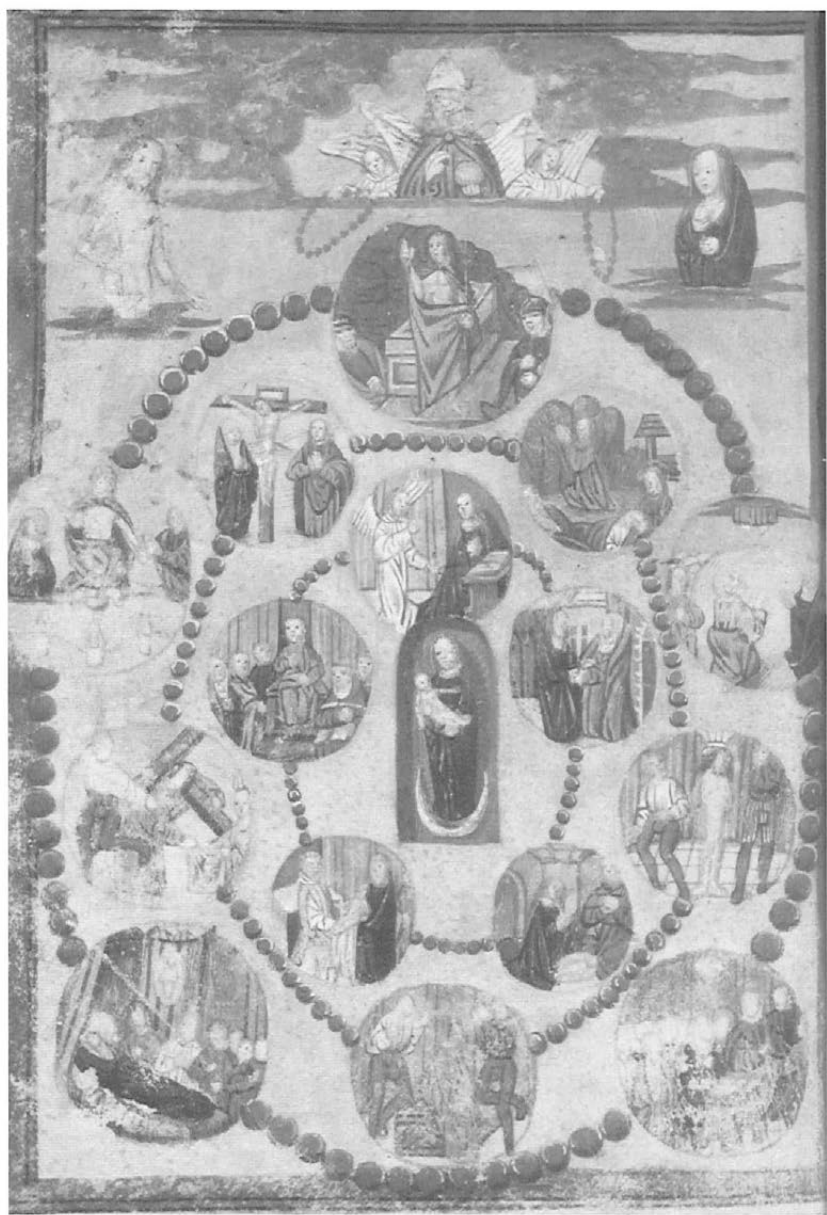


Figure 16a. Cornelia van Wulfschkercke. Tripartite rosary, Van Hooft Prayer book, Amsterdam, Bibliotheek van de Vrije Universiteit, MS XV.05502.-, fol. 56<sup>v</sup>. Bruges, c. 1500.



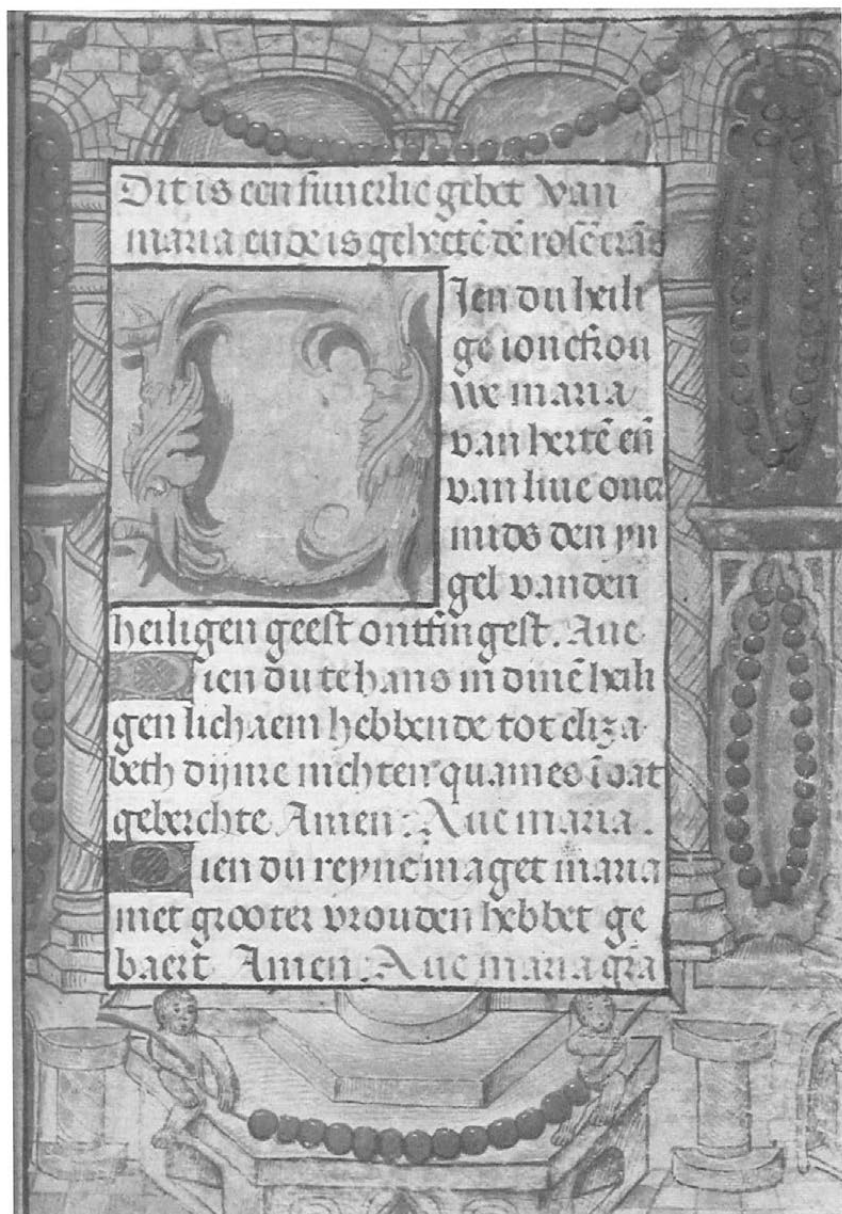


Figure 16b. Cornelia van Wulfschercke (border). Incipit of a rosary prayer, Van Hooff Prayer book, Amsterdam, Bibliotheek van de Vrije Universiteit, MS XV.05502.-, fol. 57<sup>r</sup>. Bruges, c. 1500.

border decorations of these manuscripts. First, however, it should be made clear that the word 'rosary' encompasses several, interlocked meanings. The rosary is not only a kind of prayer exercise, but the word also refers to the chain of beads used while reciting this prayer, as well as a garland made of roses, which is both the factual and the symbolic result of praying the exercise.<sup>7</sup> In a derived figurative sense, the prayer also generated textiles taking the shape of garments and head-covers, as in the cited exemplum.

The religious exercise of the rosary gradually took form over centuries, and only in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries did it develop into the

<sup>7</sup> Literature on the rosary is not as extensive as one might expect, and not much has been written on its iconography. When this article was nearing completion, a collection of studies was published, which is an important step in filling this gap: *Der Rosenkranz. Andacht, Geschichte, Kunst*, ed. by Urs-Beat Frei and Fredy Bühler (Bern: Benteli, 2003). This catalogue appeared after an exhibition entitled 'Zeitinseln – Ankerperlen: Geschichten um den Rosenkranz', held in the Museum Bruder Klaus, Sachseln from 25 May–26 October, 2003. It contains the following essays relevant to my subject: Andreas Heinz, 'Die Entstehung des Leben-Jesu-Rosenkranzes', pp. 22–47; Hildegard Elisabeth Keller, 'Rosen-Metamorphosen. Von unfesten Zeichen in spätmittelalterlichen Texten: Heinrich Seuses "Exemplar" und das Mirakel "Marien-Rosenkranz"', pp. 48–67; Thomas Lentz, 'Bildertotale des Heils: Himmlischer Rosenkranz und Gregorsmesse', pp. 68–89; Stefan Jäggi, 'Rosenkranzbruderschaften. Vom Spätmittelalter bis zur Konfessionalisierung', pp. 90–105; David Ganz, 'Ein "Krentzlein" aus Bildern. Der Englische Gruss des Veit Stoss und die Entstehung spätmittelalterlicher Bild-Rosarien', pp. 152–69. The Erzbischöfliches Diözesanmuseum in Cologne also held an exhibition on the occasion of the year of the rosary (see n. 22); sections of the accompanying catalogue can be read on the website of the museum, or see the catalogue itself: *Der heilige Rosenkranz*, Libelli rhenani, Bd. 5 (Cologne: Erzbischöfliche Diözesan- und Dombibliothek, 2003). Earlier, basic references on the rosary are Anne Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997; repr. 1998); *500 Jahre Rosenkranz, 1475 Köln 1975: Kunst und Frömmigkeit im Spätmittelalter und ihr Weiterleben* [exhibition catalogue] (Cologne: Bachem, 1975), esp. the contributions by Karl Joseph Klinkhammer, 'Die Entstehung des Rosenkranzes und seine ursprüngliche Geistigkeit', pp. 30–50, and Gisli Ritz, 'Der Rosenkranz', pp. 51–101. See also Eithne Wilkins, *The Rose-Garden Game: The Symbolic Background to the European Prayer-Beads* (London: Gollancz, 1969); Sixten Ringbom, 'Maria in Sole and the Virgin of the Rosary', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 25 (1962), 326–30; Van den Oudendijk Pieterse, *Dürers Rosenkranzfest*; Augusta von Oertzen, *Maria, die Königin des Rosenkranzes: Eine Ikonographie des Rosenkranzgebetes durch zwei Jahrhunderte deutscher Kunst* (Augsburg: Benno Filserverlag, 1925); J. A. F. Kronenburg, *Maria's heerlijkheid in Nederland. Geschiedkundige schets van de vereering der H. Maagd in ons vaderland, van de eerste tijden tot op onze dagen*, 9 vols (Amsterdam: Bekker, 1904–31), III, pp. 282–381.

format as it is currently known, comprising 150 — three times fifty — repeated *Ave Maria* ('Hail Mary') prayers recounted in groups of ten, each marked by a *Pater Noster* ('Our Father'), to be recited while contemplating one of a sequence of fifteen — three times five — events from the lives of Christ and Mary. By the twelfth century, prayer exercises already consisted of the repetitive recitation of *Pater Nosters* or *Ave Marias* as acts of devotion or penance, or as a substitute for the prayers of the Divine Office. The number of *Aves* or *Pater Nosters* in these exercises varied from several dozen to 1000 or more. Another early method for private devotion was the recitation of the 150 Psalms, each one preceded by its liturgical antiphon. Gradually the Psalms came to be replaced by a repetition of *Pater Nosters* or *Aves* because this was both shorter and simpler, while the antiphons were substituted by concise, often rhymed verses in praise of Mary, such as 'rosa sine spina' ('rose without thorns'), 'hortus conclusus' ('enclosed garden'), 'turris David' ('tower of David'), and 'scala caeli' ('stairway to heaven').<sup>8</sup> Such 'Marian psalters' were, for the sake of convenience, subdivided into three sets of fifty stanzas.<sup>9</sup> In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the *Ave* chains began to be combined with narrative sequences from the life of Christ. Not only were these chronologically-ordered meditations more easily remembered than the short verses (which lacked connection from one to another), but they also helped to focus the devotion more efficiently; moreover, they corresponded to the late medieval desire to re-enact the life and passion of Christ. These new religious exercises, which developed at the same time in both the Latin and the vernacular textual traditions, were practiced alongside the older types of devotions (based on psalter and repetitive models).<sup>10</sup>

In the fifteenth century, several individuals contributed to the further development of those religious exercises and gestures of devotion to the Virgin that combined the oral repetition of *Ave Marias* and *Pater Nosters* with sequential mental meditations on the lives of Christ and Mary. During Advent of 1409 a Carthusian monk named Dominic of Prussia (1384–1460), who lived in the Charterhouse at Trier, wrote a version of the devotion consisting of fifty short sentences (*clausulae*) on the life of Christ, each linked by a relative clause structure to one of a series of fifty *Ave Marias* (that is, '[...] blessed is Jesus, who

<sup>8</sup> Van den Oudendijk Pieterse, *Dürers Rosenkranzfest*, pp. 330–401, cites many sources providing names in honour of Mary.

<sup>9</sup> Obviously in analogy to the much older, tripartite division of the Psalms of David signifying the Trinity. See Heinz, 'Die Entstehung', pp. 28–29, for further references.

<sup>10</sup> Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 13–22; Heinz, 'Die Entstehung', pp. 29–37.

[...]). His prior, Adolf of Essen (between 1370 and 1375–1439), recognizing the importance of the idea, had many copies made and distributed among members of the Carthusian order. Dominic's version became the first text to be widely disseminated.<sup>11</sup> The Dominican Alanus de Rupe (c. 1428–75), who considered the Carthusian version with its fifty *clausulae* to be too short, composed his own Psalter of Our Lady, consisting of 150 *Aves* punctuated by fifteen *Pater Nosters*, accompanied by a wide range of verses and *vita Christi* meditations. He asserted that the Virgin had taught this method to St Dominic (the founder of the Dominican order) and that she had charged him in several visions with preaching it. Through this promotional claim, Alanus de Rupe attributed the invention of the rosary prayer to St Dominic, a legend that lasted well into the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> In the statutes of a confraternity Alanus founded in Douai in around 1468<sup>13</sup> to promote the devotion to lay people, one is recommended to divide the 150 *Aves* into three sections of fifty by meditating on themes of joy and sorrow. Alanus advised several methods including a tripartite scheme meant to contemplate the Incarnation, the Passion, and the Glorification of Christ.<sup>14</sup> These subdivisions fit broader developments to structure the prayer by focusing the attention on coherent, serial meditations, which can also be seen in the writings of Michael Francisci (c. 1435–1502), who advised a joyful-sorrowful-glorious sequence of meditations to the members of a brotherhood founded by the Dominican prior Jakob Sprenger (1435–95) in Cologne on 8 September 1475.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Klinkhammer, 'Die Entstehung des Rosenkranzes', pp. 39–43; Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 22–23; Heinz, 'Die Entstehung', pp. 24–26. Dominic also composed a psalter version with 150 *clausulae*.

<sup>12</sup> Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 6–7, 72–73, 136–37; Heinz, 'Die Entstehung', pp. 38–39. Although the legend was proven to go back to De Rupe in the late nineteenth century by Thomas Esser, it was not until well into the twentieth century that the authorship of St Dominic was generally rejected. For Esser's publications on the subject, and for doubts expressed in earlier scholarship, see Heinz, 'Die Entstehung', p. 23 and n. 5. For a Middle Dutch translation of De Rupe's rosary, see Kronenburg, *Maria's heerlijkheid in Nederland*, III, pp. 504–05.

<sup>13</sup> That is, Alanus introduced the daily praying of the rosary to an existing Dominican confraternity that concentrated its devotion on the Virgin, in the period between 1464 and the approval of the brotherhood by the Dominican order on 16 May 1470 (as explained by Jäggi, 'Rosenkranzbruderschaften', p. 92; see also Heinz, 'Die Entstehung', p. 38).

<sup>14</sup> Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 66–67; Heinz, 'Die Entstehung', pp. 38–39.

<sup>15</sup> Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 26, 67–68; Heinz, 'Die Entstehung', p. 39.

The foundation of Sprenger's confraternity, on which festive occasion the Emperor Frederick III and many other dignitaries were present,<sup>16</sup> was another key factor in the popularization of the rosary prayer. Stimulated by the activities and thoughts of Alanus de Rupe, the new confraternity had very open regulations. One could join without vows or obligations and without paying a fee; nor were there rules on how the devotion should be recited. Members were allowed to choose the version they preferred; they could say it when and where they wished and still share in the benefits of the confraternity.<sup>17</sup> By entering into a community whose aim was to pray for its members, people were assured of protection through their collective supplications. More importantly, this advantage extended after their death, when they would be dependent on others to reduce their time in purgatory. Several popes granted indulgences for saying the rosary, among them Pope Sixtus IV, who declared in 1476 that these indulgences also extended to souls languishing in purgatory. This meant that deceased family members and friends could be enrolled in the brotherhood and prayers said on their behalf.<sup>18</sup>

The rosary confraternity rapidly expanded and chapters of the brotherhood were founded in Germany, Brabant, Flanders, Portugal, Spain, and Italy. Membership numbers increased to at least 100,000 in 1482, and continued to grow. Owing to its simple regulations, it was relatively easy for women and for people from the lower classes to join the brotherhood. A wealth of texts relating to the confraternity, its rewards, and descriptions of how to say the devotional exercises appeared in manuscripts and prints between 1475 and 1550. In these books and broadsheets one can read that, beyond the benefits to be expected after death, members of the brotherhood were promised Mary's protection in their temporal life. By saying the rosary, a votary might dissuade God from sending punishments onto the earth. As the Dominican order continued as an active promulgator of the rosary devotion, members were said to be sharing in

<sup>16</sup> According to the story told by Aegidius Gelenius, *De Admiranda, Sacra et Civili Magnitudine Coloniae...* (Cologne: Kalckhoven, 1645), p. 464 onwards, with a German translation in *500 Jahre Rosenkranz*, pp. 102–08 (p. 106). See further Hatto Küffner, 'Zur Kölner Rosenkranzbruderschaft', in *500 Jahre Rosenkranz*, pp. 109–17, esp. pp. 109–10; Heinz, 'Die Entstehung', p. 39; Jäggi, 'Rosenkranzbruderschaften', p. 92; Siegfried Schmidt, 'Die Entstehung der Kölner Rosenkranzbruderschaft von 1475', in *Der heilige Rosenkranz* [internet version at <http://dombibliothek-koeln.de>].

<sup>17</sup> Küffner, 'Zur Kölner Rosenkranzbruderschaft', pp. 114–15; Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 24–25; Jäggi, 'Rosenkranzbruderschaften', pp. 92–93.

<sup>18</sup> Winston-Allen, *Stories*, p. 122; Jäggi, 'Rosenkranzbruderschaften', p. 93.

the religious services that were held in all Dominican cloisters, in addition to participating in the collective prayer of all lay members of the brotherhood.<sup>19</sup>

Methods of saying the devotion remained flexible. There were versions with twelve, fifty, sixty-three, 150, and other numbers of meditations.<sup>20</sup> Many of the devotional books that appeared in print contain at least two or three rosaries of various kinds, including rosaries concentrating on the wounds of Christ, on His or on Mary's limbs, on the virtues, on saints, or on other similar topics.<sup>21</sup> Rather than prescribing a standard manner to say the prayer, the manuals of the rosary confraternity offered a variety of methods from which to choose. Only in 1569 did a papal proclamation make one version official: a version consisting of 150 *Aves* marked by fifteen *Pater Nosters* and fifteen meditations, which were divided into three sets of fifty *Aves*, with five joyful, five sorrowful, and five glorious mysteries for meditation attached to the decades.<sup>22</sup>

As early as the thirteenth century the chains of repeated *Ave Marias* and *Pater Nosters* were called 'chaplets' or 'coronas', as were the beads used for keeping

<sup>19</sup> Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 111, 117–21; Jäggi, 'Rosenkranzbruderschaften', pp. 93–94; Roberto Rusconi, 'Pratica culturale ed istruzione religiosa nelle confraternite italiane del tardo medio evo: "libri da compagnia" e libri di pietà', in *Le mouvement confraternel au Moyen Âge: France, Italie, Suisse; Lausanne 9–11 mai 1985: Actes de la table ronde organisée par l'Université de Lausanne avec le concours de l'École française de Rome et de l'Unité associée 1011 du CNRS "L'institution ecclésiastique à la fin du Moyen Âge"*, Collection de l'École française de Rome 97/Université de Lausanne, Publications de la Faculté des lettres, 30 (Rome: École française de Rome, 1987), pp. 133–53, esp. pp. 143–46.

<sup>20</sup> The Birgittine rosary, for example, consisted of the Credo, three *Ave Marias*, and six decades of *Aves*, each introduced by a *Pater Noster*, making a total of seven *Pater Nosters* and sixty-three *Aves*, which reflected the supposed number of the Virgin's years of life. See Van den Oudendijk Pieterse, *Dürers Rosenkranzfest*, p. 170. For other types of rosaries see also Kronenburg, *Maria's heerlijkheid in Nederland*, III, pp. 377–81, who mentions that in the sixteenth century the Franciscans introduced a version with seventy-two *Aves* on the assumption that Mary reached the age of seventy-two instead of sixty-three.

<sup>21</sup> Compare the contents of the manuscript discussed by Hanneke van Asperen in this volume.

<sup>22</sup> Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 25–26; Heinz, 'Die Entstehung', p. 40. The Credo and the Gloria only became part of the rosary prayer in the sixteenth century (Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 2–3). The Brotherhood of the Rosary still exists; members can subscribe through the internet. In 2002 the prayer was re-shaped, when Pope John Paul II recommended a fourth set of 'luminous meditations', focusing on the public life of Christ, be inserted between the joyful and the sorrowful meditations (Heinz, 'Die Entstehung', p. 42).



track of the prayers.<sup>23</sup> From at least the fourteenth century onwards, devotions to the Virgin Mary were called 'rosaries' or 'garlands of roses'.<sup>24</sup> The symbolism of the rose in connection to the Virgin extends back to patristic times, and the rose imagery itself predates Christianity. The primary source for the image of Mary as a rose, and as a rose garden that bore Christ, is the Old Testament Song of Songs. The enclosed garden ('hortus conclusus') became the symbol of Mary's virginity, the mother's womb from which the Christ-child sprang. The rose thus also refers to Christ and the Incarnation (especially the white rose); and (red) roses furthermore represent the wounds that Christ suffered during His Passion. In devotional garden allegories, the garden became the soul, from which were picked spiritual flowers to offer to the Virgin. The *Ave Marias* were compared to roses through the identification of the rose with Christ and Christ with the Word.<sup>25</sup> The rosary prayers in printed devotional books were indicated with words such as 'wreath', 'garland', 'crown', or 'chaplet of roses', names that appear to have been used interchangeably depending on the context. The second rosary included in a devotional book can be presented as the crown to the first, which consisted of a wreath of a thousand roses.<sup>26</sup>

The earliest mention of the transformation of *Aves* into roses is in a famous story of how the rosary came into being, dating back to the second half of the thirteenth century. A pious man was used to making each day a chaplet of flowers, which he placed on the head of an image of the Virgin. Later, after becoming a lay brother, he became disappointed because his tasks no longer left him enough time to make Mary a chaplet. He then began to recite fifty *Ave Marias* each day in place of wreathing fresh flowers, on the advice of an elder monk who assured him that Mary would prefer this to all the rose chaplets he

<sup>23</sup> Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 14–15, 101–03.

<sup>24</sup> Van den Oudendijk Pieterse, *Dürers Rosenkranzfest*, p. 378; Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 101–03.

<sup>25</sup> Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 81–99; Reindert Falkenburg, *The Fruit of Devotion: Mysticism and the Imagery of Love in Flemish Paintings of the Virgin and Child, 1450–1550*, trans. by Sammy Herman (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1994); *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, ed. by E. Kirschbaum and others, 8 vols (Freiburg: Herder, 1970, repr. 1994), III, cc. 563–68; Wilkins, *The Rose-Garden Game*, pp. 105–25. Winston-Allen, Falkenburg, and Van den Oudendijk Pieterse (*Dürers Rosenkranzfest*, pp. 330–401), have written extensively on the Song of Songs and the rose symbolism surrounding the Virgin Mary (they include sources and further references). See also Ann W. Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>26</sup> See Van den Oudendijk Pieterse, *Dürers Rosenkranzfest*, p. 234.

had made previously. One day, when he stopped in a forest to say his *Aves* on his knees, thieves approached to rob him. They desisted, however, when they saw a beautiful maiden standing beside him, who took roses from his mouth and added these to a chaplet she was making. (The description indicates that she bound the flowers onto a hoop.)<sup>27</sup> Once the chaplet was complete, she placed it on her head and ascended to heaven. Only when the robbers asked the brother to explain the maiden's identity did he himself understand that the Virgin had come down to accept the spiritual rose chaplet made out of his repeated *Aves*. The explanation reduced the thieves to tears; they were converted and became monks. The brother also began to instruct other good people in the practice of weaving Mary's chaplet.<sup>28</sup>

The pious lay brother had constructed a spiritual gift to the Virgin out of words. Praying the rosary yielded a present to please and glorify Mary and to ask for her intercession. Marian miracle stories describe praying the *Ave*-psalter as 'making dresses' for the Virgin. However, they also make clear that merely reciting the prayers repeatedly is not enough; it is the intention of the prayer that matters. In another Marian legend, three monks made mantles for the Virgin. After a year of fiery prayers, Mary acknowledged the first monk for the wonderful mantle she wore by kissing him on his mouth. The second mantle was not as splendid as the first, but still beautiful. The third monk, however, through his inattentive prayers, had made the Virgin look like a beggar. The unabashed Virgin nonetheless thanked him that she was at least somewhat protected against the cold. Of course, like the three devout sisters described earlier, the monks had learned their lessons so that the following year, when Our Lady 'the sweet rose' returned, she kissed all three for their intense prayers, and allowed them a place in heaven.<sup>29</sup>

These exempla show that the chains of *Ave Marias* may lead to inattentive prayer, and consequently, unsuitable garments. The serial meditations helped to overcome this problem. A second and possibly more important tool for focusing the attention was the use of images. Many printed books instructing members

<sup>27</sup> Such hoops could be made of metal, bast, leather, hemp, and the like: Wilkins, *The Rose-Garden Game*, pp. 169–72.

<sup>28</sup> Keller, 'Rosen-Metamorphosen', pp. 61–63; Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 101–03.

<sup>29</sup> De Voors, *Middel nederlandse Marialegenden*, 1, pp. 220–23, miracle no. CVI; The Hague, Sint-Aloysiuscollege, MS Katwijk 4, fols 106<sup>v</sup>–108<sup>r</sup> (burned in 1945), for which, see <<http://www.bnm.leidenuniv.nl>>, choose the 'handschriftsignatuur' option and type 'Katwijk'; Van den Oudendijk Pieterse, *Dürers Rosenkranzfest*, pp. 555–56.



of the rosary confraternity on how to pray the devotion contained helpful illustrations for meditation; moreover, broadsheets with images and instructions appeared in large quantities. Rosary prayers were also included in manuscripts, but were rarely illustrated when they appeared among the accessory texts in books of hours.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, the miniature in the Van Hooff Prayer book (Figure 16a) provides a useful starting point for understanding the iconography of the rosary.

The small red beads represent the recitation of decades of *Ave Marias*. The fifteen — three times five — roundels stand for the *Pater Noster* beads, and they indicate the theme for contemplation during the next series of ten *Aves*. If one were to 'pray the miniature' one would begin in the inner circle, with consideration of the five joyful mysteries. The sequence should be read clockwise, starting with the *Annunciation* at the top. The image is not as helpful for counting the accompanying decade of *Ave Marias*, since the illuminator painted different numbers of beads as they fit in the leftover space between the roundels. The second theme for contemplation is the *Visitation*, which was then followed by another ten *Aves*, the *Nativity*, ten *Aves*, the *Presentation in the Temple*, ten *Aves*, the *Finding of the Twelve-Year Old Child Jesus in the Temple*, and the final decade of *Aves*. The second, woeful set recounts the Passion of Christ. It runs from the *Agony in the Garden* (top right), through the *Flagellation*, the *Crowning With Thorns* and *Christ Carrying the Cross*, to the *Crucifixion*. The five final, glorious mysteries are the *Resurrection of Christ* (the large roundel on top), His *Ascension*, the *Descent of the Holy Spirit*, the *Death of the Virgin*, and the *Last Judgment*.<sup>31</sup> The outermost chain, depicted as if lying over the framing border, suggests that the miniature is intended to represent actual strings of

<sup>30</sup> The decorative programme of Ghent-Bruges books of hours usually does not provide for illustrations at all of the accessory texts. The *rosaria* illuminated by Simon Bening do not contain any illustrations that incorporate all of the meditations into one image (as in the Van Hooff Prayer book); see Judith Testa, *The Beatty Rosarium: A Manuscript with Paintings by Simon Bening*, Studies and Facsimiles of Netherlandish Illuminated Manuscripts, 1 (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1986), pp. 17–22; *Illuminating the Renaissance*, ed. by Kren and McKendrick, pp. 455–56, 478–80 (nos 144, 156).

<sup>31</sup> As I have mentioned, the themes for contemplation had not yet been standardized. Around 1500, the final *Last Judgment* gradually became to be replaced by the *Coronation of the Virgin*, which stressed the eternal glory of heavenly paradise where Mary was received, and where the supplicant would hope to join her. See Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 54–60.

beads. Thus, the image itself is entirely sufficient to recite a full Psalter of Our Lady; it is an instrument for pictorial prayer.<sup>32</sup>

The written form of the prayer starts on the opposite page (Figure 16b). In the rubric it is announced as 'Dit is een suverlic gebet van maria ende is geheeten den rosenkrans' ('This is a pure prayer to Mary called the rosary'). The large decorated initial *D* introduces the first of a series of fifty meditations. Each of the repetitive *Ave Marias* precedes a sentence describing an event from the lives of Mary and Christ. The *Ave* salutation only comprised the first half of prayer as it is known today: 'Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus'.<sup>33</sup> The individuated meditations complete the salutation with a relative clause, for example, 'who on your [that is, Mary's] kind request transformed water into wine on the wedding [at Cana]', or 'who during the Last Supper consecrated and instituted the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood'.<sup>34</sup> Despite the fact that a *Pater Noster* punctuates every decade of *Aves*, the meditations do not fall into five separate sections. The sequence runs chronologically from the Annunciation, through the Birth and Childhood of Christ, His Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, to Pentecost, the Coronation of Mary, and the Final Judgment. The text in the Van Hooft Prayer book probably represents a Flemish translation of a rosary text similar to the one written by the Carthusian Dominic of Prussia.<sup>35</sup> Two prayers to the Queen of Heaven complete the sequence in the Van Hooft Prayer book and emphasize its devotional intention by pleading, 'Oh, queen of the heavens, mercifully accept this garland, which I, poor sinful soul, on bended

<sup>32</sup> This term was used by Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 75.

<sup>33</sup> The text is composed of the Angel Gabriel's salutation to Mary (Luke 1. 28) and the greeting of Elisabeth (Luke 1. 42), with the addition of the name of Jesus. See Van den Oudendijk Pieterse, *Dürers Rosenkranzfest*, pp. 163–65; Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 2, 13–14; Heinz, 'Die Entstehung', p. 41.

<sup>34</sup> Amsterdam, Bibliotheek van de Vrije Universiteit, MS XV.05502.-, fols 58<sup>v</sup>–59<sup>r</sup>: 'Die na dijnre milder begerten water in wijn verwandelde tot ter bruylocht'; fols 59<sup>r</sup>–59<sup>v</sup>: 'Die in sinen lesten avontmael consacraerde ende in sette dat heilige sacrament. sijn lichaems ende bloets. Amen'.

<sup>35</sup> Compare the Latin rosaries transcribed by Klinkhammer, 'Die Entstehung des Rosenkranzes', pp. 198–201, 203–05, 209–10. See also Kronenburg, *Maria's heerlijkheid in Nederland*, III, pp. 351–52.

knees [and] with humble heart, long to place on your pure, virgin head. Praying with urgency that it is agreeable to your highness'.<sup>36</sup>

Clearly the text of the Van Hooff Prayer book is not the same rosary prayer as the one in the miniature. The discrepancy indicates that the devotion still existed in multiple versions.<sup>37</sup> Stating that word and image in the Van Hooff Prayer book do not match would do no justice to the combination; rather, the book contains two possibilities for praying the rosary: either the fifty narrative (textual) meditations, or a full chaplet of 150 *Aves* with fifteen (pictorial) mysteries. The closely related composition in a book of hours painted by the same illuminator (Cornelia van Wulfschkercke, who is discussed further below) confirms this interpretation. In that book an almost identical rosary miniature accompanies the incipit of a section with prayers to the Virgin (Plate 3).<sup>38</sup> The image faces the *Salve regina*, followed by a complementary Marian prayer, still on the same *recto folio*.<sup>39</sup> This means that the rosary miniature is self-sufficient; there is no rosary at all in written form. Since the imagery of the rosary interacted and competed with the written versions (as Winston-Allen puts it),<sup>40</sup> this should not come as a surprise. One of the most popular German rosary books also included a picture rosary without words, alongside at least seven written versions.<sup>41</sup>

The composition of both miniatures appears to be unique in Ghent-Bruges miniature painting. Among the illustrations in printed books, the single-sheet woodcuts and the broadsheets that were published in the last quarter of the

<sup>36</sup> Amsterdam, Bibliotheek van de Vrije Universiteit, MS XV.05502.-, fol. 63<sup>v</sup>: 'O hemelsche coninginne, ontfact goedertierlic dit cransken dat ic, arme sondige mensche, begere, met gebuechden knien mijns herten oetmoedeliken, op dijn ioffrouwelijcke geschierde hoot te setten. Biddende nerstelijc dattet ontfanckelijc si dijnre hoger maiesteit'.

<sup>37</sup> For a version of the rosary that is known almost exclusively from the visual tradition: Lenten, 'Bildertotale des Heils', pp. 68–89.

<sup>38</sup> London, Sotheby's, 17 November 1999, Lot 3, fol. 82<sup>v</sup>. Formerly London, Sotheby's, 3 April 1939, Lot 39; present whereabouts unknown.

<sup>39</sup> London, Sotheby's, 17 November 1999, Lot 3, fol. 83<sup>v</sup>: 'Omnipotens sempiterna deus qui gloriose virginis [...]'. These prayers (fols 82–83) are inserted between Compline of the Hours of the Virgin and the Advent Office, which is unusual. The rosary illustration does complement the *Salve regina* prayer in that both strongly address the Virgin as intercessor.

<sup>40</sup> Winston-Allen, *Stories*, p. 64.

<sup>41</sup> *Unser lieben frauen Psalter* ('Our Lady's Psalter'), published in Ulm by Conrad Dinckmut, went through at least eight editions between 1483 and 1503. See Winston-Allen, *Stories*, p. 33.

fifteenth and the early sixteenth century, a specific model for the two miniatures could not be traced.<sup>42</sup> Since picture texts often contain several illustrations, it was unnecessary to include all of the mysteries within one image as in the Van Hooff Prayer book. Instead, one finds series of fifteen individual images of the mysteries of the rosary, or three groupings of five roundels on separate sheets. Most of the early rosary texts printed in the Netherlands are provided with the non-narrative image of a heart within a crown of thorns, which is surrounded by a rosary chain with the Five Wounds of Christ (Figure 17).<sup>43</sup> His wounded hands, feet, and side are represented on large flowers, mostly roses, that function



Figure 17. Rosary with the Five Wounds of Christ, in Dirk Coelde van Munster, *Kerstenspiegel*, printed in Delft by Jacob Jacobszoon van der Meer or Christiaen Snellaert [between 1 March 1487 and 10 August 1491], The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Inc. 150 E 16, fol. 14<sup>v</sup>.

as *Pater Noster* beads. Among these flowers a carnation — referring to both the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ — is often included, alongside other

<sup>42</sup> See *Dutch Royal Library Disc: A Videodisc Production by Qbit Interactive Media, Utrecht and the Royal Library, The Hague and Pica, The Hague – The Netherlands* (S.l.: s.n., s.d. [1987]), which contains 75% of the images in illustrated incunables printed in the Netherlands. See also W. L. Schreiber, *Manuel de l'amateur de la gravure sur bois et sur métal au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 8 vols (Berlin: Librairie Albert Cohn, 1891–1911), 1; P. Heitz, *Pestblätter des XV. Jahrhunderts* (Strassburg: Heitz, 1901); F. W. H. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, ca. 1450–1700, Volume 12: Masters and Monogrammists of the 15th century* (Amsterdam: Hertzberger, 1955); relevant volumes of *The Illustrated Bartsch*, ed. by W. L. Strauss and J. T. Spike (New York: Abaris Books: 1978–); Max Geisberg, *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut: 1500–1550*, rev. and ed. by Walter L. Strauss, 4 vols (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1974); Arthur M. Hind, *Early Italian Engraving: A Critical Catalogue with Complete Reproduction of All the Prints*, 7 vols (London: Quaritch, 1938–48). I would like to thank Dr Claudine A. Chavannes-Mazel for referring me to the Bartsch volumes.

<sup>43</sup> As shown in the *Dutch Royal Library Disc*. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Inc. 150 E 16, fol. 14<sup>v</sup>.

species which should be interpreted allegorically. Several rosary manuals advise contemplation of the wounds of Christ and the woes of Mary whilst praying the *Pater Nosters*.<sup>44</sup> In the corners of the illustration are clouds and sun-rays, and — in the upper corners — hands pointing to the rosary in the middle.<sup>45</sup> These corner pieces are reminiscent of German broadsheets that include four half-length Dominican saints on clouds, who recommend the devotion. This motif appears on a coloured woodcut now in Washington (Figure 18).<sup>46</sup> The saints are, in clockwise order, St Vincent Ferrer, St Catherine of Siena, St Peter of Milan, and St Thomas Aquinas. Within a rosary made out of rose flowers, Mary is represented as the *Advocatrix* of mankind. She receives rosaries from a gathering of popes, St Dominic, and St Francis, on whose behalf she is urging God to relieve the sorrows of the world.

Despite the absence of a direct link to other rosary images, the iconography of the two Bruges miniatures proves to be embedded within the tradition of the illustration of the rosary. Several thematic connections can be established with elements of the multiple, slightly different versions of the illustrations appearing in incunables as well as in other media. The particular image of Mary included at the centre of the three concentric strings of beads is Our Lady in the Sun (the Virgin in Glory), one of the favoured Madonna types in the context of the rosary. The Virgin appears in radiant golden sun-rays, standing on the crescent moon, and holding the Christ-child in her arms. The motif incorporates elements of the apocalyptic woman from the Revelation of St John, who appeared in the sky clothed with the sun ('mulier amicta sole'), the moon under her feet, and wearing a crown with twelve stars (Revelation 12. 1). To indicate that she travailed and gave birth to a son (as described in Revelation 12. 2; 5), the apocalyptic woman was sometimes represented bearing a child. Until the

<sup>44</sup> Maurits Smeyers, 'Het Marianum of Onze-Lieve-Vrouw in de zon: Getuige van een laat-middeleeuwse devotie in de Nederlanden en in Duitsland', in *Beelden in de late middeleeuwen en renaissance/Late Gothic and Renaissance Sculpture in the Netherlands*, ed. by Reindert Falkenburg and others, Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek, 45 (Zwolle: Waanders, 1994), pp. 271–99.

<sup>45</sup> In several illustrations, the corner pieces are either partly visible, or reduced to the upper two, while omitting the ones below the rosary.

<sup>46</sup> Washington, National Gallery of Art, inv. no. 1943.3.553. See *Fifteenth Century Woodcuts and Metalcuts from the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.* [exhibition catalogue], ed. by Richard S. Field (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1959), no. 157; *500 Jahre Rosenkranz*, pp. 144–45, no. A 49, fig. 3 (incorrectly described as being in the collection of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg).



Figure 18. The Virgin in a Rosary, coloured woodcut, Washington, National Gallery of Art, inv. no. 1943.3.553. Germany?, c. 1500.

fourteenth century, she was mainly interpreted as the Church both in heaven and on earth; thereafter she could also signify Mary or the combined notion of Mary–Ecclesia. This identification of the apocalyptic woman with Mary led to the image of Our Lady in the Sun, that is, a representation of Mary with the

attributes of the apocalyptic woman, used independently, without illustrating the text of the Apocalypse. The image is a glorification of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven. The Mother of God is raised above all of the earth, clad in heavenly light, in sun-rays that refer to Christ being the 'sol iustitiae' and the 'sol invictus'. She becomes the Bride of the Song of Songs, 'pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol' (Cant. 6), the Bride of Christ who Himself is the sun or the eternal light.<sup>47</sup> The radiant garments woven by the three sisters may therefore be interpreted as imaginations of the Virgin in Glory.

The representation of Our Lady in the Sun is not to be confused with that of the Virgin Immaculate, even if both images are virtually identical. In numerous rubrics in prayer books, Sixtus IV, the same pope who had granted generous spiritual rewards to the rosary devotion, is said to have bestowed an indulgence of 11,000 years for saying the prayer *Ave sanctissima* before an image of Our Lady in the Sun. Pope Sixtus IV, and with him the Franciscan order to which he belonged, strongly favoured the controversial doctrine that Mary was exempt from Original Sin upon conception. The Dominicans, on the contrary, held the view that Mary was sanctified from sin in her mother's womb.<sup>48</sup> The *Ave sanctissima* prayer exists in different readings, in which either the immaculist belief is stressed, or the conception is phrased in more general words.<sup>49</sup> The Immaculate Virgin is represented with joined hands, floating above the earth, but developed into Our Lady in the Sun through the characteristics of the apocalyptic woman.<sup>50</sup> Although the Immaculata iconography asked for a representation without Jesus, the iconography of the Madonna-with-a-child was apparently so prevalent that many illustrations of the *Ave sanctissima* prayer do contain the Christ-child. Angels convey the glorification of the Virgin as they make music while wearing the symbolic attributes of her purity, or they crown

<sup>47</sup> Gertrud Schiller, *Ikongraphie der christlichen Kunst*, 5 vols (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1966–91), IV, Part 1, pp. 77–84; IV, Part 2, pp. 192–93, 198–99; further *Lexikon*, ed. by Kirschbaum and others, II, cc. 142–49, esp. c. 145; III, cc. 95–99; IV, cc. 175–80. See also Smeyers, 'Het Marianum', p. 282, which includes the related iconographic themes of the Madonna on the Crescent and the Assumption of the Virgin.

<sup>48</sup> For the theological discussions on the question, see Mirella Levi d'Ancona, *The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance* (New York: CAA and Art Bulletin, 1957), pp. 5–13; Schiller, *Ikongraphie*, IV, Part 2, pp. 154–57.

<sup>49</sup> For the text of the prayer and its different versions see Ringbom, 'Maria in Sole', p. 326.

<sup>50</sup> See *Lexikon*, ed. by Kirschbaum and others, II, cc. 340–41; Levi d'Ancona, *The Iconography*, pp. 24–26. Many images contain representations of biblical allusions to Mary's purity from the Song of Songs ('Tota pulchra'); see Levi d'Ancona, *The Iconography*, pp. 65–67.



Mary as Queen of Heaven.<sup>51</sup> The prayer and its image do not only appear on block-prints, but also in (Ghent-Bruges) prayer books and among the accessory texts in books of hours. The image furthermore occurs in the music manuscripts made for the Burgundian-Habsburg court, illustrating Pierre de la Rue's mass for the feast of the Immaculate Conception (the *Missa Ave sanctissima Maria*), which was one of the most frequently copied masses in these manuscripts.<sup>52</sup>

Although the image of Our Lady in the Sun itself became strongly associated with the *Ave sanctissima* prayer, the motif was equally important in the context of the rosary. The Virgin is the Queen of Heaven, whom the worshipper — through praying the rosary — wants to clothe with roses, jewels, and finery. When Our Lady in the Sun was intended to represent Our Lady of the Rosary, she appears surrounded by a rosary string, composed of either prayer beads or roses, and usually divided into five groups of ten *Ave Marias* with alternating *Pater Nosters*.<sup>53</sup> One example showing the conflation of both themes is a woodblock now in Berlin (Figure 19).<sup>54</sup> The Queen of Heaven appears in full glory, enframed in a rosary, while the text of the *Ave sanctissima* prayer is printed below, in Latin as well as in a German translation. Both the rosary and the *Ave*

<sup>51</sup> Levi d'Ancona, *The Iconography*, pp. 28–32; see also *Lexikon*, ed. by Kirschbaum and others, II, c. 341. The composition resembles that of the Ascension of Mary.

<sup>52</sup> Bonnie J. Blackburn, 'Messages in Miniature: Pictorial Programme and Theological Implications in the Alamire Choirbooks', in *The Burgundian-Habsburg Court Complex of Music Manuscripts (1500–1535) and the Workshop of Petrus Alamire, Colloquium Proceedings Leuven, 25–28 November 1999*, ed. by Bruno Bouckaert and Eugene Schreurs, Yearbook of the Alamire Foundation, 5 (Leuven: Alamire Foundation, 2003), pp. 161–83, esp. pp. 171–73.

<sup>53</sup> Compare *The Illustrated Bartsch: Volume 9: Early German Artists: Israhel van Meckenem, Wenzel von Olmütz and Monogrammists*, ed. by Fritz Koreny and Jane C. Hutchinson (New York: Abaris Books, 1981), p. 221, no. 48 [L. 199]; *The Illustrated Bartsch: Volume 83: German Book Illustration before 1500 (Part IV: Anonymous Artists 1481–1482)*, ed. by Walter L. Strauss and Carol Schuler (New York: Abaris Books, 1982), no. 1482/137; *The Illustrated Bartsch: Volume 164 (Supplement): German Single-Leaf Woodcuts before 1500 (Anonymous Artists: 997–1383)*, ed. by Richard S. Field (New York: Abaris Books, 1992), nos 1087, 1090–91, 1107, 1109–3, 1129–1, 1130–1, 1130–2, 1132, 1136–1. See also The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Inc. 150 E 11, fol. f6<sup>r</sup>, and London, British Library, Add. MS 14042, fol. 6<sup>v</sup> (illustrated in Van Asperen's article).

<sup>54</sup> Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen, Schreiber, *Manuel*, no. 1107 (woodblock). See *The Illustrated Bartsch: Volume 164 (Supplement)*, ed. by Field, no. 1107; Rudolph Z. Becker, *Holzschnitte alter deutscher Meister in den Originalplatten gesammelt von Hans Albrecht von Derschau; Als ein Beytrag zur Kunstgeschichte herausgegeben und mit einer Abhandlung über die Holzschneidekunst und deren Schicksale begleitet*, 3 vols (Gotha: Becker, 1808–16), III, no. A31.





Figure 19. The Madonna and Child in a Glory, impression from a woodblock, Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen, Schreiber, *Manuel*, no. 1107. Germany?, fifteenth century.

sanctissima prayers were connected with Pope Sixtus IV and with munificent indulgences.<sup>55</sup> The possibility of a dual significance incorporated in this and many other representations may have allowed their owners to perform several devotions and gain their spiritual rewards with one image.<sup>56</sup>

Another representation of the Virgin that occurs frequently within the context of the rosary is the Virgin of Mercy or 'Schutzmantel-Madonna', that is Mary — without the Christ-child — who protects people under her wide cloak.<sup>57</sup> This reminds one of the exempla: the Virgin Mary has dressed up in the mantle that is woven through the rosary prayer, and moreover, this mantle functions in obtaining protection and asking for Mary's intercession. The idea of mantle-coverage goes back to the archaic notion that the power of prominent figures entered into their clothes. Mary's mantle, in this context, offers a shelter to ward off the thorn of God.<sup>58</sup> The rosaries that encircle the Virgin of Mercy are often chains including the Five Wounds like the ones discussed above, but the *Pater Noster* beads may also take the form of narrative roundels (as in the miniatures), or large roses, or beads of a different colour or size. The *Ave* beads are frequently represented as roses, so that they display the transformation of the prayer into a wreath in honour of Mary. At the same time, praying the *Ave Marias* yielded the fabrics, the threads, and the decorations to manufacture the Virgin a mantle.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Ringbom, 'Maria in Sole', p. 329. Levi d'Ancona, *The Iconography*, stressed the frequent blending of related iconographical themes as well, and this will be further demonstrated below.

<sup>56</sup> As argued by Ringbom, 'Maria in Sole', pp. 329–30. The little triptych *Our Lady of the Rosary*, in the London National Gallery (inv. no. NG3066), on which Ringbom focused his research, however, does not substantiate his conclusions, as recent scholarship has established that the shutters bearing the *Ave sanctissima* prayer, although contemporary, were added to the centre panel only in the nineteenth century. The painting is nowadays attributed to a follower of Hugo van der Goes. See Lorne Campbell, *The Fifteenth Century Netherlandish Schools* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1998), pp. 240–47.

<sup>57</sup> Schiller, *Ikongraphie*, IV, Part 2, pp. 195–98; see also *Lexikon*, ed. by Kirschbaum and others, IV, cc. 128–33. On the occasion of the foundation of the Cologne brotherhood, a painted altarpiece of the Virgin of Mercy was festively consecrated in the Dominican church; see the German translation of Gelenius, *De Admiranda*, in *500 Jahre Rosenkranz*, p. 107.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Lentjes, 'Die Gewänder der Heiligen: Ein Diskussionsbeitrag zum Verhältnis von Gebet, Bild und Imagination', in *Hagiographie und Kunst: Der Heiligenkult in Schrift, Bild und Architektur*, ed. by Gottfried Kerscher (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1993), pp. 120–51, esp. pp. 136–37.

<sup>59</sup> Lentjes, 'Die Gewänder', pp. 139–40.

The general compositional scheme of all these rosary images consists of a Madonna, either Our Lady in the Sun or the Virgin of Mercy,<sup>60</sup> enclosed in a string that may or may not have narrative *Pater Noster* beads. The composition of the Bruges miniatures belongs to that tradition. It deviates from it in that the roundels dominate the composition, while generally the image of Our Lady takes up the larger part of the picture. Furthermore, the three concentric strings of beads are unusual, as is the group of figures above these, which can be identified as the *Scala salutis*.

The iconographic formula of the metaphorical *Scala salutis* ('Stairway to Salvation') indicates a representation of Christ and Mary speaking to God the Father on behalf of mankind (Figure 20).<sup>61</sup> The Virgin shows her uncovered



Figure 20. The *Scala salutis*, coloured woodcut, Nürnberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, inv. no. H. 69. Germany, c. 1460–70.

breast to her son, while Christ as the Man of Sorrows, kneeling on the cross, displays His wounds to the Father. The Mother of God implores Jesus, whom

<sup>60</sup> A third type is the *Mater amabilis*, who is also often depicted on the crescent moon. More extensively on the Madonna-types and other representations included in rosary strings: Van den Oudendijk Pieterse, *Dürers Rosenkranzfest*, catalogue part.

<sup>61</sup> Nürnberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, inv. no. H. 69. See Schreiber, *Manuel*, no. 751; Heitz, *Pestblätter des XV. Jahrhunderts*, plate 3.

she nursed, and He, who cannot refuse His Mother anything, passes on this plea, while stressing His sufferings. Their joined appeal should move the Father to protect humanity from the great plagues of war, famine, and pestilence, which are represented by the three arrows that God holds in his hand.<sup>62</sup> In the woodcut shown in Figure 20, the mediating role of the pleading Virgin is further stressed because she is at the same time represented as Our Lady of Mercy. The association with the Virgin of Mercy and the angered Father holding arrows already appeared in the woodcut now in Washington (Figure 18), in which the arrows are labeled 'pestilenz' ('plague' — leading to sudden death), 'Teuerung' ('high prices' — that is, hunger), and 'kryeg' ('war'). 'Pestblätter' ('plague sheets') like these, with or without the text of an accompanying prayer, should help their owner to ward off evil, as Mary's clothing was thought to break God's arrows.<sup>63</sup> Prints containing prayers against pestilence, and promising indulgences, circulated widely. As noted earlier, the intermediary role of Mary in obtaining mercy for supplicants (and Christianity as a whole) is also central to the devotion of the rosary. One of the mystic names that appeared in the series of greetings to the Virgin is 'scala caeli'.<sup>64</sup> The *Scala salutis* encouraged people to pray the rosary for salvation from pestilence. Rosary manuals asserted that the prayer helped to avert all plagues.<sup>65</sup>

In the miniatures one sees a slightly different version of the *Scala salutis*, in which the Father, urged by the Man of Sorrows and the nursing Mother of God and accompanied by angels carrying rosaries, is blessing the earth from heaven. The Father shoots no arrows. This deviation from the normal *Scala salutis* scheme becomes clear through comparison with another woodcut that features a conflation of themes in abbreviated form (Figure 21). In this illustration, in a Leuven rosary booklet, Our Lady in the Sun appears crowned with a tripartite chaplet of roses that was presumably made for her by the male and female

<sup>62</sup> Peter Dinzelbacher, 'Die tötende Gottheit: Pestbild und Todesikonographie als Ausdruck der Mentalität des Spätmittelalters und der Renaissance', in *Zeit, Tod und Ewigkeit in der Renaissance Literatur: Band 2*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 117 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1986), pp. 5–138, esp. pp. 26–28, 32–36; *Lexikon*, ed. by Kirschbaum and others, II, cc. 346–52, esp. 351–52.

<sup>63</sup> Dinzelbacher, 'Die tötende Gottheit', pp. 36–38, 84–101; Lentjes, 'Die Gewänder', p. 136.

<sup>64</sup> Van den Oudendijk Pieterse, *Dürers Rosenkranzfest*, p. 515. The related concept of the Stairway to Heaven appears illustrated in the *Scala coeli* by Johannes Gobius (Strasbourg: Jacob Ebner, 1482); *The Illustrated Bartsch: Volume 83*, ed. by Strauss and Schuler, no. 1482/130.

<sup>65</sup> Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 119–20.

supplicants kneeling on both sides.<sup>66</sup> In her role as *mediatrix*, Mary is suckling a fairly large and naked Christ-child who recalls the Man of Sorrows of the *Scala salutis*. Their supplication is received by God the Father, who acknowledges their prayer and is blessing the earth. The inclusion of the Holy Spirit not only indicates the unity of the Trinity, but — together with the blessing gesture of the



Figure 21. The Madonna and Child on the Crescent, in *Legenda S. Annae. Praeconia rosarii S. Mariae*; printed in Leuven by Johannes de Westfalia, 7 November [14]96. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Inc. 150 E 11, fol. g6'.

<sup>66</sup> *Anna. Legenda S. Annae, and Praeconia rosarii S. Mariae*; 8°; printed in Leuven by J. de Westfalia, 7 Nov. [14]96. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Inc. 150 E 11, fol. g6'. The woodcut (88 × 62 mm) is placed at the end of the volume. See M. F. A. G. Campbell, *Annales de la typographie néerlandaise au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1874), no. 1096; *Incunabula in Dutch Libraries: A Census of Fifteenth-Century Printed Books in Dutch Public Collections*, ed. by G. van Thienen, *Biblioteca Bibliographica Neerlandica*, 17, 2 vols (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1983), no. 310.

Father — also refers to the Annunciation, in other words, the Incarnation of Christ through which the intermediary role of Mary became possible. This interpretation is particularly appropriate, since the rosary is woven from the same *Ave*-words that the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary on the occasion.<sup>67</sup> The blessings Mary receives through the Son from the Father thus extend to the kneeling supplicants below. The tripartite chaplet worn by Mary probably refers to a full chaplet of three times fifty *Ave Marias*, the same variant of the rosary prayer that is represented in the Bruges miniatures.

Tripartite rosaries, that is, images displaying three strings of beads, are surprisingly rare. Among the 225 rosary representations collected by Van den Oudendijk-Pieterse,<sup>68</sup> only six contain three concentric rosaries, all of which have roses as *Ave* beads. These images differ from the miniatures in artistic medium, in composition, in the subjects included in the centre and in the roundels, as well as in the number and identification of the other figures that are represented. Still, it seems significant that three of them contain a *Scala salutis*, while in a fourth a mediating Christ and Virgin are depicted above the three wreaths.<sup>69</sup> The well-known woodcut printed by Wolf Traut in 1510 is one of these.<sup>70</sup> Here, half-length figures of the Man of Sorrows showing his wounds, the Virgin with an uncovered breast, and the Father with a flexed bow appear in the centre of the three rosaries, leaving no room for a separate image of Our Lady; the fifteen roundels do not comprise the same mysteries as in the miniature. The additional figures — mainly Dominican saints — as well as the texts written on several banderoles, propagate the force of the rosary prayer, and recommend the devout

<sup>67</sup> A few rosary images have the Annunciation as their central image: Van den Oudendijk Pieterse, *Dürers Rosenkranzfest*, pp. 221–22. One example is the Angelic Salutation by Veit Stoss, c. 1517–18, in the Church of St Laurence at Nuremberg, for which see Ganz, ‘Ein “Krentzlein” aus Bildern’, pp. 152–69.

<sup>68</sup> Her catalogue contains 295 items, among which 225 date from before c. 1540.

<sup>69</sup> Van den Oudendijk Pieterse, *Dürers Rosenkranzfest*, pp. 240–43, cat. nos A7.131 (fragment of a woodcut, c. 1490–1500; Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, and reproduced in *The Illustrated Bartsch: Volume 164 (Supplement)*, ed. by Field, no. 1127); A7.132 (drawing, late fifteenth century; ex-collection Rosenthal, see below and fig. 22); A7.129 (broadsheet, Wolf Traut, see below); and *ibid.*, p. 288, cat. no. BII, 5g.231 (altarpiece on panel, Middle-Rhine, c. 1490; private collection). For the other two see *ibid.*, pp. 241–42, cat. nos A7.133 (wall-painting, c. 1500, in the Church of St Peter at Weilheim unter der Teck, Württemberg); A7.134 (a fragment of an altarpiece, c. 1500–10 [no roundels], Lübeck Museum).

<sup>70</sup> Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Kb 21; Wolf Traut, 1510. Often reproduced; see for instance Winston-Allen, *Stories*, fig. 10; *500 Jahre Rosenkranz*, Abb. XII (A57) on p. 125.

to join the confraternity of the rosary. They explain to those who want to take part in the special favours of the confraternity how they should pray the rosary, and promise them the indulgences rewarded by several popes.<sup>71</sup>

In another example, a drawing in a late fifteenth-century sketchbook attributed to the workshop of Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff, the figures of the *Scala salutis* appear both inside and outside the three wreaths of roses (Figure 22).<sup>72</sup> In this image the Virgin, clothed not with the sun but with a giant rose, holds her hands onto her breast in a gesture of prayer while addressing the Man of Sorrows, who with folded hands, carrying the lance and the sponge, kneels on the column in the upper right corner. On the left is God (although in fact characterized as Christ by a cross-nimbus) shooting arrows, one of which has already hit a pilgrim lying down on the earth below the floating rosary strings. The roundels include some unusual themes, such as the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, as well as two apparitions of the Resurrected Christ. The colouring of the three garlands helps to structure the prayer into a chaplet of white or joyous roses, red or sorrowful blooms, and golden or glorious roses. This image evokes the fear of the plague, and it recommends seeking the Virgin's protection through an offering of a garment of roses that will hopefully be precious enough to avert the dangerous arrows.

What has become clear is that the individual themes included in the composition of the miniatures (the Virgin in the Sun, the rosary strings with roundels, and the *Scala salutis*) are each typical for the iconography of the rosary in the period around 1500. Even if the specific model for the miniatures, presumably a print, did not survive (or could not be traced), they nonetheless fit

<sup>71</sup> The text held by St Dominicus is taken from Jakob Sprenger's rosary booklet of 1476; see Van den Oudendijk Pieterse, *Dürers Rosenkranzfest*, p. 289.

<sup>72</sup> Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen, MS 78 b 3a, fol. 10<sup>v</sup>. *Incunabula xylographica et chalcographica* (Munich: Ludwig Rosenthal's Antiquariat, 1892), no. 4; Van den Oudendijk Pieterse, *Dürers Rosenkranzfest*, p. 241, cat. no. A7.132; Richard Bellm, *Wolgemuts Skizzenbuch im Berliner Kupferstichkabinett. Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung des graphischen Werkes von Michael Wolgemut und Wilhelm Pleydenwurff*, Studien zur Deutschen Kunstgeschichte, Band 322 (Baden-Baden: Heitz, 1959); James H. Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance* (Kortrijk: Van Ghemmert, 1979), pp. 48, 79, 82, 140, 262, n. 126, 297, n. 445, figs 29–31, 50–52; Joseph Koerner, 'The Icon as Iconoclash', in *Iconoclash: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion, and Art* [exhibition catalogue] ed. by Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Karlsruhe: ZKM Center for Art and Media, 2002; Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002), pp. 164–213, esp. pp. 194–96, 197–98. I would like to thank Drs Klaas van der Hoek for providing me with a reproduction of the Rosenthal catalogue.



in with the extant rosary prints, especially those that present a link to protection against the plague. The iconography of the rosary shifted, with similar elements recurring in different constellations and formats. The central issue of all the images was to propagate the rosary devotion as the main tool for asking Mary to be one's mediator to heaven.

For the fifteen mysteries in the miniatures, the illuminator, Cornelia van Wulfschkercke, a Carmelite sister of the Bruges convent of Sion,<sup>73</sup> relied on

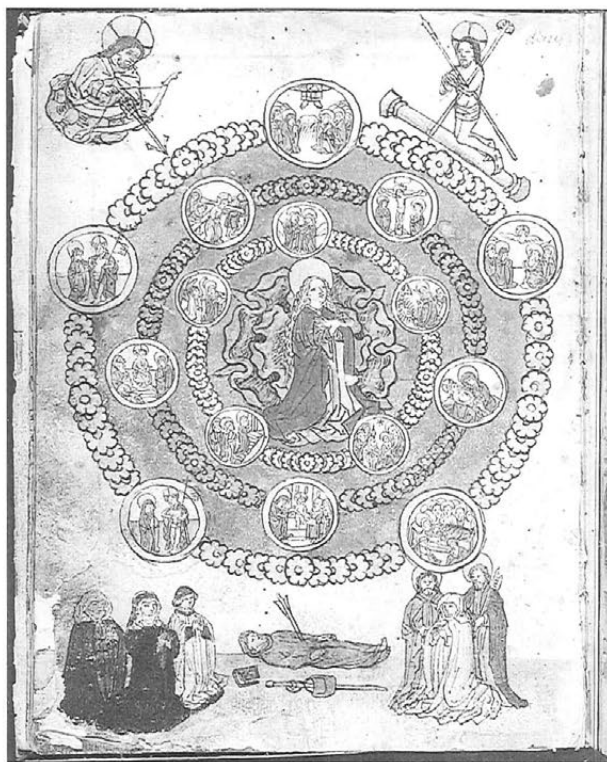


Figure 22. Tripartite rosary, coloured drawing, in Wolgemut sketchbook, Workshop of Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff, Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen, MS 78 b3 a, fol. 10<sup>v</sup>. Late fifteenth century.

<sup>73</sup> Alain Arnould, *De la production de miniatures de Cornelia van Wulfschkercke au couvent des carmélites de Sion à Bruges*, *Elementa Historiae Ordinis Praedicatorum*, 5 (Brussels: Vicariat Général des Dominicains, 1998); As-Vijvers, 'Randversiering in Gents-Brugse manuscripten', pp. 296–306, 390–92.



iconographic formulas that appear in other Ghent-Bruges manuscripts. She had a profusion of models at her disposal for the illustrations in books of hours, not only for the common miniature cycles, but also for additional images. Although not of the highest quality, her manuscripts normally feature numerous illustrations. From around 1500 onwards, she and several sisters at the convent produced books of hours and other devotional books for a lay clientele, as well as manuscripts for liturgical use. Most of the individual mysteries included in her remarkable rosary miniature do appear in the standard cycles of books of hours. The first of the joyful mysteries, the *Annunciation*, heads the Hours of the Virgin at Matins, while the *Visitation* and the *Nativity* belong to Lauds and Prime. The *Presentation in the Temple* — with the compositionally similar *Circumcision* — is the favourite image for Nones of the Virgin. The fifth scene, the *Finding of the Lost Child in the Temple*, is not included in the Infancy Cycle for the Hours of the Virgin, but it does appear to illustrate additional texts. Within the context of the Seven Sorrows of Mary, for instance, which occurs elsewhere in the Van Hooff Prayer book, the third Sorrow — which describes the mother desperately seeking Jesus before she and Joseph finally discover Him among the doctors — required an identical image.<sup>74</sup> The sorrowful mysteries featuring events from Christ's Passion might be copied from a Passion cycle for the Hours of the Virgin, but since these rarely occur in Ghent-Bruges manuscripts, they are more likely to derive from another source, probably a historiated border with passion scenes. The *Crucifixion*, the fifth sorrowful mystery, is the usual miniature for the Hours of the Cross, which Cornelia van Wulfschkercke often augmented with historiated borders including the first to fourth sorrowful mysteries.<sup>75</sup> The third mystery of the final set, *Pentecost*, is the common illustration for the Hours of the Holy Spirit, but the other four are more likely to be found in breviaries and missals. Several of the figures in the roundels look partly cut off, most notoriously the tormentors in the *Flagellation* and the *Carrying of the Cross* in the second set of mysteries, indicating that the models displayed an angular format, as used for (small) miniatures and border illustrations. Along with the parallels to other Ghent-Bruges compositions, this suggests that — at least for the individual scenes — Cornelia did not use one of those printed broadsheets with picture rosaries in roundels, but instead referred to her usual stock of

<sup>74</sup> On fol. 50'.

<sup>75</sup> The *Carrying of the Cross* and the *Crucifixion* are also included in the cycle of the Seven Sorrows of Mary.

compositions. Due to the small required format, the images are reduced to a minimum of detail in the figures and their spatial surroundings.

The number of beads connecting these roundels varies between five and thirteen. Contrary to the printed images, in which the beads number precisely ten, the illuminator merely filled in the space between the roundels, without considering the possibility of using the image as an independent instrument for saying the rosary. Two angels flanking God the Father collect the threaded beads of the three large strings, and then pass them along to the Virgin. These angels show the devotee how to imagine the result of the prayer.

The red colour of the painted beads suggests that the rosaries depicted are made of coral, which in the fifteenth century was a common material for them.<sup>76</sup> The similarity of their colour with that of roses is obvious, and — as we have seen — the *Ave* beads are indeed often represented as roses. This association lends the image an extra, spiritual level by referring to the act of producing roses by prayer. Rosary beads could be made of a variety of materials, ranging in value from very cheap to highly precious, such as wood, stones of fruit, bone, rope, red coral, pearls, mussel shells, glass, rock crystal, amber, gemstones, jet or gagat (polished brown coal), clay, tin, copper or brass wire, silver, and gold.<sup>77</sup> Alanus de Rupe had a chain that he claimed was made from the hair of the Virgin, and which he declared to have received from her own hands.<sup>78</sup> The *Pater Noster* beads serving to mark off the decades were usually larger than the *Ave* beads, and of a different colour, shape, or material. Although wooden beads in general belonged to the cheapest category — together with those of bone, which were often meant for children<sup>79</sup> — some high-quality boxwood rosary beads survive from early sixteenth-century Flanders. When these ‘nuts’ are opened, they reveal scenes from the Passion of Christ that are carved into extraordinarily detail.<sup>80</sup> Many

<sup>76</sup> Ritz, ‘Der Rosenkranz’, p. 75.

<sup>77</sup> Winston-Allen, *Stories*, p. 112; Ritz, ‘Der Rosenkranz’, pp. 74–87; Kronenburg, *Maria’s heerlijkheid in Nederland*, III, pp. 372–73; Geoff Egan and Frances Pritchard, *Dress Accessories c. 1150 – c. 1450*, *Medieval Finds From Excavations in London*, 3 (London: HMSO, 1991), pp. 305–17.

<sup>78</sup> Kronenburg, *Maria’s heerlijkheid in Nederland*, III, p. 368.

<sup>79</sup> Ritz, ‘Der Rosenkranz’, p. 90, citing the stock of a London jeweller in 1381.

<sup>80</sup> Examples in several collections, including Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art, inv. no. 1961.87 (image on the museum’s website); Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, inv. no. 1878.134 (Lentes, ‘Bildertotale des Heils’, fig. 16); New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 17.190.474 ab (Wilkins, *The Rose-Garden Game*, fig. 16; Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists*,

bead-sets include pendants: for instance a jewel, a medal, a cross, the *arma Christi*, a tassel, or a filigree pomander that could be filled with fragrant perfume paste.<sup>81</sup> Since rosary strings also served to fend off evil, they may have threaded amulets as well.<sup>82</sup>

Chains of varying lengths and types were in use. Women possessed longer chains than men, who usually carried ten-bead chains. Female donors are frequently depicted wearing prayer strings around their necks or hanging from their belts. The unidentified owner of the Van Hooff Prayer book had herself depicted on fol. 133<sup>v</sup> kneeling before a vision of the Man of Sorrows (Figure 23). The visionary image resembles the Man of Sorrows included in the *Scala salutis* of the rosary miniature, but this time the lady seems to have approached her Lord very closely, joining Him in the small chapel at the other side of the balustrade. Her prayer for mercy is written on a banderole.<sup>83</sup> On her girdle, the lady wears a long string of coral *Ave* beads with gold *Pater Nosters*. Her prominent wearing of a rosary emphasizes the intensity of her prayer.

From inventories and testaments we learn that well-to-do people often possessed several prayer chains, made out of different materials.<sup>84</sup> Rosary strings were combined with other jewellery, and their material conveyed the status of their owner. Even for the pious it was deemed acceptable to display precious rosary strings, since they were considered religious jewellery.<sup>85</sup> This led to a paradox: since the prayers were offered to God, it was appropriate to count them on jewels; on the other hand, the humble devotee was worthy of only the simplest beads.<sup>86</sup> That their function as status symbol was an important factor in their popularity can be deduced from the fact that some city governments

fig. 49).

<sup>81</sup> A precious paternoster pendant, showing the Virgin and Child and the Meeting at the Golden Gate, is kept in the Robert Lehman Collection in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 1975.1.1522 (illustrated on the museum's website).

<sup>82</sup> Ritz, 'Der Rosenkranz', pp. 99–100.

<sup>83</sup> 'Al moghend god ontferremt u mijns'. The accompanying prayer is to the Sweet Lamb of God.

<sup>84</sup> Kronenburg, *Maria's heerlijkheid in Nederland*, III, pp. 372–73; Wilkins, *The Rose-Garden Game*, pp. 48–49; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400–c. 1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 40–41.

<sup>85</sup> Ritz, 'Der Rosenkranz', pp. 64–65, 91–94; Winston-Allen, *Stories*, p. 112.

<sup>86</sup> Wilkins, *The Rose-Garden Game*, p. 50.

promulgated ordinances prohibiting the ostentatious display of religious jewellery.<sup>87</sup> In a Ghent-Bruges prayer book now in Copenhagen, the miniature

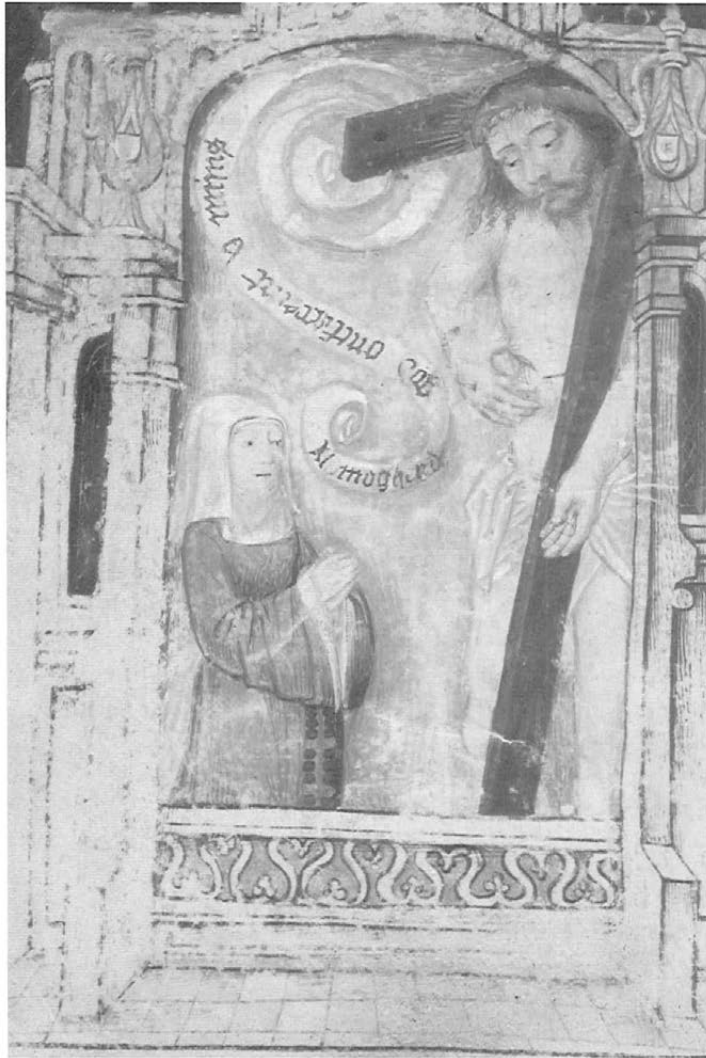


Figure 23. Cornelia van Wulfschkercke. Patroness kneeling before a Vision of the Man of Sorrows, Van Hooff Prayer book, Amsterdam, Bibliotheek van de Vrije Universiteit, MS XV.05502.-, fol. 133<sup>v</sup>. Bruges, c. 1500.

<sup>87</sup> Winston-Allen, *Stories*, pp. 112, 116; Wilkins, *The Rose-Garden Game*, p. 49.

for 'De superbia' shows a lady wearing perfume, sumptuous clothes, and jewellery including a flashy gold prayer chain (Figure 24).<sup>88</sup>



Figure 24. Master of the David Scenes in the Grimani Breviary. Superbia, Prayer book with Psalter, Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, MS GkS 1605, 4to, fol. 24<sup>r</sup>. Bruges or Ghent, c. 1515.

<sup>88</sup> Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, MS GkS 1605, 4to, fol. 24<sup>r</sup>. On this manuscript, see As-Vijvers, 'Randversiering in Gents-Brugse manuscripten', pp. 269–71, 335–37, 464–68. Küffner, 'Zur Kölner Rosenkranzbruderschaft', p. 115, mentions that, by the early sixteenth century, rosary beads were considered a sign of vanity. See also Kronenburg, *Maria's heerlijkheid in Nederland*, III, p. 372.

The variation in prayer beads reappears in the representations of the chains in the illusionistic Ghent-Bruges border decorations, as in the Mettenye Hours (Figure 25).<sup>89</sup> Although the *Ave* beads are usually red (coral), and the *Pater Noster* beads are usually gold, white beads — presumably pearls — also appear, as do chains with amulets attached to them. Although these chains cannot be interpreted as rosaries with certainty, the alternation between the two kinds of beads suggests they are, even if the number of beads is not exactly fifty-five. Many chains, but not necessarily religious ones, appear in the ubiquitous Ghent-Bruges border featuring precious objects on the shelves of a room (a showcase, a jeweller's shop, perhaps). The display items include chains, girdles, brooches, clasps, rings, small devotional images, gold and silver vases, and reliquaries. Usually a peacock is present, who is about to sweep away part of this idle collection with its magnificent tail.<sup>90</sup> In other borders we find people visiting a jeweller's shop, or ladies selecting ornaments from a jewel case; however it is difficult to determine whether the prominent chains are rosaries or not.<sup>91</sup>

Given the divergent texts and images where these borders appear, they should not be interpreted in relationship to their specific contexts, at least, not beyond a general level of meaning that is inherent in the religious sphere of the book of

<sup>89</sup> Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, MS A.F. A.28, fol. 15'. On the manuscript see As-Vijvers, 'Randversiering in Gents-Brugse manuscripten', pp. 291–93, 487–92, and Bodo Brinkmann, *Offizium der Madonna: Der Codex Vat. Lat. 10293 und verwandte kleine Stundenbücher mit Architekturbordüren* (Stuttgart: Belser, 1992), pp. 98–101, figs 25–26. On jewellery in Ghent-Bruges border decorations, see Kate Challis, 'Marginalized Jewels: The Depiction of Jewellery in the Borders of Flemish Devotional Manuscripts', in *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship*, ed. by Margaret M. Manion and Bernard J. Muir (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), pp. 253–89. On the representation of precious textiles in Ghent-Bruges borders see the contribution by Margaret L. Gochring in this volume.

<sup>90</sup> See Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1897, fols 127<sup>v</sup>–128<sup>r</sup> (reproduced in Dagmar Thoss, *Flämische Buchmalerei: Handschriftenschätze aus dem Burgunderreich* [exhibition catalogue] (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1987), figs 89–90); Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1926, fol. 1<sup>r</sup> (Thoss, *Flämische Buchmalerei*, fig. 99); London, British Library, Add. MS 18852, fol. 40<sup>r</sup> (see Scot McKendrick, *Flemish Illuminated Manuscripts 1400–1550* (London: British Library, 2003), plate 98); London, Sir John Soane's Museum, MS Soane 4 (see J. Harthan, *Books of Hours and Their Owners* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977; repr. 1988)); amongst many others.

<sup>91</sup> Hours of Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg, 2 vols, London, Sotheby's, 19 June 2001, Lot 36 (formerly Amsterdam, Biblioteca Philosophica Hermetica, MS 40), II, fols 33<sup>v</sup>, 92<sup>r</sup>.

hours.<sup>92</sup> Still, there are some examples that seem to be related to the devotional and social functions of the rosary beads. Borders like the one opposite the rosary miniature in the Van Hooff Prayer book (Figure 16b) appear in a number of Ghent-Bruges manuscripts. In a small book of hours, now in the Vatican library, rosary chains are displayed in gothic arches; they surround the *Madonna with the Christ-child* that marks the incipit of the Marian Mass.<sup>93</sup> The close-up

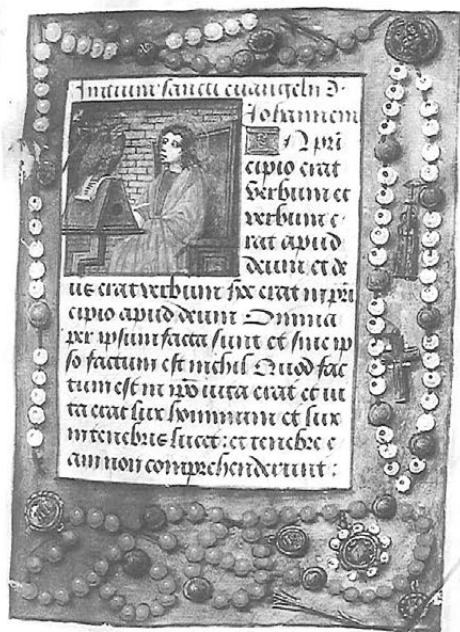


Figure 25. Chief Associate of the Master of the David Scenes in the Grimani Breviary. St John the Evangelist at his writing desk, and border containing prayer beads, Mettenye Hours, Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, MS A.F. A.28, fol. 15<sup>r</sup>. Bruges, c. 1500.

<sup>92</sup> On this subject see A. M. W. As-Vijvers, 'More than Marginal Meaning? The Interpretation of Ghent-Bruges Border Decoration', *Oud Holland*, 116 (2003), 3–33.

<sup>93</sup> Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Ross. 94, fols 33<sup>r</sup>–34<sup>r</sup>; see Bodo Brinkmann's comments in *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: Liturgie und Andacht im Mittelalter* [exhibition catalogue] (Stuttgart: Belser, 1992), cat. no. 58, with a reproduction, and Heinz, 'Die Entstehung', fig. 8. As-Vijvers, 'Randversiering in Gents-Brugse manuscripten', pp. 277–79, identified the illuminator as the Master of Ross. 94, named after the present manuscript.



composition, with the figures in half-length, suggests that the illuminator sought to represent a devotional image on panel. The same border design occurs in the Ware Hours, where it marks the beginning of a Marian prayer mainly consisting of names praising the Virgin.<sup>94</sup> The patron of this manuscript had his name, Thomas, included in the text of the prayer.<sup>95</sup> In the accompanying miniature, he is depicted as kneeling in front of a highly tangible vision of Mary with the little Jesus on her lap.<sup>96</sup> These borders may reflect the practice of decorating chapels as well as the images therein with prayer beads. Statues of the Virgin and of other saints received — besides clothing<sup>97</sup> — flower wreaths and prayer chains from pious persons, like in the story of the lay brother related above who wrought fresh flowers before he learned the rosary prayer.<sup>98</sup> This not only pleased Mary or the saints, but also transferred power onto one's rosary, which could then serve to ward off evil or to cure illnesses. At home, believers hung rosaries on the walls for decoration and protection. Other architectural borders include flowerpots filled with carnations or daisies placed in niches. In a book of hours now in Padua, a seated Madonna in a garden, being crowned by an angel, is surrounded by such a border with flowerpots, precious vases, and rosary beads, all of which serve to 'decorate' the Virgin.<sup>99</sup>

The rosary was especially a prayer for one's own salvation and that of one's family. People kept wearing their rosary during sleep so as not to be overtaken by death during the night.<sup>100</sup> Praying the rosary also benefitted one's relatives already suffering in purgatory. In books of hours, the Office of the Dead served

<sup>94</sup> Ware, St Edmund's College, MS s.n., fol. 181r: 'O sanctissima, o dulcissima, o piissima [...]', which is a common prayer. On this manuscript see *Illuminating the Renaissance*, ed. by Kren and McKendrick, p. 390, cat. no. 116.

<sup>95</sup> Ware, St Edmund's College, MS s.n., fol. 181r: 'me famulum tuum thomam custodias'.

<sup>96</sup> The border around the miniature is inscribed with short verses in praise of the Virgin: 'O spes mea', 'O dulcissima', and so on. See *Illuminating the Renaissance*, ed. by Kren and McKendrick, p. 390, colour plate.

<sup>97</sup> Lentjes, 'Die Gewänder', pp. 129–36.

<sup>98</sup> Kronenburg, *Maria's heerlijkheid in Nederland*, III, pp. 371, 374–75; Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 40–41; Lentjes, 'Die Gewänder', pp. 122, 127.

<sup>99</sup> Padua, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS A.72, fols 108<sup>v</sup>–109<sup>v</sup>; see *Codici miniati fiamminghi e olandesi nelle Biblioteche dell'Italia nord-orientale*, ed. by Caterina Limentani Viridis (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1981), figs 77–78. The border design as depicted here has merged with the cupboard border mentioned above.

<sup>100</sup> Winston-Allen, *Stories*, p. 116.



the same purpose. This Office was said when someone died, and also — as often as possible — to relieve the suffering of the deceased in purgatory. Therefore, a border of rosary chains in a book of hours called *La Flora* appears around the incipit of the Office of the Dead. It frames a half-page miniature showing the covered coffin set up in the church, underneath a catafalque with candles, while clerics and mourners pray the office.<sup>101</sup> Another version of the border with flowerpots illustrates the Office of the Dead in a book of hours now in Vienna. The niches contain prayer beads, flowerpots with violets (violets were strewn on the graves of the beloved), red roses, and banderoles with texts referring to mortality.<sup>102</sup> In a fragmentary book of hours kept in Vic (Spain), a widow kneels at the grave of her beloved spouse, and she lets the beads go through her fingers.<sup>103</sup> Praying the rosary and praying from one's book of hours were complementary activities serving the same goal: to reach eternal life in heaven.

Among the thousands of borders containing strewn flowers in Ghent-Bruges manuscripts, only very few show actual flowers strung together.<sup>104</sup> In a book of hours sold through Sotheby's in 1992, 'Ave beads' of roses alternate with large irises serving as *Pater Noster* beads, at the incipit of the Gospel according to St Luke which tells the story of the Annunciation. The border alludes to the angelic salutation *Ave gratia plena* by a prayer chain consisting of the roses and irises that are often found in a vase near Mary in other images of the Annunciation.<sup>105</sup> In a prayer book in the Walters Art Museum, we find threaded roses, Parma violets, daisies, a borage flower, and pearls (Figure 26).<sup>106</sup> That this is a spiritual prayer

<sup>101</sup> Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli, MS I.B.51, fol. 189<sup>r</sup>, reproduced in *Il Codice Flora: Una pinacoteca miniata nella Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli*, ed. by Romeo De Maio (Naples: Tullio Pironti, 1992). See also *Illuminating the Renaissance*, ed. by Kren and McKendrick, pp. 330–34, no. 93.

<sup>102</sup> Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 2032, fols 208<sup>v</sup>–209<sup>r</sup>; Thoss, *Flämische Buchmalerei*, cat. no. 73.

<sup>103</sup> Vic, Museo Episcopale, MS 88, fol. 7<sup>v</sup>; known to me only from a xerox of a photograph, from which it is not clear if the body has already been buried, or is in the coffin next to the grave.

<sup>104</sup> Garlands of green leaves, decorated with berries or [dried] flowers appear more often. See, for example, the Rothschild Hours, London, British Library, Add. MS 35313, fol. 28<sup>v</sup>, reproduced in *Renaissance Painting in Manuscripts: Treasures from the British Library*, ed. by Thomas Kren (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1983), fig. 8a.

<sup>105</sup> London, Sotheby's, 23 June 1992, Lot 93, fol. 16<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>106</sup> Baltimore, The Walters Art Museum, MS W. 426, fol. 137<sup>r</sup>. See Lilian M. C. Randall, *Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Walters Art Gallery, Volume 3: Belgium, 1250–1530*

chain is suggested by the inclusion of the pearls, and by the fact that, at the ends there are tassels. The text is a suffrage to St Michael, and the border probably reflects the practice of praying rosaries for saints other than Mary. The act of wreathing flowers into a garland is also represented in a few borders.<sup>107</sup>



Figure 26. Workshop of Simon Bening. Threaded flowers in a border, Prayer book, Baltimore, The Walters Art Museum, MS W. 426, fol. 137r. Ghent, c. 1510–20.

One has to conclude that the rosary miniature in the Van Hooff Prayer book remains a singular composition. However, it does fit with the wider iconography of the rosary devotion as this rapidly expanded after the foundation of the

(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), no. 296, plate XLIVb, figs 554–57. Similar borders are also found in Kassel, Landesbibliothek, MS math. et art. 50, fols 5r, 8v; see Judith A. Testa, *The Stockholm-Kassel Book of Hours: A Reintegrated Manuscript from the Shop of Simon Bening* (Stockholm: Kungl. Biblioteket/Royal Library, 1992), figs 33–34.

<sup>107</sup> Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 3770, fol. 58r; see *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, plate on p. 291.

Brotherhood of the Rosary in 1475. The tripartite rosary is an instrument for pictorial prayer: the image helps to recite the prayer by visualising its serial meditations in roundels. These little pictures structure the prayer into three sets of fifty *Ave Marias* and fifteen *Pater Nosters*, placed as they are onto three individuated chains, representing the joyful, the sorrowful, and the glorious mysteries. Although this format is nearly identical to how the prayer is recited today, in around 1500 members of the rosary confraternity could freely choose between different versions of the devotion. The prayer text in the Van Hooff Prayer book, starting opposite the miniature, illustrates this practice, as it presents a rosary prayer composed of fifty meditations attached to fifty *Ave Marias*, divided into decades by five *Pater Nosters*. The opening pages of this section in the Van Hooff Prayer book thus achieve a double function: text and image not only complement each other, but they can also be used separately.

In the centre of the tripartite rosary is the image of Our Lady in the Sun, which was the favourite Madonna-type to represent the Virgin of the Rosary. In late medieval Marian legends and rosary manuals she is considered to be the Queen of Heaven, whom the devotee wants to offer splendid clothes by the praying of the rosary. The image of the *Scala salutis* above the beads links the Bruges miniature to printed broadsheets invoking the protection of Mary's mantle (the Madonna of Mercy) against pestilence and other plagues. Similar concepts underlie the prayer chains painted in the borders of Ghent-Bruges manuscripts. As actual prayer chains were worn for decoration and to display status, these illusionistic borders show precious objects for similar reasons. At the same time they evoke devotional practices, such as decorating chapels and statues of the Virgin with prayer chains, both to glorify Mary as well as to seek her protection. The devotee, having piously made the Virgin a flower chaplet or a radiant garment by praying the rosary, ultimately hoped to receive a mantle or a crown in return and be granted a place in Heaven.



PRAYING, THREADING, AND ADORNING:  
SEWN-IN PRINTS IN A ROSARY PRAYER BOOK  
(LONDON, BRITISH LIBRARY, ADD. MS 14042)

Hanneke van Asperen

The medieval votary most often prayed with the help of a written text. Manuscript prayer books provided the devotee with instructions for devotion. Most of these books contain ample instructions on how to pray, when, and where (often in the form of rubrics), as well as what to pray, that is, the prayer texts themselves. In this article, I would like to single out a manuscript that was such an aid for personal devotion: a small sixteenth-century prayer book in the British Library in London (Additional MS 14042).<sup>1</sup> The sewn-

<sup>1</sup> London, British Library, Add. MS 14042: paper, 140 × 100 mm, 407 + I ff. Literature on the manuscript includes: Karel De Flou and Edward Gailliard, *Beschrijving van Middelnederlandsche en andere Handschriften die in Engeland bewaard worden* (Ghent: Siffer, 1895–96), pp. 229–33, no. 42; Albert Ampe, 'Kritisch onderzoek van enkele aan Ruusbroec toegeschreven teksten', in *Dr. L. Reypens-Album*, ed. by Albert Ampe (Antwerp: Ruusbroec-Genootschap, 1964), pp. 1–36 (pp. 15–16); Mieke L. de Kreek, 'Geprent te Mariënwater. Onderzoek naar – en voorlopige inventarisatie van – mogelijke Mariënwater-prentjes', in *Birgitta van Zweden 1303–1373. 600 jaar kunst en cultuur van haar kloosterorde*, ed. by Leon C. B. M. van Liebergen (Uden: Museum voor Religieuze Kunst, 1986), pp. 17–30; Ulla Sander Olsen, 'Handschriften uit het Birgittinessenklooster Mariënwater te Rosmalen bij 's-Hertogenbosch', in *Serta Devota*, ed. by Werner Verbeke and others (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995), pp. 225–54 (p. 232); Karl Stooker and Theo Verbeij, *Collecties op Orde, Miscellanea Neerlandica XV–XVI*, 2 vols (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), II, p. 358, no. 1068; Ursula Weekes, *Early Engravers and their Public: The Master of the Berlin Passion and Manuscripts from Convents in the Rhine-Maas Region* (London: Harvey Miller, 2004), p. 178, and the *Online Manuscripts Catalogue* of the British Library. At this point, I would like to thank Kathryn Rudy for bringing this manuscript to my attention and for giving me a chance to present an essay

in prints are the most striking aspect of this manuscript. Focusing on this prayer book, I examine the role of images in worship, and the relationship between prayer, image, and thread.

The London prayer book contains many rosary prayers. The rosary in its most basic form is a repetition of the *Ave Maria*, usually followed by a *Pater Noster* at even intervals. While there were several main rosary traditions in the late Middle Ages, many other 'rosaries' blossomed, which encompassed different aspects of Mary's life and character, as well as those of Christ and the saints. The compiler of the London prayer book brought several versions of the rosary together and provided them with illustrations. Except for a few coloured drawings and a miniature, the illustrations are single-leaf woodcuts and engravings. A few of these woodcuts bear xylographic text (that is, letters printed from the wood block) that either provides a short prayer or names the convent from which the picture derived: Mariënwater. Most of the images are glued to the background; others are sewn in with needle and bright silk thread. Stitches surround the prints on all four sides of the page. In this way, the compiler added a layer of border decoration. Like precious stones in the frame of a painting, the silk threads animate the periphery around the image. The stitches add colour to the mass-produced images.<sup>2</sup>

Although the use of needle and thread to attach objects (for example, prints, miniatures, silk pieces of cloth for the protection of the miniatures, Veronicas, or pilgrims' badges) to books was not uncommon in the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, the highly visible red and green silk floss in the British Library codex begs some questions regarding function and metaphor, attachment and decoration. Rarely is the method of attachment transformed into a decorative element; instead, stitches usually remain silent and hardly visible. In this respect, the London prayer book stands out.

In this article, I first examine the genesis of the London manuscript and the choice of images in order to contextualize the sewn-in prints. Then I consider the meaning of objects stitched into books, both functionally and

on the subject in this setting. Moreover, I would like to express my gratitude for her valuable comments and meticulous editing. I would also like to thank Anne Margreet As-Vijvers, Ursula Weekes, and Jos Koldeweij for their useful suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> Jan Van der Stock analyses the inexpensive prices of printed images in *Printing Images in Antwerp: The Introduction of Printmaking in a City: Fifteenth Century to 1585* (Rotterdam: Sound and Vision Interactive, 1998), pp. 113–24. At the time the Mariënwater images were printed, however, they were still fairly expensive.

metaphorically. The use of thread to attach objects refers to the practice of praying, especially in convents where textile work was an important part of the daily practice. In the case of the London prayer book, this was a convent of Tertiaries, which may be identified as the convent of Mariënburch or Barbaradal in 's-Hertogenbosch. Finally, I submit that the stitched borders elaborate on the underlying concept of the rosary prayer book, making them essential to the understanding of the London codex.

### *The Production of the London Prayer Book*

The rosary prayer book provides some clues about the time and place of its creation. On several occasions, the text attributes indulgences to Pope Leo X (1513–21), providing a *terminus post quem* for the book's production.<sup>3</sup> The book was written entirely in Middle Dutch with female pronouns indicating the gender of the reader. Nouns include terms such as *dochter* ('daughter'), *dieneresse* ('female servant'), and *sondaresse* ('female sinner') when referring to the person who recites the prayers. The pronouns suggest that the scribe was a nun who wrote for her own use or that of her sisters.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, introductions to prayers relate stories of nuns and young women, and images of praying nuns populate the prints. After its production, the book remained within the walls of a convent, as indicated by a sixteenth-century owner's inscription on the flyleaves, 'sister Geertruijt van Oosterwijck'.<sup>5</sup>

The identity of the scribe remains a mystery. She is usually identified as a resident of the Birgittine convent of Mariënwater in Rosmalen (near 's-Hertogenbosch), because several of the woodcut prints sewn and pasted into the London prayer book apparently came from that convent, as xylographic texts on the prints indicate (see Appendix).<sup>6</sup> However, the prints that Mariënwater either

<sup>3</sup> Add. MS 14042, fols 156<sup>v</sup>, 157<sup>v</sup>, 187<sup>r</sup>, and 261<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> The book with the biographies of the sisters from the convent of Saint Agnes in Emmerich relates a story about a woman who used to write 'wreaths of Our Dear Lady' for the other sisters. See *Schwesterbuch und Statuten des St Agnes-Konvents in Emmerich*, ed. by Anne Bollmann and Nikolaus Staubach (Emmerich: Emmericher Geschichtsverein, 1998), p. 170.

<sup>5</sup> Add. MS 14042, fol. 3<sup>r</sup>: 'Suster Geertruyt van Oosterwyck'.

<sup>6</sup> For the identification as Birgittine, see De Kreek, 'Geprent te Mariënwater', p. 25; Olsen, 'Handschriften', p. 232; Stooker and Verbeij, *Collecties op Orde*, II, p. 358, and Weekes, *Early Engravers*, p. 178. The print with the inscription *Maria water* in the London prayer book has

produced or commissioned, which comprise but a fraction of the images in the book, probably circulated both inside and outside the convent of Rosmalen. The nuns probably sold them or gave them away to visitors and sisters from other convents.<sup>7</sup> The images, dateable to around 1500,<sup>8</sup> circulated for quite some time before they were integrated in the rosary prayer book that was written after the accession of Pope Leo X.

Was the compiler of the London prayer book a Birgittine? In my view, there are good indications that the book was *not* written or used in a Birgittine convent. While there is a pasted-in drawing depicting St Bridget of Sweden, St Barbara, and St Amalberga with the sturgeon at her feet (fol. 383<sup>v</sup>), the extensive rosary accompanying it is dedicated to Barbara, not to Bridget. Another indication is the Mariënwater woodcut depicting the Holy Family, which includes a kneeling nun (Plate 4). In a closely related version of this single-leaf print (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-P-1955-328; Plate 5), the nun kneeling at the bottom of the scene wears the garb of the Birgittine order, which includes a white crown marked by the five red wounds of Christ. In the copy in the London prayer book, on the other hand, the distinctive headgear has been heavily painted over in order to obscure the typical characteristics of the Birgittine order. While the Birgittines were responsible for printing many single-leaf devotional woodcuts in the Netherlands around 1500, many people collected them over a long period of time. The images could have changed hands several times before they were inserted in the prayer book. After all, early prints were circulated, used, and re-used. The images, while not made exclusively for the

even been described as an ex-libris: De Kreek, '*Geprent te Mariënwater*', p. 25. This seems erroneous, however. The xylographic text may state the origin of the prints, but certainly not that of the book. The print of the *Virgin in Sole* serves primarily as an illumination of the psalter that follows directly afterwards, and not so much as an ex-libris that stands apart from the contents of the book.

<sup>7</sup> The carved blocks from which the prints were pulled probably comprised changeable components (main scene, margins, and text), which could be combined or altered depending on the wishes of the printer or commissioner. For more information on Mariënwater as a centre of printmaking, see Maurits De Meyer, *Volksprenten in de Nederlanden 1400–1900* (Amsterdam: Scheltema and Holkema; Antwerp: Standaard Wetenschappelijke Uitgeverij, 1970), p. 13; Adolf Spamer, *Das kleine Andachtsbild vom XIV. bis zum XX. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1930), p. 33, and *In Buscoducis 1450–1629. Kunst uit de Bourgondische tijd te 's-Hertogenbosch*, ed. by Jos Koldeweij (Maarssen: Gary Schwarz-SDU, 1990), p. 159.

<sup>8</sup> For the dating of these prints to around 1500, see *In Buscoducis*, ed. by Koldeweij, p. 159, and De Kreek, '*Geprent te Mariënwater*', p. 18.



nuns of Mariënwater, could however, point to the region of origin of the London prayer book.

Rather than a Birgittine, the compiler was probably a Tertiary, that is, a sister who followed the rule of the Third Order of St Francis, presumably from a convent in 's-Hertogenbosch. Clues supporting this hypothesis appear in several of the book's rubrics. For example, Francis, who has two prayers in the manuscript instead of only one, is called 'our holy humble father'.<sup>9</sup> Another prayer has a rubric explaining that 'Christ taught the following *Twenty-five Pater Nosters*', a common prayer, 'to a nun from the grey order', in other words, to a Tertiary.<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere, the text mentions a certain father Sigilbertus who, according to the text, was 'the honourable father and general of the entire Tertiary order'.<sup>11</sup> After the intercession of this clergyman, Leo X granted 1,200 years of indulgence to the accompanying prayer. Father Sigilbertus can be identified as Gilbertus Nicolai (d. 1532), who was commissioner general of the Third Order during the papacy of Leo X. After his appointment as vicar general (*vicarius generalis*) of the Third Order to the north of the Alps in 1511–14 and 1516–17, Gilbertus became minister general (*commissarius generalis*) of the entire order in 1517.<sup>12</sup> He was re-elected for another three years in 1520. This means that the prayer book must have been written between 1517 and 1523, or shortly thereafter. Moreover, the rubric in the London prayer book mentions briefly that father Sigilbertus was called Ave Maria. In 1517, Leo X actually allowed Gilbertus Nicolai to change his name to Gabriel de Ave Maria, or Ave Maria, to accentuate his devotion to the Virgin Mary.<sup>13</sup>

Mary and Barbara, who receive particular attention in the London prayer book, were the combined patron saints of two different convents of Tertiaries in

<sup>9</sup> Add. MS 14042, fol. 398<sup>v</sup>: 'Hier be / ghint een / seer deuoet / schoon ghe / bet Van / den glorio / sen weardi / ghen teeken / dragher xpisti / onsen heili / ghen oetmoe / dighen vader / Francisco'.

<sup>10</sup> Add. MS 14042, fol. 256<sup>r</sup>: 'Dese nauolgende xxv. pater noster leerde onse here / Ihesus eender nonnen vander grouwen orden'.

<sup>11</sup> Add. MS 14042, fols 187<sup>r-v</sup>: 'Ende dits geschiet / ter beden des eerwerdigen vaders / Generaelder heelder minderbrue / ders orden Pater Sigilbertus diemen / naemde Aue Maria'.

<sup>12</sup> P. Péano, 'Gabriel-Maria Nicolas', in *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques*, ed. by Alfred Baudrillart and others, currently 29 vols (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1912–), XIX, cols 572–76, and Heribert Holzapfel, *Manuale Historiae Ordinis Fratrum Minorum* (Freiburg: Herder, 1909), pp. 625–26.

<sup>13</sup> Péano, 'Gabriel-Maria Nicolas', col. 574.

's-Hertogenbosch and its environs. The first was Barbaradal op den Eikendonk, which was founded in 1475.<sup>14</sup> There are several indications of literary production there.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the convent was situated near Mariënwater, where the prints originated. The other Tertiary community dedicated to Mary and Barbara was Mariënborg op den Uilenborg. The former beguines accepted the rule of St Francis in 1469.<sup>16</sup> A production of prayer books for nuns' own use at Mariënborg is demonstrable in the late sixteenth century.<sup>17</sup> The intended reader of the manuscript could have been a sister from either convent.

The name of sister Geertruijt van Oosterwijck, written on one of the blank pages of the London prayer book (fol. 3<sup>v</sup>), re-appears in a manuscript from Mariënborg.<sup>18</sup> The book from Mariënborg (Tilburg, University Library, KHS 6) is a *Liber Obituum*, a calendar with the names of the sisters who had died and were to be commemorated on specific days during the liturgical year. According to a later addition in the obituary book, 'suster Gertruijt van Oisterwijck' died at the convent of Mariënborg on the eighteenth of the 'slaughter month' (November) in 1622.<sup>19</sup> She is not mentioned in a register of the sisters at

<sup>14</sup> L. van de Meerendonk, *Het Klooster op de Eikendonk te Den Dungen* (Tilburg: Stichting Brabants Historisch Contact, 1964), p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Van de Meerendonk, *Het Klooster*, pp. 58–60; Piet Dorenbosch, 'De Dichteres van Sinte Barbara-Dael', *Brabantia Nostra*, 2 (1936), 90–96, 157–64.

<sup>16</sup> L. H. C. Schutjes, *Geschiedenis van het Bisdom 's Hertogenbosch*, 5 vols (Sint-Michiels-Gestel: Boekdrukkerij van het Bisdom van 's Bosch, 1870–81), IV, p. 492.

<sup>17</sup> Jos Koldewij, 'Lijfelijke en geestelijke pelgrimage: materiële *souvenirs* van spirituele pelgrimage', in *Geen Povere Schoonheid. Laat-middeleeuwse Kunst in Verband met de Moderne Devotie*, ed. by Kees Veelenturf (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 2000), pp. 222–52 (pp. 231–32); C. J. A. van den Oord, *Twee eeuwen Bosch' Boekbedrijf 1450–1656* (Tilburg: Stichting Zuidelijk Historisch Contact, 1984), p. 406, no. A4.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Schoengen, *Monasticon Batavum*, 3 vols (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1941–42), I, p. III, and *Supplement* by David de Kok, pp. 82–83; *Analecta Gijsberti Coeverincx*, ed. by G. van Elsen and W. Hoevenaars, 2 vols ('s-Hertogenbosch: Provinciaal Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen in Noord-Brabant, Lutkie en Cranenburg, 1905–07), II, pp. 347–63; Schutjes, *Geschiedenis*, pp. 491–99.

<sup>19</sup> Tilburg, University Library, KHS 6 (Olim: 338c), fol. 35<sup>v</sup>. See Jeroen M. M. van de Ven, *Over Brabant Gescheven. Handschriften en Archivalische Bronnen in de Tilburgse Universiteitsbibliotheek*, 2 vols (Leuven: Peeters, 1994), I, pp. 51–53, and *Nieuwe Catalogus der Oorkonden en Handschriften berustende in de Boekerij van het Provinciaal Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen in Noord-Brabant*, suppl. by A. F. O. van Sasse van Ysselt ('s-Hertogenbosch: Lutkie en Cranenburg, 1915), p. 407. Ulla Sander Olsen identified Geertruijt van Oosterwijck as a resident of the Mariënwater convent. However, Olsen could not trace her

Mariënborg from 1575, which could mean that she entered the convent after that date.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the sister who wrote her name in the London prayer book is the same as the sister who died at Mariënborg in 1622. However, Geertruijt was a common name, and the town of Oisterwijk is close to 's-Hertogenbosch. The possibility of there being another Geertruijt from Oisterwijk in one of the Tertiary convents cannot be excluded.

Summarizing, the manuscript prayer book was written for the use of the sisters of the Third Order of St Francis between 1517 and 1523, or shortly thereafter. The convent was situated in or around 's-Hertogenbosch, as indicated by the presence of the Mariënwater prints. Because of the accent on the Virgin Mary and St Barbara, a provenance from Mariënborg or Barbaradal, both communities of Tertiaries in 's-Hertogenbosch, seems most likely. The two convents took Mary and Barbara as their patron saints and produced manuscripts. The identity of the scribe remains obscure. She could have been a Birgittine of Mariënwater, writing for the use of a Tertiary sister of a nearby convent. Considering the prints (obscured Mariënwater prints supplemented with many additional engravings), and the order-specific content of the prayer book, the most obvious conclusion seems to be a production at Mariënborg or Barbaradal.

### *The Contents and the Decorative Programme*

The London manuscript was intended for individual use, as indicated by its small size, as well as the subjects and rubrics of the prayer texts. The pages are filled with different kinds of prayers, mainly rosaries, a devotional exercise which was widespread during the late Middle Ages (see Appendix).<sup>21</sup> The main

in the obituary book of Mariënwater: Olsen, 'Handschriften', p. 248.

<sup>20</sup> Schutjes, *Geschiedenis*, pp. 494–95. A sister named Geertruijt Cornelis appears in the list of names, but it is not clear whether she can be identified as Geertruijt van Oosterwijk.

<sup>21</sup> For a brief history of the rosary devotion, see the article of Anne Margreet W. As-Vijvers in this volume, as well as *Der Rosenkranz. Andacht, Geschichte, Kunst*, ed. by Urs-Beat Frei and Fredy Bühler (Bern: Benteli, 2003); Anne Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages*, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997, repr. 1998), pp. 13–30, and Sixten Ringbom, 'Maria in Sole and the Virgin of the Rosary', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 25 (1962), 326–30, and the literature cited there. Because the origins of the rosary prayer are dealt with fully elsewhere in this volume, I will only tackle the subject briefly.

characteristic of the rosary is the reiteration of prayer, an ancient form of devotion. From early Christian times onwards, the *Pater Noster* was used to create a repetitive prayer sequence of variable length. With the growing popularity of the Virgin the *Pater Noster* was replaced with the angelic salutation *Ave Maria*, which became the backbone of the rosary prayer. The number of *Aves* varied from five to several hundred. The devotee could keep track of the number of recitations by using a knotted cord or a string of beads, which was also called a rosary or paternoster.<sup>22</sup>

Even though the rosary began to take its definite shape during the late Middle Ages, different forms of the rosary prayer existed side by side, as illustrated by the London prayer book. The first rosary prayer in the manuscript is a Psalter of Our Lady, to be read throughout the year (fols 5<sup>r</sup>–61<sup>r</sup>).<sup>23</sup> This form of the rosary, consisting of 150 *Aves* in total, referred to the 150 psalms, and hence was called a psalter. For the sake of simplification, the texts of the psalms were replaced by the text of the *Pater Noster* or the *Ave Maria*. Presumably, in the fourteenth century, the psalter gradually crystallized by focusing on the recitation of 150 *Aves* interspersed with fifteen *Pater Nosters*.<sup>24</sup> Invocations, praises, and pleas were added in order to vary the devotional fare and construct an intricate spiritual exercise to contemplate the life of the Virgin. This form of the psalter of three groups of fifty *Aves* with the accompanying contemplations most closely resembles the present-day rosary.

The next sequence in the London prayer book, consisting of nine groups of fifty *Aves*, describes the events of Mary's life from the Immaculate Conception to the Assumption (fols 62<sup>r</sup>–122<sup>r</sup>). After this follow several other prayers to Mary, including rosary cycles concentrating on the Virgin's Sorrows and her Joys, all to be read at different moments of the day, week, or year. The latter part of the London prayer book (also comprising rosaries) focuses on Christ, the Eucharist,

<sup>22</sup> On prayer strings and beads, see Ronald W. Lightbown, *Mediaeval European Jewellery* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1992), pp. 342–54; Manfred Brauneck, *Religiöse Volkskunst. Votivgaben, Andachtsbilder, Hinterglas, Rosenkranz, Amulette* (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), pp. 238–62; *500 Jahre Rosenkranz, 1475 Köln 1975: Kunst und Frömmigkeit im Spätmittelalter und ihr Weiterleben* [exhibition catalogue] (Cologne: Bachem, 1975), and Gislinde Ritz, 'Der Rosenkranz. Formen und Funktionen', in *Bayerisches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde 1960* (Regensburg: Habel, 1960), pp. 51–101 (pp. 57–69).

<sup>23</sup> Add. MS 14042, fol. 7<sup>r</sup>: 'Hier begint den paradijsscen souter der / glorioser hemelscer coninginnen ende moeder / gods maria'.

<sup>24</sup> This invention is usually attributed to Heinrich von Kalkar (1328–1408), but may be substantially older: *500 Jahre Rosenkranz*, p. 55.

and saints, including Peter, Catherine, Barbara, Anne, and Francis.<sup>25</sup> Even though the saints occupy an important part of the manuscript, the London codex is mainly a prayer book for Marian devotion that provides the reader with a rosary for every possible Marian occasion.

The sewn-in prints appear in the first part of the book, within the rosaries of the life of Mary. Six out of the eight prints that illustrate the joyful events still have a stitched border.<sup>26</sup> Two of the sewn-in pictures were taken out and replaced. The stitches were removed in the process. One of the substitute prints depicts the *Virgin in the Rosary* to precede the Psalter of Our Lady (Figure 27). In the centre of the engraving is an image of the *Virgin in Sole* (as the print with the prologue).<sup>27</sup> Mary, holding Jesus in her arms, is depicted in the Sun and wears the crown of twelve stars. This vision of the apocalyptic woman is taken from the Apocalypse (12. 1). Here, the image is combined with different references to the rose, and Mary is enthroned in the rose's heart. This is the flowering vine that grew until it reached the highest heaven, and represents Mary's bodily Assumption. An inscription runs along the edge of the print in which Mary, 'the heavenly flower and flowering rose', is hailed as Our Lady of perpetual help to sinners.<sup>28</sup> A scroll with a text from Ecclesiasticus (24. 18) runs along the stalk of the flower: 'Ego quasi plantatio rose in Iherico' ('I [was exalted] as a rose plant in Jericho').<sup>29</sup> In the rosary string framing the image of Mary, the small red beads represent the *Ave* prayers, while roses represent the *Pater Nosters*. These red roses connote the wounds of Christ.<sup>30</sup> There is some space left between

<sup>25</sup> In the late Middle Ages, the rosary prayer was associated with the veneration of saints as well. See *500 Jahre Rosenkranz*, pp. 84–85.

<sup>26</sup> Six of the prints are sewn-in and not five, as Ursula Weekes states: Weekes, *Early Engravers*, p. 178.

<sup>27</sup> The image of the *Virgin in Sole* developed into the *Virgin in the Rosary*, both of them connected with large indulgences. See the contribution of Anne Margreet W. As-Vijvers in this volume, and Ringbom, 'Maria in Sole', p. 329.

<sup>28</sup> The text reads: 'O hemelsche bloeme een bloeende / rose in iherico gheplant deser werelt wijt / met recht wij u noeme want godt / u vercoese dei sonderen [sic: den sondaren] bistant te wesen altijd'. The word 'bloeend' means both 'flowery' and 'bleeding', pointing to the Passion of Christ and the Sorrows of Mary.

<sup>29</sup> The deuterocanonical book of the Bible, *Ecclesiasticus*, not to be confounded with *Ecclesiastes*, is also known as the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach, or simply Sirach.

<sup>30</sup> On fol. 17<sup>v</sup>, the wounds of Christ are actually called the 'die gebloem / de wonden', or 'the flowery wounds'. See also Reindert L. Falkenburg, *The Fruit of Devotion: Mysticism and the Imagery of Love in Flemish Paintings of the Virgin and Child, 1450–1550*, trans. by Sammy

the beads, so that they can be shifted across the string as if the rosary is in actual use.



Figure 27. The Virgin in the Rosary, hand-coloured engraving pasted onto page of a prayer book, London, British Library, Add. MS 14042, fol. 6<sup>v</sup>.  
Monogrammist LPX?, sixteenth century.

Herman (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1994), pp. 39–40.

The print focuses the votary's attention while she recites the Psalter of Our Lady, which is divided into three parts. Every part — named a psalter in itself — consists of fifty *Aves*, as stated before. The rosary string that frames Mary in the print comprises exactly the same number: fifty small beads representing the *Aves* and a rose after each ten to represent the *Paters*. God the Father and the Holy Spirit are represented in the upper corners of the print. Together with the Christ child, depicted at the centre, they complete the Trinity, cited in the first lines of the Psalter: 'Joy of joys and delight of delights are you, O honourable Mother of God, in the middle of the Trinity'.<sup>31</sup> The image treats the text literally by placing the Virgin at the centre of the Trinity. As the perforations visible from the folio's recto indicate, the image of *Mary in the Rosary* replaces one that was previously sewn in, but subsequently removed. Perhaps the new one fitted the text better. Alternatively, the former print might have grown shabby through use or become damaged by accident, and the user felt the need to replace it. Whatever the reason, the stitches were removed in the process.

The next print in the London prayer book shows what the border of the rosary engraving must have looked like when the stitches were still in place. The image of the Holy Family is firmly fixed to the page with a series of alternating red and green cross stitches (Plate 4). The print introduces the entire set of rosaries of the feasts of Mary. The prologue reads: 'Here begins a pure arbour of roses and all kinds of flowers of the life, the love and the virtues of the Heavenly Queen Mary'.<sup>32</sup> Mary appears together with Anne, Joachim, and Christ in the foreground of a garden confined by a low brick wall. This is the enclosed garden (*hortus conclusus*). The image of the enclosed garden, derived from the Canticles (4. 12), is often cited to express Mary's virginity.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the image fits the main theme of the first rosary. It addresses the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin. She is the unspoiled garden that brought forth the rose of Christ. Mary herself is a 'beautiful rose' as well, 'produced by the black earth without being

<sup>31</sup> Add. MS 14042, fol. 7r: 'Bliscap der blisca / ppen ende vroude / der vrouwen si / v O eerwerdige / moeder gods int / middel der .h. / drieuoldicheit'.

<sup>32</sup> Add. MS 14042, fol. 62r: 'Hier begint een suuerlic priel / van roosen ende menigerley bloemen / des leuens des lifdens ende duechden der / hemelscher coninginne maria'.

<sup>33</sup> On the subject of the Holy Family and the enclosed garden, see Hildegard Erlemann, *Die Heilige Familie. Ein Tugendvorbild der Gegenreformation im Wandel der Zeit, Kult und Ideologie* (Münster: Ardey, 1993), pp. 50–56. Hildegard Erlemann depicts a very similar print, with Joseph shaking the fruit down off the tree instead of Joachim. Anne is not present in this much younger version of the image: Erlemann, *Die Heilige Familie*, fig. 9.



soiled by it'.<sup>34</sup> The text of the prayer praises the virginity of both Anne and Mary, symbolized by the image of the enclosed garden and accentuated by their place under the canopy.

The other elements in the print correspond closely to the contents of the rosary as well, for example the tree in the background. It symbolizes the fertility of Mary and her mother. Mary is the 'blessed fruit' of Anne's body, as Christ is that of Mary.<sup>35</sup> In a broader sense, the blossoming tree is evidence of Anne's devoutness. After all, she was endowed with a child because of her piety. The text relates that Anne 'was twenty years without the blessing of fertility, but she served God ardently. At every feast, she went to the temple to make her offerings'.<sup>36</sup> Mary, the fruit of prayer, was created because of Anne's devotions.

The rosaries in the London prayer book give the devotee an opportunity to follow the virtuous example of Anne, because by reading the rosary prayers, the devotee offers 'roses', which are both flowers and prayers. In combination with the text of the prayers, the red blossoms of the tree can be identified as roses. Some of the fallen flowers lie at the feet of the praying nun (once a Birgittine) in the lower right corner. She is the devout soul.<sup>37</sup> Like Mary and Anne, she is depicted within the confines of the enclosed garden, possibly a reference to the

<sup>34</sup> Add. MS 14042, fol. 66<sup>v</sup>: 'Ghelijc die schoone roose voort / coemt wtter swarter eerden Onbesmet / vander eerden Alsoe sijt ghi O maria in v / ontfanckenis bewaertt sonder smette der erfsonden / Aue / En gelijc die roose onder die / dornen Alsoe sidi O maria gods vriendinne / onder die dochteren / Pater noster maria / O Maria moeder ende maget gebendijt si v alder heilicste ontfanckenis / ende gebendijt moet sijn die vruchtbaarheid uwer / \$moeder / Aue maria'.

<sup>35</sup> On the subject of Anne, see Ton Brandenburg, 'Saint Anne: A Holy Grandmother and Her Children', in *Sanctity and Motherhood*, ed. by Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker (New York: Garland, 1995), pp. 31–65; *Heilige Anna, Grote Moeder. De Cultus van de Heilige Moeder Anna en haar Familie in de Nederlanden en Aangrenzende Streken*, ed. by Ton Brandenburg and others (Nijmegen: SUN, 1992); Ton Brandenburg, *Heilig Familieleven. Verspreiding en Waardering van de Historie van Sint-Anna in de Stedelijke Cultuur in de Nederlanden en het Rijnland aan het Begin van de Moderne Tijd* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1990), and *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society*, ed. by Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1991).

<sup>36</sup> Add. MS 14042, fol. 63<sup>v</sup>: 'Si wan xx jaren sonder bendictie / der vruchtbaarheid. nochtans god veirich / lic dienende Ende gingen tot allen hoochtij / den inden tempel om haer offerhande te doen'.

<sup>37</sup> Falkenburg, *The Fruit of Devotion*, pp. 43–44.



private community of the convent or to the garden of her soul.<sup>38</sup> The flowers in front of the nun are the results of her prayers; they are her offerings. Her piety reflects that of Anne.

From the examples mentioned above, it becomes clear that the compiler carefully selected the illustrations to enhance the text's devotional message.<sup>39</sup> Like a miniature cycle, they illustrate and amplify the text, but unlike the usual miniature cycles, that is, those accompanying a book of hours, they do not systematically provide illustrations of narrative moments; rather, they are single-leaf devotional images to be used in combination with the prayer texts. Sometimes, the combination with the text or other images even adds new meaning to the pictures. The result is a unique book of prayers with a strong personal bias.

The personal slant of the London prayer book also manifests itself in the stitches. The composer combined textual and textural techniques. This adds an entirely new element to the manuscript. Before examining the role of the stitches, it is important to consider when and why the stitches were applied. Not all the prints were attached with needle and thread, only the ones that still have a blank frame. When this blank frame was cut off (and the edge of the image was the edge of the print), stitches would have interfered with the image. In these cases, the compiler pasted the print to the paper. The reason why some pictures have a stitched border and others do not seems to have originated out of sheer necessity. It has to do with the state of the print at the time the compiler decided to use the image for the prayer book. This does not mean the thread is just an alternate way of attachment. Whenever she could, the composer of the London prayer book used stitches. In doing so, she added to the meaning of the prints. The sister added a layer of reception that gives useful information on the way the

<sup>38</sup> *Hooglied. De beeldwereld van religieuze vrouwen in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden, vanaf de dertiende eeuw*, ed. by Paul Vandenbroeck and others (Brussels: Vereniging voor Tentoonstellingen Paleis voor Schone Kunsten, 1994), pp. 91–99, and Falkenburg, *The Fruit of Devotion*, esp. pp. 22–37.

<sup>39</sup> For the same reasons, miniatures and drawings could be added to books. On the subject of single-leaf prints (and other single-leaf pictures) in manuscripts, see Peter Schmidt, 'The Use of Prints in German Convents of the Fifteenth Century: The Example of Nuremberg', *Studies in Iconography*, 24 (2003), 43–69 (pp. 47–48), and Peter Schmidt, *Gedruckte Bilder in handgeschriebenen Büchern. Zum Gebrauch von Druckgraphik im 15. Jahrhundert* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2003). In the Rhine-Maas region, nuns regularly added engravings to manuscripts. The early prints were in fact produced with the intention to incorporate them into devotional books, see Weekes, *Early Engravers*, pp. 81–97.

prints were used and understood in a period that was highly influenced by religious reforms.

### *The Thread of Prayer*

The stitches have several functions. First, they add relief to the page, and therefore could serve as bookmarks. The stitched borders mark the folios of the prayers that had to be recovered quickly. Like the knotted strips or tabs of parchment attached to the fore-edge of the book, they make it easy for the user to find the inception pages, or incipits. Furthermore, the stitched borders serve as a simple kind of border decoration, because they add colour and animate the periphery of the page and, like marginal illuminations, they organise the text. They enhance the coherence of the manuscript book by constructing a recurrent motif throughout the codex. The stitched borders literally tie the prayers together. Although the individual rosaries treat different events, they form a closely-knit unit. As the thread of a story, the sewing threads give the manuscript its coherence.

Significantly, the words text–textile are etymologically related.<sup>40</sup> The Latin *textus*, the perfect participle of the infinitive *texere*, means ‘something woven or plaited’. Texts, which derive from textiles, are woven metaphorically from words, and likewise, a storyteller must weave a yarn carefully or else the narrative will fail to hang together well. A text is a compilation of words, woven together to create a tight structure. The words are the composing threads that ensure the coherence of the text, and their meaning and appearance determine what the text will look like.

The notion of text as fabric — or text transformed into fabric — was widespread, as fourteenth- and fifteenth-century sources demonstrate. In a miracle story, Mary appears to the faithful worshipper dressed in a beautiful mantle of golden *Ave* prayers.<sup>41</sup> Apparently, the words of the salutation create the fabric that dresses Mary. A coloured drawing in a late fifteenth-century gospel book, in another example, shows that text and fabric are closely related (The

<sup>40</sup> Eithne Wilkins emphasizes the relationship between text and textile in *The Rose-Garden Game: The Symbolic Background to the European Prayer-Beads* (London: Gollancz, 1969), p. 207.

<sup>41</sup> Cornelis G. N. de Vooys, *Middel nederlandse Marialegenden*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1903), I, pp. 118–23; see also: pp. 220–23, pp. 227–29, and the articles by Rudy and As-Vijvers in this volume.

Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 75 E 9; Figure 28).<sup>42</sup> The drawing, depicting the *Five Wounds* and the *Arma Christi*, was inserted as an opening page at the beginning of the manuscript. The Christ child sits in the centre of the page in

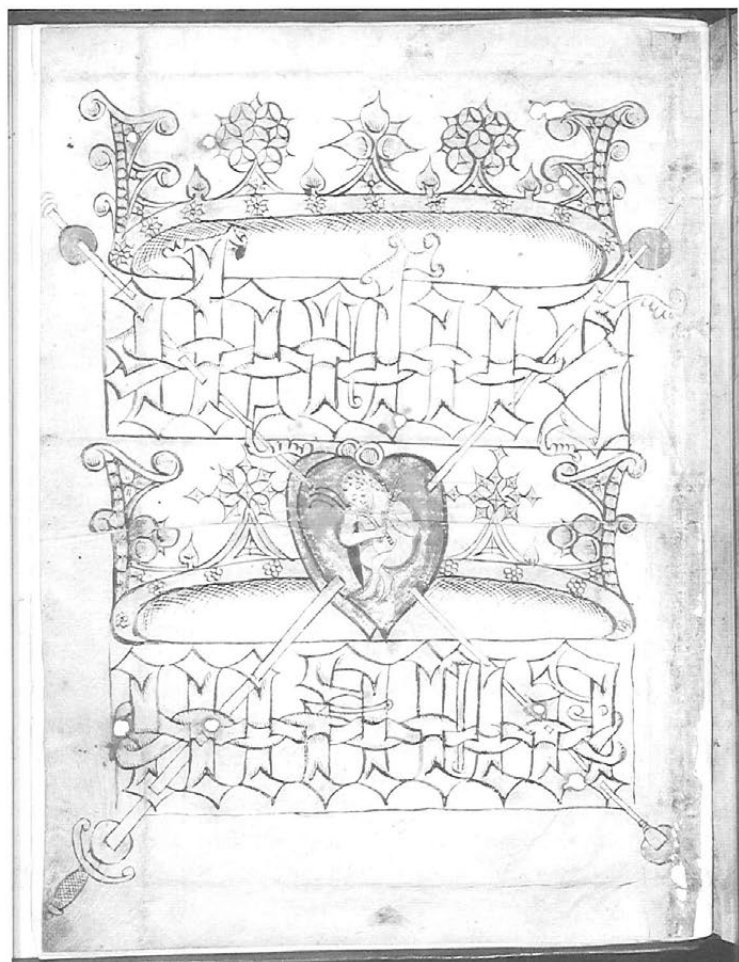


Figure 28. Christ-child, the *Arma Christi*, and the names of Christ and Mary, hand-coloured drawing in a gospel book, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 75 E 9, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>. Utrecht, 1472.

<sup>42</sup> The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 75 E 9, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>; vellum, 277 × 207 mm, 128 ff. Ghysbert Beynop, a Canon Regular of the Windesheim congregation at the monastery Vredendaal in Utrecht, wrote the book for his brother Aelbert in 1472, according to the text on fol. 127<sup>v</sup>.

the wounded heart. The branches of the crown of thorns are woven through the words *Ihesus* and *Maria*. Like warp and weft threads in a fabric, the letters and the branches form a tight structure. Text *is* textile. The objects are attached to a background of *textus*, in both senses of the term. The sword and the lance, situated crosswise, pierce the letters and connect the five wounds — the side wound in the middle and the wounds of the hands and feet in the corners — with the names of Christ and his mother. The words and objects in the drawing are firmly tied together as proportional parts in the whole. Together, they create a fabric in which every element is interconnected. Like a cloth of honour, the letters and objects form an appropriate setting for the Christ child.

Like the depicted objects in the gospel book, actual images and objects can be tied to a text. Often, devotional books contain traces of pilgrims' badges once stitched to their pages, as in the D'Oiselet Hours in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague (77 L 60, fol. 98<sup>r</sup>).<sup>43</sup> The method of attachment elaborates on the text–textile metaphor. By stitching prints and badges onto the pages of the manuscript, the owner has threaded them through the text, making them an integral part of the woven structure.

The stitches in the London codex have more extensive connotations, especially in the context of the convent. The appearance of sewn-in prints in a prayer book connects the related activities of prayer and textile work.<sup>44</sup> There are

<sup>43</sup> For an illustration, see H. J. E. van Beuningen and Jos Koldewij, *Heilig en profaan*, Rotterdam Papers, 8, 2 vols (Cothen: Stichting Middeleeuwse Religieuze en Profane Ensignes, 1993–2001), 1, pp. 46–48. The link with pilgrims' badges was noted before: Friz Oskar Schupisser, 'Copper Engravings of the *Mass Production*: Illustrating Netherlandish Prayer Manuscripts', in *Masters and Miniatures: Proceedings of the Congress on Medieval Manuscript Illumination in the Northern Netherlands*, ed. by Koert van der Horst and Johann Christian Klamt (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1990), pp. 389–400 (p. 392), and Weekes, *Early Engravers*, pp. 167, 182–83.

<sup>44</sup> In his analyses of the prints of the 'mass production', Schupisser mentions a book of hours in Vienna with sewn-in prints: Schupisser, 'Copper Engravings', p. 392 (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS Series nova 12715). In the sixth chapter ('Sewing in Meaning') of her book on the Master of the Berlin Passion, Ursula Weekes elaborates on the Vienna hours, considering the decorative quality and semiotic meaning of the stitches: Weekes, *Early Engravers*, pp. 167–85. She rightly points out that the stitches in the Vienna hours can be connected with devout labour at convents. Regrettably, she refers almost exclusively to German sources in her attempt to contextualize the manuscript from Brabant. The intended readers of the Vienna hours still deserve closer attention. Weekes argues that the presence of the stitches indicates the involvement of women in the production of the book, even though the book was made for a man who was probably sensitive to the devotional meaning of the stitches. See

many similarities between praying and sewing: both require repetitive actions (either of the hands, the mouth, or the thoughts) and subsequently produce a tranquillizing effect. Because of these characteristics, manual labour could have devout dimensions. Most suitable for women were light, monotonous activities, which created opportunities for pious thoughts. Needlework, a daily routine in most nunneries from times immemorial, was ideal: embroidery helped nuns avert idleness and gossip, especially when they coupled their handiwork with pious meditations to turn labour into a devotional exercise.<sup>45</sup>

Various medieval sources, especially from convents of the *Devotio Moderna*, reveal the connotations of textile work in religious communities. For example, the Sisters of the Common Life at the Meester Geertshuis in Deventer, a foundation of Geert Grote (who also founded the *Devotio Moderna*), wrote 'Sister Books', biographies of the sisters who had died.<sup>46</sup> These lives chronicle the exceptional devotional activities of exemplary sisters. The texts reveal that, besides praying, reading, and writing, sisters devoted themselves to spinning and weaving. They combined this work with devout meditations, as the earliest manuscript Sister Book indicates. The women used to comport themselves 'in

Weekes, *Early Engravers*, pp. 168–69, and pp. 177–80. The text is actually interspersed with male nouns such as *knecht* ('male servant') and *son* ('son'); see MS Series nova 12715, fols 74<sup>v</sup>, 79<sup>v</sup>, and 83<sup>v</sup>. Sisters, however, are included, for example on fol. 121<sup>v</sup>: 'Collecte / voer susteren ende bruederen', suggesting a wide audience of men and women.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example Lina Eckenstein, *Women under Monasticism: Chapters on Saint-Lore and Convent Life between A.D. 500 and A.D. 1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), pp. 222–38, and Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 207.

<sup>46</sup> On the subject of the Meester Geertshuis, see, for example J. De Hullu, 'De Statuten van het Meester-Geertshuis te Deventer', in *Archief voor Nederlandsche Kerkgeschiedenis*, ed. by J. G. R. Acquoy and H. C. Rogge, 7 vols (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1885–99), VI, pp. 63–76, and Wybren Scheepsma, *Deemoed en Devotie. De Koorvrouwen van Windesheim en hun Geschriften* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1997), pp. 16–18, and the literature mentioned there, esp. in n. 17. On Sister Books, see the introduction of Kathryn M. Rudy in this volume, as well as Wybren Scheepsma, 'For hereby I hope to rouse some piety: Books of Sisters from Convents and Sister-houses associated with the *Devotio Moderna* in the Low Countries', in *Women, the Book and the Godly (Selected Proceedings of the St Hilda's Conference)*, ed. by L. Smith and J. H. M. Taylor, 2 vols (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995), I, pp. 27–40, and Ludo Jongen and Wybren Scheepsma, 'Wachten op de Hemelse Bruidegom. De Diepenveense Nonnenviten in Literairhistorisch Perspectief', in *Boeken voor de Eeuwigheid*, ed. by Th. Mertens and others (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1993), pp. 295–317.

the agony and the sufferings of Christ', so that they could incorporate the spiritual in their daily activities, wherever they were.<sup>47</sup>

The interconnectedness of praying and textile work emerges in the content of the stories themselves. For example, sister Gertrut van Hiessel (d. 1434) wove at her loom so devoutly that it felt as if she had attended Mass, 'where God is present'.<sup>48</sup> Spinning work could also have devout dimensions, since the text of the Sister Book interchanges the words 'spijnhuys' ('house for the spinning work') and 'bedehuys' ('house of prayer').<sup>49</sup> The sisters evidently did not perform their spinning in the 'werckhuys' ('the working house', where the weaving was done). Instead, they would gather in a room that was dedicated to prayer. The sisters of the convent of St Agnes in Emmerich, a community of Sisters of the Common Life who took up the Rule of Augustine in 1463, would retreat to the church with a spool to combine their work with prayers.<sup>50</sup>

Because of its spiritual implications, textile work could yield indulgences. When the bishop of 'Yslant' came to Deventer, he visited the Lamme van Diezehuis, another community of the Sisters of the Common Life where the residents wrote Sister Books.<sup>51</sup> During his visit, the bishop saw the young sister Andries Yserens (d. 1502) busily spooling her threads on reed pipes, an activity that was especially appropriate for young girls who could not yet perform heavy labours.<sup>52</sup> He accosted the girl and conversed with her 'in a kind and confidential way', during which sister Andries probably explained the content of the spiritual exercises that accompanied her spinning activities. Impressed with her devotion,

<sup>47</sup> Arnhem, Rijksarchief te Gelderland, MS 2435: Dirk de Man, *Hier Beginnen Sommige Stichtige Punten van Onsen Oelden Zusteren* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1919), p. 64.

<sup>48</sup> De Man, *Hier Beginnen Sommige*, p. 122.

<sup>49</sup> De Man, *Hier Beginnen Sommige*, pp. 55, 65, 114, and 211. In Diepenveen, a convent of the Windesheim chapter, the spinning was done in the house of prayer as well. See D. A. Brinkerink, 'De Vita venerabilis Ioannis Brinckerinck', *Nederlandsch Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, n.s. 1 (1900), 314–54 (p. 333), and *Van den Doecheden der Vuriger ende Stichtiger Susteren van Diepen Veen* ('Handschrift D'), ed. by D. A. Brinkerink (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff's Uitgeverij-Maatschappij, 1904), p. 10. In the working house of the Meester Geertshuis, there was actually a small altar with saints: De Man, *Hier Beginnen Sommige*, p. 71.

<sup>50</sup> *Schwesternbuch und Statuten*, ed. by Bollmann and Staubach, pp. 174 and 230.

<sup>51</sup> O. A. Spitzen, 'Het leven der eerwaardige moeder Andries Yserens, overste van het Lammenhuis te Deventer, overleden in den jare 1502', *Archief voor de Geschiedenis van het Aartsbisdom Utrecht*, 2 (1875), 178–216 (pp. 193–94).

<sup>52</sup> Young girls and elderly sisters occupied themselves with spooling: *Schwesternbuch und Statuten*, ed. by Bollmann and Staubach, pp. 143, 177, and 219.

the prelate granted her three days of indulgence for every pipe that she should finish during her lifetime. Undoubtedly, the indulgences were coupled with her spiritual exercises, not just with the bodily work. Sister Andries apparently developed a preference for spinning, and years later, when she had become prioress of the Lamme van Diezehuis, she even abolished weaving in favour of spinning 'for devotion's sake'.<sup>53</sup>

The lives inadvertently relate the contents of the devotions that accompanied the textile work. Sister Lubbe van Swolle (that is, Zwolle; d. 1418), for example, took responsibility for the instruction of the young sisters at the Meester Geertshuis.<sup>54</sup> She taught them how to do their spinning work in a pious way. While working, the young sisters should: 'spin the thread through the wounds of Christ'. In other words, while the sisters were spinning an actual thread, they also created a spiritual string interlacing the wounds. Likewise, they should address Mary and the saints. The instructions of sister Lubbe evoke the image of a rosary string with the *Pater Noster* beads in the shape of the disembodied wounds of Christ (Figure 27). This evocation is justified, as becomes apparent from the Sister Book of the convent of St Agnes in Emmerich. According to sister Beel de Mushoel (d. 1481), who also helped the young sisters with their spinning work, Christ, Mary, and the saints would prefer the spun yarn to a recited *Pater Noster* or *Ave Maria*.<sup>55</sup>

The spinning of words through the wounds of Christ is visualized in miniatures. In the London prayer book, a pasted-in miniature depicting the *Five Wounds of Christ* precedes a devotional exercise that should drive away sleep and boredom while the reader is attending Mass (Figure 29).<sup>56</sup> The lozenges in the corners represent the wounds of the hands and feet, while the side wound occupies the central part of the miniature. The almond-shaped opening offers a view of the wounded heart of Christ. A scroll penetrates the heart several times, like the weft threads in a fabric that move in and out of the warp. Here, the thread has been expanded into a scroll so that it can carry words upon it.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> De Man, *Hier Beginnen Sommige*, p. xlix, and Spitzen, 'Het leven der eerwaardige moeder', p. 201.

<sup>54</sup> De Man, *Hier Beginnen Sommige*, pp. 52–53.

<sup>55</sup> *Schwesternbuch und Statuten*, ed. by Bollmann and Staubach, p. 246.

<sup>56</sup> Add. MS 14042, fol. 337<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> The text on the scroll reads: '*dominus amo / re vvlne / ratus / est*', meaning: 'the Lord is wounded out of love'. The second part of the inscription is turned upside down following the movement of the scroll.





Figure 29. The Five Wounds of Christ, miniature pasted onto page of a prayer book, London, British Library, Add. MS 14042, fol. 337<sup>v</sup>. Possibly 's- Hertogenbosch, first quarter of sixteenth century?



Illustrations in other prayer books depict the same subject, including a miniature in the Hours of Margriet Uutenham.<sup>58</sup> The scroll is longer and bears another text, but it is woven through the almond-shaped opening of the wound in the same way as the scroll in the London prayer book. Also appearing in cheap, mass-produced pewter badges, this iconography occurs regularly, indicating its wide audience. Such a badge, now in a private collection, was found in 's-Hertogenbosch (Collection H. J. E. van Beuningen, inv. no. 3230; Figure 30).<sup>59</sup>

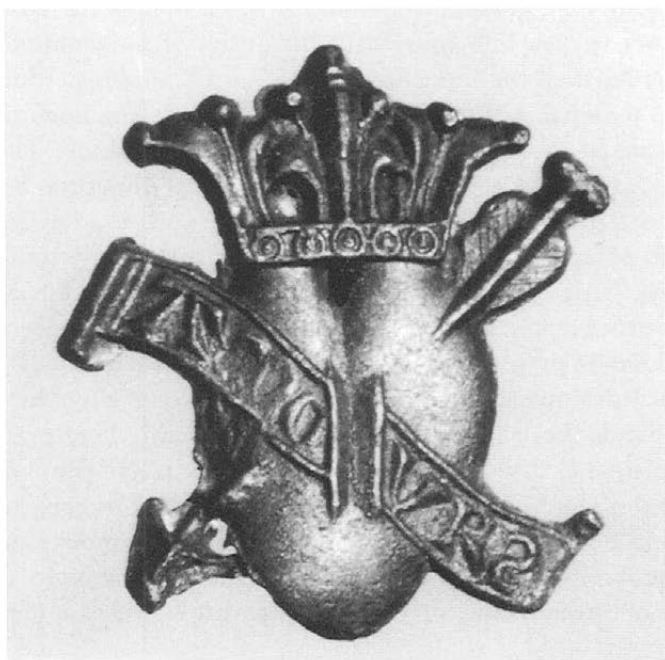


Figure 30. Words woven through the wounded heart, pewter badge, Cothen, Collection H. J. E. van Beuningen, inv. no. 3230. 's-Hertogenbosch, 1400–50.

<sup>58</sup> London, Sotheby's, 3 December 2002, lot 79. For an illustration, see *The Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting* [exhibition catalogue], ed. by Henri L. M. Defoer, Anne S. Korteweg, and Wilhelmina C. M. Wüstefeld, with intro. by James H. Marrow (Stuttgart: Belser, 1989), fig. x.89.

<sup>59</sup> For this and other badges with the same iconography, see Van Beuningen and Koldewij, *Heilig en profaan*, I, no. 902, and II, nos 1900–02. Eleven late medieval badges with this imagery were recently found in Valenciennes. See Arnaud Tixador, *Enseignes Sacrées et Profanes Médiévales Découvertes à Valenciennes. Un Peu Plus d'un Kilogramme d'Histoire* (Valenciennes: Service Archéologique de Valenciennes, 2004), p. 90, nos 163–73.

A scroll bearing the text 'Amour' is woven through the centre of the heart, harking back to the wound of Christ. The notion of spinning and weaving as a devotional practice was certainly not limited to the convent. As sister Lubbe van Swolle instructed her pupils, the devotee pulls a spiritual thread of prayer through the wounded heart.

The exemplary lives of the nuns at the Meester Geertshuis, the Lamme van Diezehuis, and the convent of St Agnes reveal that spinning — creating a thread — and praying were united metaphorically. Even though the London prayer book was not written in a convent of the Sisters of the Common Life, the manuscript indicates the influence of the *Devotio Moderna*, which strongly emphasized personal meditation and physical labour. The importance of the *Devotio Moderna* to the London codex is hardly surprising. This religious movement did not just set the tone for the spiritual life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life and the Windesheim congregation that were the direct results of Geert Grote's reforms, but also for convents of the Third Order of St Francis.<sup>60</sup> Many houses of the Sisters of the Common Life adopted the Third Rule of St Francis, as did the convent of Mariënborg in 's-Hertogenbosch where the London prayer book possibly originated and circulated.<sup>61</sup>

At Franciscan convents, spinning, sewing, and weaving took up an equally important part of the daily practice.<sup>62</sup> For example, archival sources indicate the weaving activities of the women of the Agnietenhuis in Kampen, who accepted the Rule of the Third Order of St Francis before 1423.<sup>63</sup> The convent possessed various looms for weaving wool and linen fabrics. Furthermore, the processing of the crude wool was among the activities of the Tertiary sisters. During the excavations of fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century cesspools at the former site

<sup>60</sup> R. Th. M. van Dijk, 'Devotio Moderna', in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, ed. by Michael Buchberger and others, 11 vols (Freiburg: Herder, 1993–2001), III, cols 173–74.

<sup>61</sup> Schoengen, *Monasticon Batavum*, I, p. 111, and Schutjes, *Geschiedenis*, p. 491. On the subject of convents adopting the Third Rule of Saint Francis, see R. R. Post, *Kerkgeschiedenis van Nederland in de Middeleeuwen*, 2 vols (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1957), I, pp. 350–51 and II, p. 160.

<sup>62</sup> Dalmatius van Heel, 'De Tertiarissen van het Utrechtse Kapittel', *Archief voor de Geschiedenis van het Aartsbisdom Utrecht*, 63 (1939), 1–382 (p. 57), and Willem Moll, *Kerkgeschiedenis van Nederland vóór de Hervorming*, 2 vols (Arnhem: Nijhoff; Utrecht: Kemink, 1864–71), II, p. 97.

<sup>63</sup> *De Susteren van Sanct-Agnetenhuus. De Geschiedenis, Materiële Cultuur en Spiritualiteit van het Kampense Agnietenconvent*, ed. by F. van der Pol and M. Smit (Kampen: IJsselacademie, 1997), pp. 12–16.

of the convent, several objects related to spinning and sewing were retrieved, such as the spools and sticks of wooden spindles and copper pins for sewing.<sup>64</sup> Rosary beads of bone and agate were also found. In the Tertiary convent of Mariënborg the sisters passed the time with spinning, as becomes clear from a contemporary description of the iconoclastic outbreak in 's-Hertogenbosch: when an anonymous resident of Mariënborg chronicled the horrors that fell upon her convent between 1566 and 1575, she mentioned the spinning activities of the sisters on several occasions.<sup>65</sup> A late sixteenth-century prayer book from Mariënborg (Leiden, Gemeentearchief, MS 72045) mentions a weaving house at the convent.<sup>66</sup> Also in Barbaradal, all kinds of handiwork, like sewing, knitting, spinning, and weaving, were part of the daily routine.<sup>67</sup>

Textile work and prayer, physical and spiritual labour, went together. The metaphor of prayer as a thread shaped depictions of female saints who spent (part of) their lives in a cloistered community. St Gertrude was abbess at the Benedictine convent in Nivelles until, at the age of thirty, she resigned her office in order to devote her time to prayer and reading.<sup>68</sup> Although Gertrude was never formally canonized, her cult spread quickly from the Low Countries to the surrounding lands. Late medieval depictions show the saint absorbed in books or in handiwork. In a late fifteenth-century woodcut in the German printed edition of *The Golden Legend*, Gertrude, wearing the habit, is seated on a bench in a chapel interior (München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2° Inc.c.a. 1073-2; Figure 31). Presumably, the scene is situated in a convent. Sister Gertrude holds a distaff between her knees, while the yarn is passing through her hands. Meanwhile, her eyes are focused on an altarpiece depicting the *Virgin in Sole*, in front of which she busily constructs her thread.

Gertrude's spinning illustrates her diligence and her humility before God. After all, Gertrude led an exemplary life as a nun. The print may depict a real

<sup>64</sup> *De Susteren van Sanct-Agnetenhuus*, ed. by Van der Pol and Smit, pp. 69, 81, and 89.

<sup>65</sup> *Kroniek eener Kloosterzuster van het Voormalig Bossche Klooster 'Mariënborg' over de Troebelen te 's-Hertogenbosch e.e. in de jaren 1566-1575*, ed. by H. van Alfen ('s-Hertogenbosch: Provinciaal Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen in Noord-Brabant, 1931), pp. 3, 27, and 59.

<sup>66</sup> Leiden, Gemeentearchief, MS 72045. See Koldewij, 'Lijfelijke en geestelijke pelgrimage', p. 232.

<sup>67</sup> Van de Meerendonk, *Het Klooster*, p. 37.

<sup>68</sup> Mireille Madou, *De Heilige Gertrudis van Nijvel*, 2 vols (Brussels: Koninklijke Akademie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, 1975).

situation, since the working houses in female convents are known to have included altarpieces. More importantly, however, the spinning has a metaphorical meaning: while performing her devotions, she is pulling a thread through her prayers and meditations. Perhaps Gertrude is constructing a rosary, for after all, the image depicting the *Virgin in Sole* was closely related to the rosary. The image suggests that, while praying to Mary and meditating on the life of the Virgin, Gertrude is spinning a thread of prayers and meditations.



Figure 31. Gertrude of Nivelles, woodcut book illustration in Jacobus de Voragine, *Der Heiligen Leben, Winterteil* (Urach: Conrad Fyner, 1481), München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2° Inc.c.a. 1073-2, fol. 237<sup>v</sup>. Germany, 1481.

With the thread that the worshipper creates, she interconnects the elements of her prayer. She also connects herself with the sacred, negotiating between the earthly and the heavenly realms. In the visual arts, a look towards the saint, written words, or a scroll connecting the mouth of the devotee with the mouth of the other — visualising the non-material words of the prayer — expresses this connection.<sup>69</sup> A miniature depicting the Virgin and Child at the incipit of the Hours of the Virgin in the Hours of Margaret of Cleves illustrates this point.<sup>70</sup> In the margin, the patron of the manuscript kneels before a *prie-dieu*. Around her neck, Margaret wears a rosary string, and her hands are folded in prayer. Christ grips the end of the scroll that runs from the hands of the devotee (in the margin) to the sacred image (in the central miniature). The words of her prayer have formed a tangible thread that connects the suppliant with the sacred.

The image of a rosary string can represent intangible prayer as well. On a late fifteenth-century painting by the Master of St Gudule in the Musée d'Art Religieux et d'Art Mosan in Liège, an unidentified donor kneels in front of the Virgin and Child.<sup>71</sup> Her prayer book lies open before her on a *prie-dieu*, but her eyes are directed at the sacred image in front of her. In her folded hands, she holds one end of a rosary string, while Christ holds the other end. Like the scroll in the Cleves Hours, the rosary string connotes prayer materialized. The *Ave* prayers of the anonymous commissioner have transformed into red beads, and the *Pater Nosters* into golden pendants. Prayer is not represented metaphorically, but tangibly. Both images, the miniature depicting Margaret of Cleves and the painting in Liège, make plain the same concept: the prayer creates a thread, a vital link to the sacred.

While praying, the devotee threaded the meditations of the prayer, the spiritual exercises, and the physical labour; the worshipper and the worshipped. The connecting thread is realised through the act of prayer. Like prayer itself, the meditations of the London prayer book comprise both textual and pictorial elements. The actual thread serves the same purpose as the spiritual thread. It joins the prayer texts and the images that constitute the spiritual exercise. Like

<sup>69</sup> Meyer Schapiro, *Words, Script and Pictures: Semiotics of Visual Language* (New York: Braziller, 1996).

<sup>70</sup> Lisbon, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, MS LA 148, fol. 19<sup>v</sup>. For an illustration, see *The Golden Age*, ed. by Defoer, Korteweg, and Wüstefeld, fig. I.1a.

<sup>71</sup> For an illustration, see *The Burgundian Netherlands*, ed. by Walter Prevenier and Wim Blockmans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), fig. 2.

the spun yarn in the devotions of Gertrude of Nivelles and the exemplary sisters in the Sister Books, the thread interweaves the essential elements of the prayer.

### *Adorning the Virgin*

The stitches in the London prayer book are not just a way of attachment. The shape and the colours of the stitches are elaborated for the purpose of the decorative effect. Because of the zigzag and cross patterns, the stitches become an ornamental element akin to embroidery, a textile technique used specifically for embellishment (Plate 4 and Figure 32).

In the case of the London prayer book, the embroidery harmonizes with the text. The coloured stitches alternate, as do the blue and red initials. Furthermore, they echo the repetitive pattern of the rosary prayers. There are also similarities between the stitched wreaths and actual rosary strings. The decorative border is made of simple materials, as were most of the medieval rosaries. Often, devotees counted their prayers on modest, knotted strings, not threaded beads.<sup>72</sup> Nuns who were urged to cultivate humility used simple rosaries. The Rule of the Convent of St Agnes explicitly warns the sisters to avoid 'curiousness, sumptuousness and copiousness' in their paternosters.<sup>73</sup> Humble rosaries comprised humble materials. For example, St Catherine of Siena, a member of the Dominican Third Order, had a prayer string of a knotted cord, because its simplicity and modesty showed her humility before God.<sup>74</sup> The sisters of the Windesheim congregation at Diepenveen provide another example: as an exercise in meekness, some of the sisters at the convent made rosaries out of the buttons of old nightdresses.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup> 500 Jahre Rosenkranz, p. 61; Wilkins, *The Rose-Garden Game*, p. 33, and Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, p. 14.

<sup>73</sup> Nikolaus Staubach and Anne Bollmann were unsure how to translate the word 'nosteren', which clearly means 'paternosters': *Schwesternbuch und Statuten*, ed. by Bollmann and Staubach, p. 313. The manuscript in which the rules were handed down, was written in 1676, but the regulations probably stem from an older tradition, because they do not seem to have been influenced by reforms: *ibid.*, pp. 24–25.

<sup>74</sup> Lightbown, *Mediaeval European Jewellery*, pp. 345 and 352. Sister Mechtelt van Kalker [sic: Kalkar] of the convent of Saint Agnes in Emmerich also possessed a rosary of a knotted cord; see *Schwesternbuch und Statuten*, ed. by Bollmann and Staubach, p. 255.

<sup>75</sup> *Van den Doecheden*, ed. by Brinkerink, p. 14.



Figure 32. The Nativity, hand-coloured engraving sewn into a prayer book, London, British Library, Add. MS 14042, fol. 98<sup>v</sup>. Possibly 's-Hertogenbosch, first quarter of sixteenth century?



Devotees also used silk threads, such as those in the London prayer book, to create rosary strings. The *Sankt Katharinentaler Schwesternbuch*, a German Sister Book in the same genre as the book from Deventer, describes the virtues of the Dominican sisters in a convent near Dießenhofen, including a certain sister Diemūt von Lindau.<sup>76</sup> Like the other biographies in the Sister Book, the text explains her exemplary virtue, already revealed by her first name, which means humility. The story relates that sister Diemūt wondered how she should spend the Advent, because she was unsure how to pray. In a vision, Christ appeared and gave her a rosary of red and green silk threads. When sister Diemūt asked him what it meant, Christ told her that the green colour symbolized his human nature and the red his divinity. The two natures of Christ were united in Mary, expressed by the joining of the two threads. With this consideration in mind, Diemūt should braid and unbraid the cord. Like the wreaths around the prints, her rosary string comprised simple but significant red and green silk threads.<sup>77</sup> The simplicity of the rosary expressed her humility before God, like the rosary strings of Catherine of Siena and the sisters at Diepenveen.

Besides formal similarities between the stitches and actual rosary strings, there is also a resemblance regarding the purpose of the stitches and rosary prayers. The stitched borders wreath the images of Mary, like the rosaries in the London prayer book are intended to do. The reader of the London manuscript — when reading devoutly and patiently — is making ornaments for the Virgin through prayer.<sup>78</sup> In this type of devotion, the prayer is transformed into an object that

<sup>76</sup> *Das Katharinentaler Schwesternbuch. Untersuchung, Edition, Kommentar*, ed. by Ruth Meyer (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1995), p. 117. On the *Katharinentaler Schwesternbuch*, see also Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists*, p. 185, and Weekes, *Early Engravers*, pp. 180–81. For the differences between Dutch and German Sister Books, see Jongen and Scheepma, 'Wachten op de Hemelse Bruidegom', pp. 316–17, and *Schwesternbuch und Statuten*, ed. by Bollmann and Staubach, p. 20.

<sup>77</sup> Weekes, *Early Engravers*, pp. 180–81, points out the striking similarities between the colours and materials. A connection between the colours of the rosary and the stitches, the first from a convent near Dießenhofen and the second from the vicinity of Brussels, is difficult to demonstrate. More meaningful is the analogy between austere materials. After all, the religious communities shared ideals of humility and simplicity.

<sup>78</sup> Much has been said and written about the transformation of prayer into objects (flowers, stones). See, for example Thomas Lentjes, 'Die Gewänder der Heiligen: Ein Diskussionsbeitrag zum Verhältnis von Gebet, Bild und Imagination', in *Hagiographie und Kunst: Der Heiligenkult in Schrift, Bild und Architektur*, ed. by Gottfried Kerscher (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1993), pp. 120–51; Eugène Honée, 'Beeld en verbeelding in de middeleeuwse gebedscultuur. Een kerkhistorische beschouwing', in *Gebed in Schoonheid. Schatten van privé-*



is presented to Christ, the Virgin, or a saint. The object could be a piece of clothing or headgear for the Virgin, an attribute for a saint, even a house or a crib for Christ, to name just a few possibilities. The offerings had an important purpose: to bring delight to the addressed person. The gifts were also a trading device to be deployed for more selfish reasons. The decorations that the devotee offered to the Virgin would be noted and remembered, so that when the time came, the devotee could expect a favour in return.<sup>79</sup> At the same time on a more practical level, the object served as a mental picture, a mnemonic device. The visual image could be stored in the mind and recalled to remember the number of prayers.<sup>80</sup>

In the London prayer book, the majority of prayers concentrate on the creation of a wreath or a crowning of Mary. The set of rosaries of the feasts of the Virgin is called a 'pristine arbour of roses and many flowers'.<sup>81</sup> The devotee can 'read flowers' from the text 'to make the Virgin a small chaplet'. Even the rosaries of the Sorrows of Mary are called 'chaplets of roses'.<sup>82</sup> The reading of the prayer makes the flower present. Together, the prayers form a string or wreath that can be offered to (an image of) Mary. This was a familiar concept, illustrated in the legend of the man who used to adorn a statue of Mary with real

*devotie in Europa*, ed. by Henk van Os (Zwolle: Waanders, 1994), pp. 157–74 (pp. 170–72); Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), p. 78. In *Hier beginnen sommige stichtige punten*, the story of a nun is told who used to build a wooden house 'of various devout prayers and exercises' for the Christ child on the day of his birth: De Man, *Hier Beginnen Sommige*, p. 218.

<sup>79</sup> Add. MS 14042, fols 230<sup>v</sup>–231<sup>r</sup>. Following a rosary of the five wounds and the *Salve Regina*, the nun writes: *Ende ic bid v nerstelic dat hi ontfanckelic / moet sijn dijnre hooger majesteijt Op dat / elck van desen bloemkens van v / gescreuen moeten worden in dat boec / des leuens Op dat wi dan weder / loen van v mijn lieue wtuercoren / vrouwe ontfangen mogen*. For a comparable rosary prayer, see Anne Margreet W. As-Vijvers, 'More than Marginal Meaning? The Interpretation of Ghent-Bruges Border Decoration', *Oud Holland*, 116 (2003), 3–33 (pp. 29–30, n. 38), as well as As-Vijvers's article in this volume. See also Honée, 'Beeld en verbeelding', p. 171, and Hamburger, *The Visual*, pp. 234 and 301.

<sup>80</sup> Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). On the rosary as mnemonic, see Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 80.

<sup>81</sup> Add. MS 14042, fol. 62<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>82</sup> Add. MS 14042, fol. 123<sup>r</sup>.

wreaths of flowers.<sup>83</sup> After he became a lay brother, he had to perform so many tasks that he was not able to pay her this service any more. Sensitive to the needs of the lay brother, a priest advised him to recite fifty *Aves* each day. Mary would prefer this to all the chaplets he ever made. One day, while he was praying, Mary appeared to him. With every *Ave*, she picked a beautiful rose from his mouth and braided her own wreath of flowers. Stories of pious nuns tell the same: on leaving their mouths, their prayers transformed into roses.<sup>84</sup> The metaphor of the rose is befitting for hymns of praise, especially for the Virgin and for Christ, the roses that the enclosed garden brought forth. Because of this association, a collection of written prayers could be called a garden or, as in the words of the London prayer book, an arbour.

The notion of prayer transforming into a tangible offering returns time and time again in the London prayer book. Roses were a popular image, but prayers are not *just* flowers. They can be all sorts of constructing elements. In reciting a prayer called a 'crown', the believer makes Mary a diadem. In adding prayers, the reader can add precious stones to the crown: a diamond in the front, a carbuncle to the right, a ruby to the left and a pearl on the back.<sup>85</sup> The prayer that concludes the set of rosaries of the Sorrows (fols 123<sup>r</sup>–139<sup>r</sup>) is a crown of thorns (fols 138<sup>r</sup>–139<sup>r</sup>). Besides the wreath of roses and the wreath of precious stones — appropriate ornaments of Mary, so it seems — the devotee can also make her a wreath of thorns.<sup>86</sup> In celebrating the Sorrows of the Virgin — the reason why she intercedes for mankind — the devotee makes Mary a wreath of thorns to resemble the one Christ wore on the cross. After all, every branch and every thorn that hurt Christ wounded Mary as well. The combinations of *Aves* and *Pater Nosters* transform into flowers and precious stones, even thorns. Every

<sup>83</sup> Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, pp. 100–01; Lentjes, 'Die Gewänder', p. 123; *500 Jahre Rosenkranz*, pp. 58–59, and Wilkins, *The Rose-Garden Game*, p. 165.

<sup>84</sup> *Das Katharinentaler Schwesternbuch*, ed. by Meyer, pp. 101–02.

<sup>85</sup> Add. MS 14042, fols 197<sup>v</sup>–198<sup>r</sup>. Of course, this was no new concept. In a miniature in the *Vie de Sainte Benoîte* from 1318 (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, MS 78 B 16, fol. 56<sup>r</sup>), the commissioner kneels in front of an image of Mary. At the same time, an angel places a crown on top of the statue. For an illustration, see Hamburger, *The Visual*, fig. 1.30.

<sup>86</sup> For prayers of the crown of thorns of Mary, see Maria Meertens, *De Godsvrucht in de Nederlanden naar Handschriften van Gebedenboeken der XVe eeuw*, 4 vols (Mechelen: Tessens, 1930–34), IV, p. 138, and J. A. F. Kronenburg, *Maria's Heerlijkheid. Geschiedkundige schets van de vereering der H. Maagd in ons vaderland, van de eerste tijden tot op onze dagen*, 9 vols (Amsterdam: Bekker, 1904–31), II, p. 231.

time, they are a different kind of composing element, another sort of stitch in the wreath.

The decorations of the London prayer book visualize the intention of the prayer texts. The ornamental programme gives expression to the same desire to wreath the Virgin. To inspire the devotee to create a tangible offering, sometimes a tangible image of the saint was needed. A rubric of a rosary prayer in the London prayer book insists that the devotee reads the prayer in front of an image of Mary: 'This prayer was sent from heaven and when you read it, you should stand in front of an image of Our Dear Lady Mary. Stand on your feet as you are reciting ten [*Ave*] *Marias* and kneel during the prayer [*Pater Noster*].'<sup>87</sup> To make sure the instructions were followed, the compiler of the prayer book added a woodcut print of Mary (Figure 33). Mary is holding the Christ child, who is already carrying the cross. A rosary string, like the one that the reader is about to create, frames the two figures.<sup>88</sup> The depicted rosary wreathes a tangible image of Mary, like the prayers wreath the spiritual images of the Virgin. The stitched borders fulfil the same function.

The sister — possibly a Birgittine, but more likely a Tertiary — who created the London codex, added the stitches to the pages to adorn the subject of her prayers and to interweave the elements of her spiritual exercises. Through prayer, she created a spiritual thread on which she could string her textual and pictorial meditations. The material threads in the London prayer book serve the same purpose; they tie the prayer text and its images together. Moreover, the thread takes the shape of a wreath that adorns the prints. Undoubtedly, the stitches reminded the sisters of their humble rosary strings consisting of knotted cords and simple threads. The red and green-yellow stitches, maybe reminiscent of Christ's dual nature like the rosary string of Diemüt von Lindau, form a visual counterpart to the spiritual wreaths of words and meditations that the devotee created to please Mary. By adding the stitched borders to the images of Mary, the sister who wrote and compiled the London prayer book visualized the ideas

<sup>87</sup> Add. MS 14042, fol. 162<sup>v</sup>: *Want / dit gebet is vanden hemel comen ende wanneer / du dit gebet leset so suldie staen voer onser / lieuen vrouwen maria beelde. Sprect x maria / alstaende Ende gebet al knijeende*.

<sup>88</sup> Perhaps an even better illustration of this point is the image of the Virgin and Child in a manuscript in the Vatican Library, MS vat. lat. 3770, fol. 200<sup>v</sup>. The small miniature is represented as a panel painting with a broad frame. A rosary string in front of the picture frame wreathes the figures of mother and child. For an illustration, see Ringbom, '*Maria in Sole*', fig. 45C.

that lie behind the rosary prayers. She illustrated one of the main goals of the rosary prayer book: the wreathing of the Virgin.

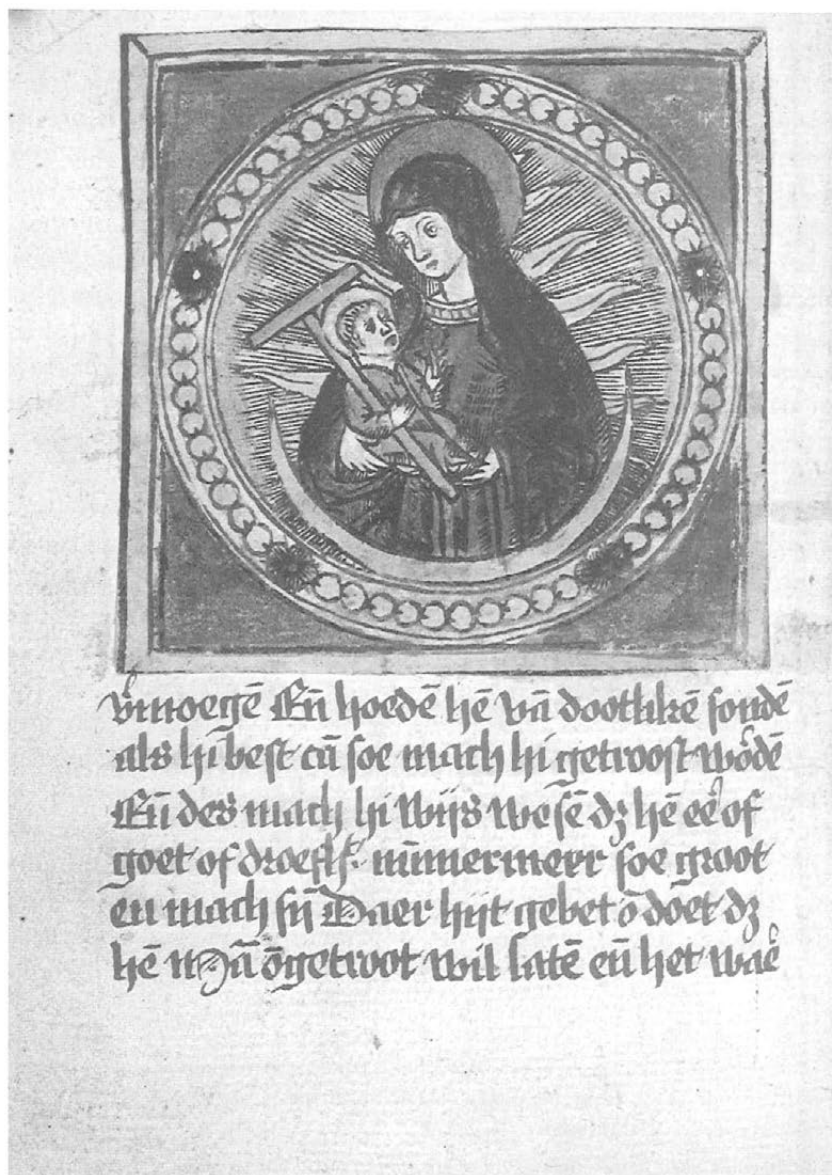


Figure 33. The Virgin in the Rosary, hand-coloured woodcut pasted onto page of a prayer book, London, British Library, Add. MS 14042, fol. 161<sup>r</sup>. Mariënwater?, c. 1500.

In conclusion, the London codex combines several aspects that played an important part in the spiritual life of nuns at the beginning of the sixteenth century: individual meditation, textile work, and the rosary devotion. The different activities at convents, whether physical or spiritual, were inextricably connected. Textile work and prayer laced together the physical and spiritual reflection of one devotional act. Even though every act of labour could be coupled with spiritual meditations, light monotonous activities were preferable. Spinning especially, was a popular activity because it was not bound to one place: the yarn of prayer could be spun anywhere. The metaphor of thread-threading, the basis of the devotional exercises that accompanied the spinning work, especially the rosary, is essential to the understanding of the London codex. The rosary devotion actually translates the manual act of stringing into a spiritual exercise. The thread ties the book together. In using the stitches to compose and embellish the rosary prayer book, the sister joined several elements that are united metaphorically: text and textile, thread and prayer, rosary and wreath.



## Appendix

*The Contents and Decorative Programme of London, British Library, Add. MS 14042.*

The sewn-in prints (or formerly) appear in bold type.

Folios	Text	Woodcuts and Engravings
5 <sup>r</sup> –61 <sup>r</sup>	Psalter of Our Lady: 5 <sup>r</sup> –6 <sup>r</sup> Prologue to the Psalter of Our Lady 7 <sup>r</sup> –24 <sup>r</sup> First part of the Psalter 24 <sup>r</sup> –41 <sup>r</sup> Second part of the Psalter 41 <sup>r</sup> –57 <sup>v</sup> Third part of the Psalter 57 <sup>v</sup> –61 <sup>r</sup> Prayer to Mary	4 <sup>v</sup> Pasted-in woodcut with the Virgin in Sole (Mariënwater)  6 <sup>v</sup> <b>Pasted-in engraving with the Virgin in the Rosary (Monogrammist LPX?), replacing a sewn-in print</b>
62 <sup>r</sup> –122 <sup>r</sup>	Rosaries of the Life of Mary: 62 <sup>r</sup> –67 <sup>r</sup> Immaculate Conception 67 <sup>r</sup> –73 <sup>r</sup> Birth of Mary 74 <sup>r</sup> –81 <sup>r</sup> Presentation of Mary in the Temple 82 <sup>r</sup> –90 <sup>r</sup> Annunciation  91 <sup>r</sup> –98 <sup>r</sup> Visitation  99 <sup>r</sup> –105 <sup>v</sup> Nativity  106 <sup>r</sup> –112 <sup>r</sup> Childbed of Mary  113 <sup>r</sup> –117 <sup>r</sup> Candlemas  118 <sup>r</sup> –122 <sup>r</sup> Assumption	61 <sup>v</sup> <b>Sewn-in woodcut of the Holy Family in an enclosed garden (Mariënwater)</b> 73 <sup>v</sup> <b>Sewn-in woodcut of the Presentation (Mariënwater?)</b> 81 <sup>v</sup> <b>Sewn-in woodcut of the Annunciation</b> 90 <sup>v</sup> <b>Sewn-in woodcut of the Visitation (Mariënwater?)</b> 98 <sup>v</sup> <b>Sewn-in engraving of the Nativity</b> 106 <sup>r</sup> Pasted-in woodcut of the Nativity (Mariënwater?) 112 <sup>v</sup> <b>Sewn-in engraving of the Holy Family</b> 117 <sup>v</sup> Pasted-in woodcut of the Assumption (Mariënwater?)





Folios	Text	Woodcuts and Engravings
167 <sup>r</sup> –172 <sup>v</sup>	Seven Psalms	
173 <sup>r</sup> –175 <sup>v</sup>	<i>Obsecro Te</i> in Middle Dutch	
175 <sup>v</sup> –177 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to Mary	
177 <sup>r</sup> –178 <sup>r</sup>	Five <i>Aves</i>	
178 <sup>v</sup> –185 <sup>v</sup>	Rosaries of the Seven Joys called a Crown of the 72 Names of Mary: 179 <sup>r</sup> Prologue 179 <sup>r</sup> –179 <sup>v</sup> Annunciation 179 <sup>v</sup> –180 <sup>v</sup> Visitation 180 <sup>v</sup> –181 <sup>r</sup> Nativity 181 <sup>r</sup> –181 <sup>v</sup> Three Kings 181 <sup>v</sup> –182 <sup>r</sup> Finding of Christ in the Temple 182 <sup>r</sup> –182 <sup>v</sup> Ascension 182 <sup>v</sup> –183 <sup>v</sup> Pentecost 183 <sup>v</sup> –185 <sup>v</sup> Prayer on the Seven Joys	178 <sup>v</sup> Pasted-in woodcut of Mary and Jesus with Catherine and Barbara (Mariënwater)
186 <sup>r</sup> –188 <sup>r</sup>	Two prayers of the Twelve Honours of Mary	
188 <sup>v</sup> –198 <sup>r</sup>	Little Psalter: 188 <sup>v</sup> –191 <sup>r</sup> First rosary 191 <sup>r</sup> –192 <sup>v</sup> Second rosary 192 <sup>v</sup> –194 <sup>v</sup> Third rosary 194 <sup>v</sup> –196 <sup>v</sup> First crown 196 <sup>v</sup> –197 <sup>r</sup> Second crown 197 <sup>r</sup> –197 <sup>v</sup> Third crown 197 <sup>v</sup> –198 <sup>r</sup> Prayers for precious stones	188 <sup>v</sup> Pasted-in engraving of Mary and Jesus on crescent crowned by angels
198 <sup>r</sup> –203 <sup>r</sup>	Two prayers to Mary	
203 <sup>r</sup> –206 <sup>v</sup>	Litany of Mary	

Folios	Text	Woodcuts and Engravings
206 <sup>v</sup> –218 <sup>r</sup>	Several prayers to Mary	
218 <sup>r</sup> –221 <sup>v</sup>	Psalter of the Name of Mary	
221 <sup>v</sup> –231 <sup>r</sup>	Short rosary of the Five Wounds	
231 <sup>r</sup> –235 <sup>v</sup>	Rosary to Mary	
235 <sup>v</sup> –237 <sup>r</sup>	Ten Virtues of Mary	
237 <sup>r</sup> –238 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to Mary of 700 <i>Aves</i>	
239 <sup>r</sup> –245 <sup>v</sup>	Crown of Thorns (rosary) for the days of the week: 239 <sup>r</sup> Prologue 239 <sup>v</sup> –240 <sup>r</sup> Sunday 240 <sup>r</sup> –241 <sup>r</sup> Monday 241 <sup>r</sup> –241 <sup>v</sup> Tuesday 241 <sup>v</sup> –242 <sup>v</sup> Wednesday 242 <sup>v</sup> –243 <sup>r</sup> Thursday 243 <sup>r</sup> –244 <sup>r</sup> Friday 244 <sup>r</sup> –245 <sup>v</sup> Saturday	238 <sup>v</sup> Pasted-in engraving of the Mocking of Christ
246 <sup>r</sup> –260 <sup>r</sup>	Golden Litany of the Life and Passion of Christ	
260 <sup>v</sup> –274 <sup>r</sup>	Mass of Gregory	260 <sup>v</sup> Pasted-in engraving of the Mass of Gregory
274 <sup>v</sup> –282 <sup>r</sup>	Two rosaries of the Sacrament	274 <sup>v</sup> Pasted-in engraving with the Manna and the Last Supper
282 <sup>v</sup> –286 <sup>v</sup>	Rosary of the Name of Christ	282 <sup>v</sup> Pasted-in woodcut of the IHS monogram (Mariënwater?)
286 <sup>v</sup> –291 <sup>r</sup>	Rosary to the guardian angel	287 <sup>r</sup> Pasted-in illumination of the guardian angel
291 <sup>v</sup> –299 <sup>r</sup>	Rosary to Peter	291 <sup>v</sup> Pasted-in engraving of Peter

Folios	Text	Woodcuts and Engravings
299 <sup>v</sup> –308 <sup>v</sup>	Rosary to Catherine	299 <sup>v</sup> Pasted-in engraving of Catherine
308 <sup>v</sup> –312 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to the crucified Christ	
312 <sup>r</sup> –315 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to the Agnus Dei	312 <sup>v</sup> Pasted-in woodcut of the Agnus Dei in a rose wreath (Mariënwater?)
315 <sup>r</sup> –337 <sup>r</sup>	Several prayers to Christ	
338 <sup>r</sup> –374 <sup>r</sup>	Devout exercises during Mass	337 <sup>v</sup> Pasted-in miniature of the Five Wounds of Christ
374 <sup>r</sup> –375 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to the Cross	
375 <sup>v</sup> –376 <sup>v</sup>	Prayer to Michael	
376 <sup>v</sup> –377 <sup>v</sup>	Prayer to Gabriel	
378 <sup>r</sup> –380 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to Catherine	
380 <sup>r</sup> –382 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to Agnes	
382 <sup>r</sup> –383 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to Barbara	
384 <sup>r</sup> –384 <sup>v</sup>	Rosary to Barbara	383 <sup>v</sup> Pasted-in illumination with Bridget of Sweden between Sts. Barbara and Amalberga of Munsterbilzen
384 <sup>v</sup> –385 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to Bridget of Sweden	
385 <sup>r</sup> –386 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to Petronella	
386 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to God	
386 <sup>v</sup> –387 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to Apollonia	
387 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to Mary Magdalene	

Folios	Text	Woodcuts and Engravings
387 <sup>v</sup> –393 <sup>r</sup>	Several prayers to Anne	387 <sup>v</sup> Pasted-in woodcut or engraving of Anne, Mary and Jesus and the Trinity (Monogrammist IA)
393 <sup>r</sup> –394 <sup>v</sup>	Prayer to all saints	
395 <sup>r</sup> –396 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to all angels	
396 <sup>r</sup> –398 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to John the Baptist	
398 <sup>v</sup> –400 <sup>r</sup>	Two prayers to Francis	398 <sup>v</sup> Pasted-in illumination with the Stigmatization of Francis
400 <sup>r</sup> –400 <sup>v</sup>	Prayer to Jerome	
400 <sup>v</sup> –401 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to an apostle	
401 <sup>v</sup> –402 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to all apostles	
402 <sup>r</sup> –402 <sup>v</sup>	Prayer to all patriarchs and prophets	
402 <sup>v</sup> –403 <sup>v</sup>	Prayer to all martyrs	
403 <sup>v</sup> –404 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer to all confessors	
404 <sup>r</sup> –404 <sup>v</sup>	Prayer to a saint	
404 <sup>v</sup> –405 <sup>r</sup>	Prayer	
405 <sup>v</sup> –407 <sup>r</sup>	Confession	

## THE REPRESENTATION AND MEANING OF LUXURIOUS TEXTILES IN FRANCO-FLEMISH MANUSCRIPT ILLUMINATION\*

Margaret L. Goehring

The attention that late medieval Flemish and French manuscript illuminators paid to the representation of costly textiles has long been a notable feature of their art. The freedom with which manuscript painters were able to invent new iconography, particularly as a means of referencing the patron (especially in the manuscripts made for the Valois), made this medium an ideal forum for the representation of luxury textiles, long associated with the public semiotics of glorification and honour.<sup>1</sup> Given the role that manuscripts also played in disseminating courtly values in the late medieval period, textiles

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<sup>1</sup> Especially the secular histories made for Philip the Good of Burgundy; see Jeffrey Chipps Smith, 'The Artistic Patronage of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy (1419–1467)' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1979); Cyriel Stroo, 'Bourgondische Presentatie-tafeleren', in *Boeken in de late middeleeuwen: verslag van de Groningse Codicologendagen 1992*, ed. by Joseph M. M. Hermans (Groningen: Forsten, 1994), pp. 285–98; Lisa Deam, 'Jason's Story: Artistic Transmission and Public Performance in Burgundian Manuscript Illumination', paper delivered at the Historians of Netherlandish Art Conference, Antwerp, 2002.

become particularly potent symbols within this context, which then raises many questions: how were textiles used to convey meaning in manuscripts? Did manuscript painters reproduce actual pieces of fabric or did they rely on stock patterns? Are specific patterns associated with individual workshops? How were these patterns transmitted and copied? And lastly, to what extent does the representation of textiles illustrate contemporary economic alliances and diplomatic ties?

These questions are particularly relevant given the valuable insights into the development and transmission of late medieval Italian and Spanish textile designs that scholars have gained in the last couple of decades by studying surviving fragments.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, given the generally low survival-rate of textiles from this period, there has been an emphasis on the documentation of textiles through contemporary panel and fresco painting.<sup>3</sup> The study of inventories, guild records, and other archival documents has helped to reconstruct some idea of the organization and economics of the textile industries of the late Middle Ages, as well as the distribution and marketing of luxury

<sup>2</sup> Otto von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei* (Berlin: Wasmuth, 1921); Florence Lewis May, *Silk Textiles of Spain, Eighth to Fifteenth Century* (New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1957); Anne E. Wardwell, 'The Stylistic Development of 14th- and 15th-century Italian Silk Design', *Aachener Kunstblätter*, 47 (1976–77), 177–226; Lisa Monnas, 'The Artists and the Weavers: The Design of Woven Silks in Italy, 1350–1550', *Apollo*, 125 (1987), 416–24.

<sup>3</sup> Heinrich Schmidt, 'Die Seidenstoffe in den Gemälden des Konrad von Soest und seiner Schule', *Westfalen*, 23 (1938), 195–206, and also his 'Die Seidenstoffe auf den Gemälden des Meister Francke', *Nordelbingen*, 20 (1952), 40–52; Brigitte Klesse, *Seidenstoffe in der italienischen Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts*, Schriften der Abegg-Stiftung, 1 (Bern: Stämpfli, 1967); Stephen Goddard, *The Master of Frankfurt and his Shop*, Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, Klasse der Schone Kunsten, Jaargang, 46, no. 38 (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie, 1984), and also his 'Brocade Patterns in the Shop of the Master of Frankfurt: An Accessory to Stylistic Analysis', *Art Bulletin*, 67 (1985), 401–17; Lucy Trench, 'Italian Silks in Fifteenth Century Netherlandish Painting', in *New Perspectives: Studies in Art History in Honour of Anne Crookshank*, ed. by Jane Fenlon and others (Dublin: Irish Academic, 1987), pp. 59–73; Lisa Monnas, 'Dress and Textiles in the St Louis Altarpiece: New Light on Simone Martini's Working Practice', *Apollo*, 137 (1993), 166–74; Donna Cottrell, 'Birds, Beasts, and Blossoms: Form and Meaning in Jan Van Eyck's Cloths of Honor' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 1998). See also Cottrell, 'Unravelling the Mystery of Jan Van Eyck's Cloths of Honor in the Ghent Altarpiece', in *Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress: Objects, Texts, Images*, ed. by Desirée Koslin and Janet E. Snyder (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 173–94.

fabrics.<sup>4</sup> However, little attention has been paid to the representation of textiles in manuscript illumination.

This is surprising, as there is evidence to suggest that illuminators, like panel painters, were active in the textile industry, especially as designers of tapestries and embroideries.<sup>5</sup> For example, the Parisian workshop of illuminator Jean Pucelle worked in a variety of media, including embroidery design; an embroidered mitre from the Church of Sixt in Savoy bears a strong stylistic connection to Pucelle's style.<sup>6</sup> Giovannino de' Grassi or a later follower, who drew a version of dogs attacking a wild boar that the Limbourgs later copied in the December miniature of the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, also included on this same page a design for a textile, the pattern of which consists of a leopard chained in an enclosure set in a field scattered with oak leaves, with the repeat indicated at the lower left.<sup>7</sup> The Master of the *Très Petites Heures* of Anne of Brittany, who worked in Paris during the last quarter of the fifteenth century,

<sup>4</sup> Lisa Monnas, 'Some Venetian Silk Weaving Statutes from the Thirteenth to the Sixteenth Century', *Bulletin de liaison du Centre International d'étude des textiles anciens (CIETA)*, 69 (1991), 37–55, and Luca Mola, *The Silk Industry of Renaissance Venice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Although the role of panel painters in providing textile designs may have been overstated, there is evidence to suggest that artists such as Jacopo Bellini, Pisanello, and Antonio Pollaiuolo were also active in this capacity; see Monnas, 'The Artists', pp. 416–24. Also note that Flemings were known to be employed in the Italian weaving industry; see Hillie Smit, 'Un si bello et onorato mistero': Flemish Weavers Employed by the City Government of Siena (1438–1480), in *Italy and the Low Countries – Artistic Relations, the Fifteenth Century, Proceedings of the Symposium, Utrecht, Museum Catharijneconvent, 14 March 1994* (Florence: Centro Di, 1999), pp. 69–78.

<sup>6</sup> See François Avril, *Manuscript Painting at the Court of France: The Fourteenth Century* (New York: Braziller, 1978), p. 20, fig. VII.

<sup>7</sup> Monnas, 'The Artists', p. 419. While most scholars discount the possibility that the Limbourgs knew the Bergamo sheet directly, it is possible that textile design was the impetus for the transmission of this pattern. It is known that Jean Malouel, uncle to the Limbourgs, was commissioned to design several cloths of gold for Isabella of Bavaria in 1396; see Pieter Roelofs, 'Johan Maelwael, Court Painter in Guelders and Burgundy', in *The Limbourg Brothers: Nijmegen Masters at the French Court 1400–1416* [exhibition catalogue], ed. by Rob Dückers and Pieter Roelofs (Nijmegen: Het Valkhof Museum and Ludion Press, 2005), pp. 35–53 (p. 41). Perhaps it was through this aspect of his workshop practice that a copy of this design became known to his nephews.

also designed tapestries.<sup>8</sup> Finally, Ghent illuminator Gerard Horenbout supplied cartoons for a set of tapestries for the church of St Pharahildis, and collaborated with a Ghent convent in the production of an embroidered 'jardinet' for Margaret of Austria.<sup>9</sup>

Nonetheless, the profound lack of physical evidence obviously limits any study. Most of the costly materials valued by the Burgundian court have long since disintegrated or disappeared. A few textiles do survive within the famed Burgundian Booty captured at Grandson and Murton; however, most of these have been altered.<sup>10</sup> In addition, scholars as yet have only a poor understanding of the development of specific patterns. Despite recent studies on workshop organization, guild regulations, and technical production of late fifteenth-century textiles, particularly in Venice and Lucca, no similar analysis has been made for the stylistic development of the patterns themselves. Further hampering any such understanding is the over-riding popularity of the so-called pomegranate pattern that dominated luxury velvet production from the mid-fifteenth century until well into the sixteenth century in both Italy and Spain; the pattern remained largely consistent, with only subtle variations.<sup>11</sup> Finally, manuscript painters, particularly those associated with the courts, were repeatedly exposed to these materials so that they need not have copied actual textiles, but would have been fully able to create their own variations.

It was under the patronage of the Valois that particular interest in the depiction of richly patterned textiles arose in manuscript painting. This was paralleled by the over-riding materialism that characterized the International Gothic Style with its close connection to fourteenth-century Italian painting and

<sup>8</sup> See Thomas Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance: Art and Magnificence* [exhibition catalogue] (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002), pp. 70–79.

<sup>9</sup> Lorne Campbell and Susan Foister, 'Gerard, Lucas and Susanna Horenbout', *Burlington Magazine*, 128 (1986), 719–20.

<sup>10</sup> See Florens Deuchler, *Die Burgunderbeute: Inventar der Beutestücke aus den Schlachten von Grandson, Murten und Nancy 1476/1477* (Bern: Stämpfli, 1963), and also Deuchler's *The Burgundian Booty and Works of Burgundian Court Art* [exhibition catalogue] (Bern: Historisches Museum, 1969).

<sup>11</sup> The 'pomegranate pattern' is a generic name that was first used in the nineteenth century, despite the fact that few, if any, pomegranates actually seem to appear in these Renaissance textiles; see von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, p. 40. The 'pinecone' pattern, after the example of contemporary inventories, also appears; see Grete de Francesco, 'Silk Fabrics in Venetian Paintings', *CIBA Review*, 29 (1940), 1036–50 (p. 1043).



its interest in textile documentation.<sup>12</sup> The relationship between French and Italian art during this period became quite close, as demonstrated, for example, by the adoption of pattern-dense yet naturalistic Italian stylistic features in Parisian art production after Jean le Bon visited the papal court in Avignon in 1342.<sup>13</sup> It is no coincidence that tapestry production bloomed during this period, further testament to the high value placed on luxury textiles in Northern Europe. The *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, perhaps more than any manuscript from this period, demonstrates the fascination with the documentation of personal possessions.<sup>14</sup> In most of the miniatures, the Limbourg brothers limited the use of patterned textiles to denote figures with secular status, such as the Three Magi, Herod, or secular courtiers, relying instead on solid, monochromatic fabrics with gold embroidery at the hems for the holy figures.<sup>15</sup> Nowhere is secular status more stressed than in the January miniature and the other monthly illustrations depicting aristocratic activities (Figure 34). At the richly catered banquet, the duke wears a luxuriously patterned blue and gold long robe, or *houppelande*, while seated in a resplendent interior lined with tapestries and surrounded by courtiers displaying no less splendidly patterned, deeply chromatic fabrics. Despite the relative specificity of the patterns and the

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of silk textiles in fourteenth-century Italian painting, see Klesse, *Seidenstoffe*. See also Victor M. Schmidt's essay in this volume, especially the section 'Curtains and Painting'.

<sup>13</sup> Avril, *Manuscript Painting*, pp. 27–28. This reciprocation of influences continued later, when Italian illuminators, such as the Master of the Brussels Initials, were attracted to the rich markets of Paris, and French illuminators, such as Jacquemart d'Hesdin, were able to introduce Italian motifs. On the Brussels Initials Master, see Patrick de Winter, 'Art, Devotion and Satire: The Book of Hours of Charles III, the Noble, King of Navarre, at the Cleveland Museum of Art', *Gamut*, 2 (1981), 42–59. For the Italian influences on Jacquemart d'Hesdin, see Millard Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry: The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke* (London: Phaidon, 1967), pp. 198–246.

<sup>14</sup> Found in Chantilly, at the Musée Condé. A survey of the principal bibliography and full colour reproductions can be found in Raymond Cazelles and Johannes Rathoffer, *Illuminations of Heaven and Earth: The Glories of the Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (New York: Abrams, 1988).

<sup>15</sup> There are some exceptions, such as the robe worn by the Archangel Gabriel (fol. 26), or the undergarments worn by John the Evangelist on Patmos (fol. 17).

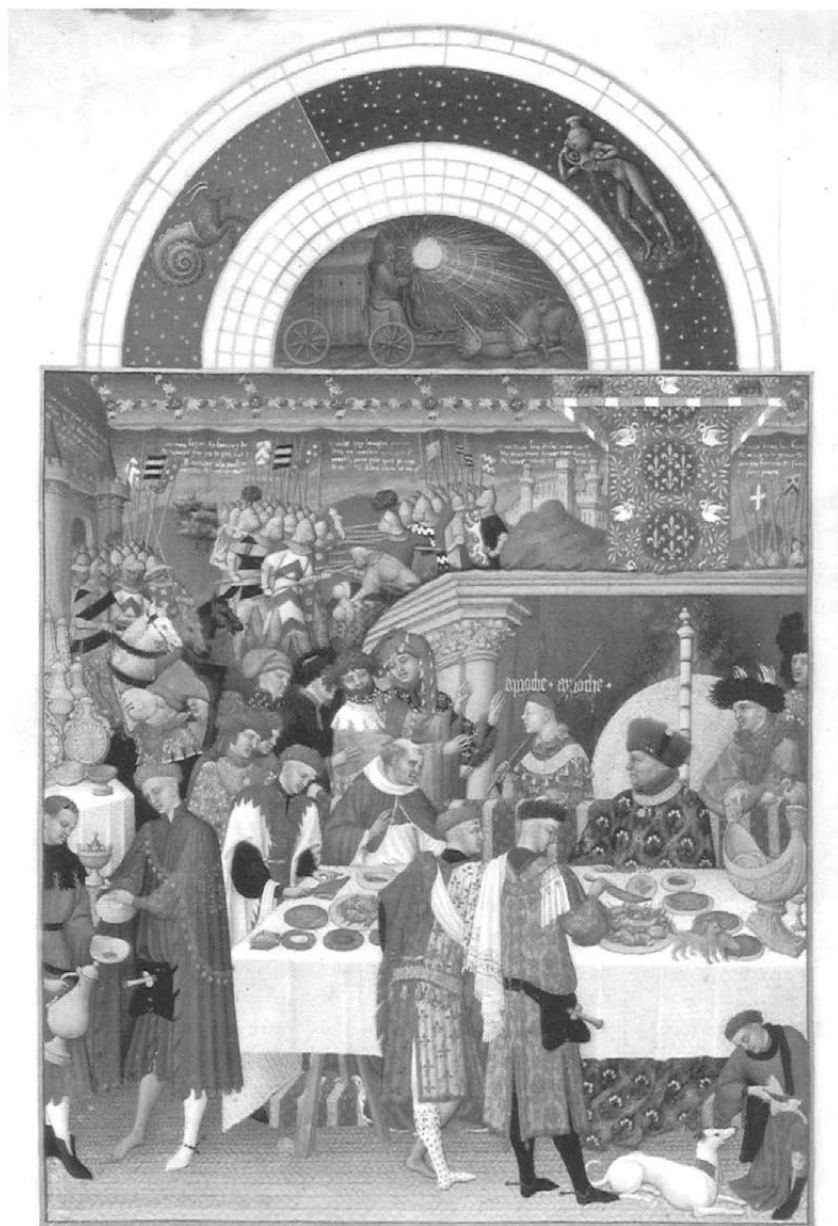


Figure 34. Limbourg Brothers. January, *Très Riches Heures de Duc de Berry*, Chantilly, Musée Condé, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>. France, before 1416.

tapestries, it is dangerous to assume that the Limbourgs relied on actual textiles in the painting of the miniature.<sup>16</sup> The miniature emphasizes ultramarine blue, a colour considered luxurious in the medium of painting and manuscript illumination since it was derived from the expensive mineral lapis lazuli. However, in textile production, blue, though common, was not necessarily considered a luxurious hue as the dye was obtained from the common indigenous woad plant or from the somewhat more expensive, imported indigo.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, it is doubtful that actual textiles displayed the deeply saturated jewel-tones associated with the illuminator's palette.<sup>18</sup> However, blue did increase in value during this period, particularly at the French court, which was the first to adopt it as a royal colour.<sup>19</sup> Also, the emphasis on gold patterning seen in most of the garments certainly reflects the richly embroidered clothing worn at the famously glittering court.

Certainly, some of the designs of textiles painted by the Limbourgs do seem to be rooted in contemporary fashion. For example, the man on the ladder helping Joseph of Arimathea with the Deposition (fol. 156<sup>v</sup>) wears a red *haincelin*, or short robe, with a dense pattern of gold vines and leaves trimmed with bands of pseudo-Arabic writing in black and gold (Figure 35). The fashion for textiles with polychrome bands including pseudo-Arabic lettering, animals, and other motifs derived from Mameluke-striped silks that were then interpreted by Italian weavers from the end of the fourteenth century until around 1415.<sup>20</sup> While such oriental influences are seen in the art of the Limbourgs, it is rarely consistent in its depiction, often being combined with contemporary French fashion and

<sup>16</sup> For commentary of the tapestries, see Scot McKendrick, 'The Great History of Troy: A Reassessment of the Development of a Secular Theme in Late Medieval Art', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 54 (1991), 43–82.

<sup>17</sup> Moreover, as Huizinga suggests, blue, along with green, might have been considered unsuitable for regular clothing in that it held symbolic connotations specifically associated with love and, inversely, folly: Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. by Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 326–28.

<sup>18</sup> See Desirée Koslin, 'Value-added Stuffs and Shifts in Meaning: An Overview and Case Study of Medieval Textile Paradigms', in *Encountering Medieval Textiles*, ed. by Koslin and Snyder, pp. 233–50, esp. pp. 235–36.

<sup>19</sup> See Michel Pastoureau, *Blue: The History of a Color* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), esp. pp. 55–63.

<sup>20</sup> Wardwell, 'The Stylistic Development', p. 185; Lewis May, *Silk Textiles*, p. 33.

other styles; it serves ultimately to underscore the exotic 'otherness' of the figure and thereby roots the miniature within a historicizing framework.<sup>21</sup>

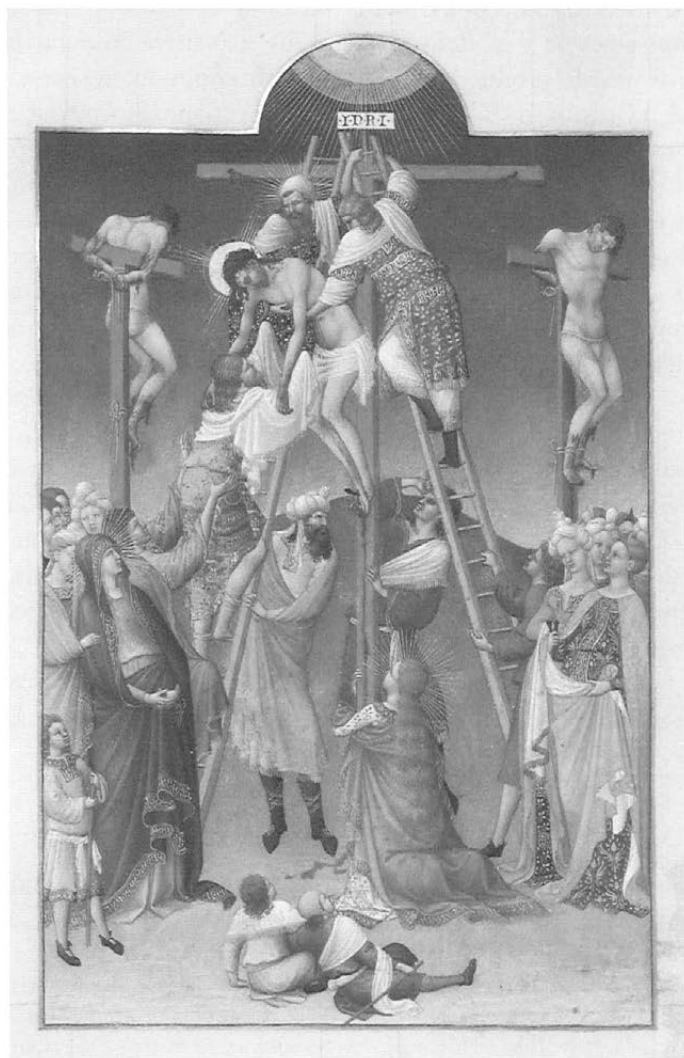


Figure 35. Limbourg Brothers. Deposition, *Très Riches Heures de Duc de Berry*, Chantilly, Musée Condé, fol. 156<sup>v</sup>. France, before 1416.

<sup>21</sup> See Joyce Kubiski, 'Orientalizing Costume in Early Fifteenth-Century French Manuscript Painting (Cité des Dames Master, Limbourg Brothers, Boucicaut Master, and Bedford Master)', *Gesta*, 60 (2001), 161–80.

It is very likely that some of the designs were part of the inherited repertoire of manuscript decoration, especially relating to the tradition of diapered backgrounds, which was in decline by the second decade of the fifteenth century. One of the most common of these background patterns was the *rinceaux* decoration of delicately curling vines and leaves, which became so popular that it lent its name to a group of artists of the period, the Masters of the Gold Scrolls.<sup>22</sup> Yet, there is at least one instance, in the *Petites Heures du Jean de Berry*, where an actual textile may have inspired the artist (Jacquemart d'Hesdin?). The background of the Mocking of Christ miniature shows a design of scrolling vines and tri-foliolate leaves in which small canine creatures rest. This design relates to a silk fragment in the Düsseldorf Kunstmuseum, and corresponds to contemporary accounts describing similarly designed textiles.<sup>23</sup> This pattern-type also appears to have continued into the sixteenth century, when illuminators decorated several borders in the Grimani Breviary by combining dense vine patterns with larger motifs, such as lilies, strawberry plants, and other items.<sup>24</sup> However, by the time the *Très Riches Heures* were begun, the Limbourgs were incorporating new types of background patterns, one of which, a stylized, curling acanthus pattern with some suggestion of modelling (fol. 26), reflects the new naturalism of Italian textile design during the first two decades of the fifteenth century.<sup>25</sup>

### *Textiles as Border Motifs and the Hours of Catherine of Cleves*

The earliest known example of luxury textiles being used as a border motif, as opposed to providing the inspiration for background patterning or clothing, occurs in the famously innovative *Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, whose eponymous

<sup>22</sup> See Georges Dogaer, *Flemish Miniature Painting in the 15th and 16th Centuries* (Amsterdam: Israël, 1987), pp. 27–31.

<sup>23</sup> Wardwell, 'The Stylistic Development', pp. 186–87.

<sup>24</sup> Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, MS lat. I, 99, fols 59<sup>v</sup>, 72<sup>v</sup>, 121<sup>r</sup>, 384<sup>r</sup>. See Scato de Vries and S. Morpurgo, *Das Brevarium Grimani in der Bibliothek von San Marco in Venedig, Vollständige photographische Reproduktion*, 4 vols (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1903–08).

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of this change, see Wardwell, 'The Stylistic Development', p. 205. For comparative examples, see Barbara Karkowsky, *Europäische Seidengewebe des 13. – 18. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne: Kunstgewerbemuseums, 1976), cat. 29, 30, and von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, fig. 439.

master was active in Utrecht in the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>26</sup> Although not Franco-Flemish in origin, the artists of this manuscript were influenced by that tradition among others. The textile border surrounding the miniature of St Agatha may be iconographically significant as she was sometimes a patron



Figure 36. Master of Catherine of Cleves. St Agatha, Hours of Catherine of Cleves, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 917, p. 306. Utrecht, 1442–45.

<sup>26</sup> See Jonathan Plummer, *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves* (New York: Braziller, 1966); Friedrich Gorissen, *Das Stundenbuch der Katharina von Kleve: Analyse und Kommentar* (Berlin: Mann, 1973); *The Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting* [exhibition catalogue], ed. by Henri L. M. Defoer, Anne S. Korteweg, and Wilhelmina C. M. Wüstefeld, with intro. by James H. Marrow (Stuttgart: Belser, 1989), cat. 45–46.

saint of weaving (Figure 36).<sup>27</sup> Although there are no known direct parallels to surviving textile fragments, the specificity of the patterns in the border does suggest reliance on actual textiles. The overlapping roundels on the silk hanging behind the saint recall medieval armour made of overlapping leather diskettes, which also inspired woven textiles, as is seen in Gentile da Fabriano's *Strozzi Altarpiece*.<sup>28</sup> Members of the Burgundian court are known to have translated this type of armour to more luxurious garments.<sup>29</sup>

The comparison to Gentile's early fifteenth-century altarpiece underscores another striking feature of the textiles represented in the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves*: namely, their archaic quality. For example, the curling vine pattern with small dogs on the curtain behind St Blaise reflects a textile pattern-type that was popular from c. 1360–90, although it was produced as late as 1400 (Figure 37).<sup>30</sup> There may have been an iconographic reason for this. According to Voragine, the saint retired to a cave during Diocletian's persecutions, where wild beasts flocked to him to receive his blessing; therefore the beasts, or dogs, in the background may be a reference to this miracle.<sup>31</sup> This is not the only miniature in which the textile backdrop refers to the miracles associated with the saint it accompanies. The miniature of St Helen (*Cleves Hours*, M. 917, p. 318), who found the True Cross, includes a red curtain appropriately embroidered in gold with the Instruments of the Passion. This concordance of textile backdrop and subject matter reflects how textiles were used at fifteenth-century courts, particularly in Burgundy and France, where cloths of honour, both real and

<sup>27</sup> The story of St Agatha was apparently conflated with that of Penelope; see Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, 3 vols (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1955–59), III, pp. 27–32. It is not clear how this Utrecht artist knew about this connection: it is not mentioned in Voragine, nor is a related posthumous miracle associated with Agatha's burial veil (used to stop an eruption of Mount Etna). A pictorial image of the latter appears in the eight-century frescoes of the Catacomb of San Genaro in Naples; see George Kaftal, *Saints in Italian Art: Iconography of the Saints in Central and South Italian Schools of Painting* (Florence: Sansoni, 1965), pp. 6–14, and fig. 18A.

<sup>28</sup> Reproduced in Frederick Hartt and David G. Wilkins, *The History of Italian Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, 5th edn (New York: Abrams, 2003), p. 225.

<sup>29</sup> Huizinga, *The Autumn*, p. 115.

<sup>30</sup> Wardwell, 'The Stylistic Development', p. 186.

<sup>31</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), I, p. 151.



represented, were embroidered or appliquéd with the arms, emblems, and mottos of their owners.<sup>32</sup>



Figure 37. Master of Catherine of Cleves. St Blaise, Hours of Catherine of Cleves, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 917, p. 264. Utrecht, 1442–45.

Some of the patterns in the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves* suggest a Spanish influence, most noticeably in the intertwined geometric patterns found on some floors in many of the miniatures and in the Iberian-style tiles surrounding the Crucifixion (Figure 38).<sup>33</sup> Whether this influence was direct or, more likely,

<sup>32</sup> Lisa Monnas, 'Contemplate What Has Been Done: Silk Fabrics in Paintings by Jan Van Eyck', *Hali*, 60 (1991), 103–28 (p. 113).

<sup>33</sup> Examples of Iberian-style floor patterns may be seen on pp. 228, 277, 286, 287, 288, 290, and 302 of the *Hours*. However, other floors in this manuscript show connections to patterns found in northern manuscript illumination, as noted by Gorissen, *Das Stundenbuch*, p. 900. The display of interlaced geometric work in association with the Crucifixion also appears in some fourteenth-century Italian painting, including the Crucifix attributed to Segna di



indirect by way of Moorish-inspired Italian weaving, interlaced geometric patterns did become common in Spanish weaving with the building of the Alhambra at the end of the thirteenth century, and remained a significant source of inspiration throughout the fourteenth century.<sup>34</sup> Other suggestions of Spanish



Figure 38. Master of Catherine of Cleves. Crucifixion, Hours of Catherine of Cleves, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 917, p. 160. Utrecht, 1442–45.

(or Spanish-inspired Italian) influence may be seen in the fantastic undulating pattern of the cloth behind St Scholastica (*Cleves Hours*, M. 917, p. 313) and the stylized foliated pattern with small birds behind St Alexis (M. 917, p. 290). The former recalls the abstract, flowing patterns of fifteenth-century Moorish Spain,<sup>35</sup>

Bonaventura in the National Gallery in London (NG. 567).

<sup>34</sup> Lewis May, *Silk Textiles*, pp. 134–38. For examples, see also Monique King and Donald King, *European Textiles in the Keir Collection: 400 B.C. to 1800 A.D.* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), cat. 34–36.

<sup>35</sup> Lewis May, *Silk Textiles*, fig. 104.

while the latter suggests the ancient 'Tree of Life' pattern in which small birds or animals perch within or flank a leafy motif.<sup>36</sup> A similar confusion in pattern origin also occurs with the striped textiles, an example of which appears in the *Cleves Hours* (M. 917, p. 226) behind the Apostle Philip, which both Spanish and Italian weavers were known to have produced.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the St Alexis miniature mentioned above is a good illustration of the international character of the textiles that appear in this manuscript: the cloth of honour behind the saint consists of an ogival framework of Italianate foliage, isolating Spanish-style lozenges that are interspersed with fantastic winged dragon- or raptor-like creatures, recalling the Chinese *feng- huang*, or phoenix.

### *The Interpretation of Textile Borders*

For the most part, the textiles in the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves* are cloths of honour displayed behind saintly figures, in the time-honoured tradition of indicating status. However, it is not always clear how to read the textile border. It may be related to the image, as in the case of the miniature of St Agatha in the *Cleves Hours*, where her association with weaving appears to come from a conflation of her legend with that of Penelope.<sup>38</sup> However, can we assume such a connection with other examples of the textile border as well? This question becomes important when considering the representation of cloth of gold (the term for silk textiles that incorporate metal threads in the weave) and other silks in late fifteenth-century Flemish border decorations of the so-called Ghent-Bruges School. This period introduced a bewildering variety of illusionistic borders, the motifs of which included jewels, pilgrimage badges, peacock feathers, grotesques, and wild men, in addition to the most common border associated with this style, the strewn flower border.<sup>39</sup> The use of luxury textiles

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 151; King and King, *European Textiles*, cat. 39, 40. It should be noted that this pattern originated in Italy.

<sup>37</sup> Lewis May, *Silk Textiles*, p. 153.

<sup>38</sup> See: n. 28, above.

<sup>39</sup> For discussion of the variety of border types in late medieval Flemish manuscripts, see Anne Margreet As-Vijvers, 'More than Marginal Meaning? The Interpretation of Ghent-Bruges Border Decoration', *Oud Holland*, 116 (2003), 3–33, and Greet Nijs, 'Typology of the Border Decoration in the Manuscripts of the Ghent-Bruges School', in *"Als ich can". Liber Amicorum in Memory of Professor Dr. Maurits Smeyers*, ed. by B. Cardon, J. Van der Stock, and D. Vanwijnsberghe, 2 vols (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), II, pp. 1007–36. The latter, however, is

in this context is intriguing, because the majority of manuscripts produced by late medieval Flemish artists were books of hours, private devotional books intended for lay audiences to express piety at the canonical hours of the day. Cloths of gold as well as other costly silks and velvets were associated with public expressions of faith within ecclesiastical settings and used in a variety of circumstances, including votive offerings for the clothing of cult images,<sup>40</sup> the making of vestments, altar cloths and other furnishings for the mass, and for the protection and display of relics.<sup>41</sup>

Scholars are only beginning to explore the role of silks in the cult of relics, although it was substantial.<sup>42</sup> While the fabric itself may have had an economic value by virtue of its material, it was contact with the relic itself that gave textile relic-holders a more tangible value to medieval viewers. In certain cases, the textile cover could even become a substitute for the actual relic, either as a proxy for the object hidden within its folds or in the case of the relic's actual absence.<sup>43</sup> It is possible that medieval viewers perceived a similar link in value through the close proximity of the holy image with the cloth.<sup>44</sup> Within the context of the

simply a catalogue of the variety of motifs.

<sup>40</sup> In 1412, John the Fearless had two, fur-lined brocade dresses donated to the statue of the Virgin at Tournai Cathedral, for which, see Léon Emmanuel De Laborde, *Les Ducs de Bourgogne, Études sur les lettres, les arts et l'industrie pendant le XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2 vols (Paris: Plon frères, 1849), I, p. 64. Mirroring this act, in 1424, Philip the Bold had new mantles made for the Tournai Madonna from cloth ordered from Arnolfini: H. Wescher, 'Fashions and Textiles at the Court of Burgundy', *CIBA Review*, 51 (1946), 1841–48 (p. 1843).

<sup>41</sup> While silks were used as relic pouches, the heavy, stiff properties of true cloth of gold generally made it unsuitable for smaller relic pouches and such.

<sup>42</sup> See Marielle Mariniani-Reber, 'Le rôle des étoffes dans le culte des reliques au Moyen Âge', *Bulletin du CIETA*, 70 (1991), 53–58, and Dominique Cardon, 'Un saint suaire en soie: le saint Cabouin de Carcassonne', *Bulletin du CIETA*, 70 (1992), 101–10. Perhaps the most famous textile relic is the Vera Icon; see *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation: Papers from a Colloquium held at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome and the Villa Spelman, Florence 1996*, ed. by Herbert L. Kessler and Gerhard Wolf, *Villa Spelman Colloquia*, 6 (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1998).

<sup>43</sup> Mariniani-Reber, 'Le rôle des étoffes', p. 54.

<sup>44</sup> As, for example, in a Madonna icon in Abbenbroek in Reimerswaal, which was surrounded by a canopy embroidered with verses on the seven sorrows of the Virgin in gold; see Tim Graas, 'Verloren gegane Lukas-Madonna's te Reimerswaal en Abbenbroek', in *Christelijke Iconographie: Opstellen over iconografische aspecten van het Nederlands Kerkelijk Kunstbezit*, ed. by Paul le Blanc and others, *Jaarboeken Stichting Kerkelijk Kunstbezit in Nederland*, 1 (The Hague: SDU, 1990), pp. 12–26 (p. 24).

book of hours, the textile border may have lent confirmation to the spiritual importance of the image it surrounded, supporting the value (and veracity) of the image it accompanied. This is suggested by two miniatures from the *Hours of Charles VIII*, attributed to the workshop of Jean Bourdichon (Figure 39).<sup>45</sup> Both consist of bust-length representations of the Virgin, one in which she



Figure 39. Workshop of Jean Bourdichon. Annunciation, *Hours of Charles VIII*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS lat. 1370, fol. 47<sup>r</sup>. France, early sixteenth century.

<sup>45</sup> See Victor Leroquais, *Les livres d'heures manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale*, 4 vols (Paris: Mâcon, 1927–43), I, pp. 189–90; II, plate XCVII. I would like to thank Kathryn Rudy for bringing this miniature to my attention.

is on her own in prayer, and the other as the Annunciate, against a cloth of honour with a rosette pattern. The tangibility of the Virgin is underscored by the shadow that she throws against the cloth backdrop, which in turn throws its own shadow on the blank vellum. This level of illusionism also appears in various Flemish books of hours where textile borders, generally rich cloth of gold with the 'pomegranate' pattern, come complete with crease marks.<sup>46</sup>

While *trompe l'oeil* imagery was a popular conceit in the Renaissance, the use of textiles in attesting to the veracity of an image had long been a feature of Christian art. In part, it may be rooted in one of the principal arguments for the use of images within the Church, that is, the typological association of Christ to the tabernacle, and specifically to the temple curtain.<sup>47</sup> This principal underlies the development of the Mandylion (the archetype that authorizes all other Christian images) to the Veronica.<sup>48</sup> In one tradition of Mandylion representation, explicit links between textile and image are made whereby the head of Christ appears not on a plain linen ground (as in the original archetype) but on a diapered cloth with tassels.<sup>49</sup> The artist thus emphasized the value of this image, in addition to adding to its veracity. Just as the Mandylion became the justification for holy icons, so too may the legitimacy of the Virgin's image (itself an iconic bust-length) be emphasized by its textile surrounds in the *Hours of Charles VIII*.

In addition to attesting to the value of an image, textiles were also prized by late medieval viewers for their association with personal expression of piety. The devout wrapped books of hours and other devotional books in fabrics and covered accoutrements such as prayer-cushions and prie-dieux in silks and velvets.<sup>50</sup> The miniature of Philip the Good attending a Mass in the *Traité sur*

<sup>46</sup> See n. 53, below.

<sup>47</sup> Hebrews 10. 19–20; see Herbert L. Kessler, 'Configuring the Invisible by Copying the Holy Face', in *The Holy Face*, ed. by Kessler and Wolf, pp. 129–51.

<sup>48</sup> See Gerhard Wolf, 'From Mandylion to Veronica: Picturing the "Disembodied" Face and Disseminating the True Image of Christ in the Latin West', in *The Holy Face*, ed. by Kessler and Wolf, pp. 153–79.

<sup>49</sup> Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Cod. Ross. Gr. 251, fol. 12<sup>v</sup>, illustrated in *The Holy Face*, ed. by Kessler and Wolf, plate D.

<sup>50</sup> Geertje Gerhold, 'An Illuminated Manuscript from the 15th Century: The Conservation of its Textile Cover', in *Conservazione dei materiali librari, archivistici e grafici*, ed. by Marina Regni and Piera Giovanna Tordella, 2 vols (Torino: Allemandi, 1996–99), 1, pp. 109–15. The manuscript tradition itself abounds with numerous illustrations of textiles used in these ways.

*l'oraison dominicale* vibrantly illustrates the variety of uses to which textiles were put in the aid of personal devotion. The duke kneels under a personal canopy, on a carpet before a covered prie-dieu on which rests a prayer book, while on the textile curtains hangs a devotional diptych.<sup>51</sup> However, this is as much a political statement as it is an image about the personal piety of Philip the Good, for his arms appear throughout the book. The priestly vestments, the altar-cloth, and the floor coverings before the altar itself all bear the arms of the duke, the authenticity of which is easily verified by the remnants of Burgundian chapel furnishings in the Grandson booty.

While this devotional context may have informed the use of cloth of gold as a form of border decoration in Flemish manuscripts, it is not the principal reason for their representation. The high level of illusionism of the Bourdichon miniature is also found in late fifteenth-century Flemish manuscripts where textile borders sometimes show crease marks. The contexts in which these cloths appear are varied, making any kind of liturgical or symbolic reading difficult to sustain.<sup>52</sup> Instead, it is within the framework of the Burgundian court, where these fabrics accompanied political displays of wealth and power, that the textile border is better understood.

The Burgundian love of textiles is well documented.<sup>53</sup> When Panigarola, the Milanese ambassador, visited the court of Charles the Bold, he noted that among the most coveted of gifts were Italian cloth of gold, brocades, and velvets.<sup>54</sup> The

<sup>51</sup> Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 9092, fol. 9<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> Cambridge, MA, Houghton Library, MS typ. 443, fol. 55<sup>r</sup>, surrounds a text page with the prayer 'Audiamus omnes in domi[n]o', and fol. 104<sup>r</sup> surrounds a miniature depicting St Lawrence. The *Voustre-Demeure Hours* (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Vit. 25-5) includes a full cloth of gold border on fol. 187, that surrounds the text page with the incipit for St John the Baptist, as does its facing miniature (now Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, 78.B.13, bl. 17). The Rothschild Prayer book (formerly Wien, Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, ser. n. 2844) includes such a border around both the miniature (a Funeral Mass) and the incipit for the Mass of the Dead (fols 28<sup>r</sup>–29<sup>r</sup>). Last, the Hours of Charlotte de Bourbon, at Alnwick Castle, includes such a border around a miniature of the Massacre of the Innocents (fol. 70<sup>r</sup>); as noted by Janet Backhouse, 'The Hours of Charlotte de Bourbon at Alnwick Castle', in *Als Ich Can*, ed. by Cardon, Van der Stock, and Vanwijnsberghe, pp. 71–90 (p. 79).

<sup>53</sup> De Laborde, *Les Duces*, I, p. 285–93; Robert L. Wyss, 'The Dukes of Burgundy and the Encouragement of Textiles in the Netherlands', *Connoisseur*, 194 (1977), 164–71; Chipps Smith, 'The Artistic Patronage', pp. 208–13.

<sup>54</sup> Marina Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance: Burgundian Arts Across Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 64.

cost of maintaining the appropriate wardrobe at the Burgundian court could be crippling.<sup>55</sup> Although most of these treasured items no longer survive (with the exception of some of the famed tapestry cycles), presentation miniatures in the Burgundian manuscript tradition provide visual records of their use.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the first known use of a textile border in a Flemish manuscript occurs in the *Prayer Book of Charles the Bold* illuminated

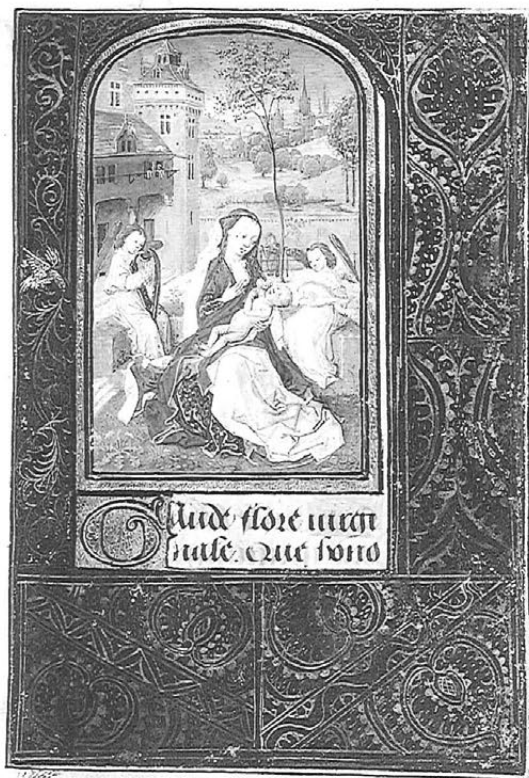


Figure 40. Lieven van Lathem. Madonna and Child with music-making angels, *Prayer book of Charles the Bold*, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS 37, fol. 10<sup>r</sup>. Flanders, 1469/1471.

<sup>55</sup> See Marie-Therese Caron, 'Les Choix de consommation d'un jeune prince à la cour de Philippe le Bon', in *La Vie matérielle au Moyen Age: l'apport des sources littéraires, normatives et de la pratique*, ed. by Emmanuelle Rassart-Eeckhout and others (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, Institut d'études médiévales, 1997), pp. 49–64.



by Lieven van Lathem and others.<sup>56</sup> Surrounding the miniature of the Madonna and Child with music-making angels (fol. 10<sup>r</sup>) is a border of textile fragments in black, with silver and gold detailing comprising an asymmetrical pattern of ogival-shaped medallions in staggered rows with curved lattice dividing the medallions (Figure 40). This pattern, which has its origins in a Yuan Dynasty design, which was transmitted through the Middle East among Mameluke and Byzantine weavers before its reception in the fourteenth century in Lucca, showcases the international character of the textile trade in the fifteenth century, and particularly the Flemish role in transmitting Italian goods to northern Europe.

Most of the other borders in this manuscript are the traditional *rinceaux* type typical of mid-century Burgundian illumination; however, another type also appears. It consists of densely entwined vine and acanthus forms interspersed



Figure 41. Lieven van Lathem. St Margaret, Prayer book of Charles the Bold, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS 37, fol. 49<sup>v</sup>. Flanders, 1469/1471.

<sup>56</sup> Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS 37. This as yet unpublished manuscript, which has not been seen personally by this author, will be the subject of a forthcoming facsimile study by Antoine de Schryver.



with fantastic creatures such as dragons and phoenix on coloured ground rather than blank vellum (Figure 41).<sup>57</sup> Although these borders could have been inspired by Italian silks, this combination of densely entwined vines and minute flowers with fantastic creatures is similar to cloths of honour and tapestries that were used at the Burgundian court, such as the one that appears behind Philip the Good in the presentation miniature of Jean Wauquelin's translation of *Roman de Girart de Roussillon* (Figure 42).<sup>58</sup> That Charles the Bold maintained many of the traditions of courtly propaganda that his father so effectively exploited helps to explain this similarity. In the *Roussillon* miniature, Philip the Good sits on a throne before a sumptuous cloth of honour of scarlet and gold, edged in green. This cloth contains the same intertwined vine motif interspersed with aggressively attacking wild beasts, including the rampant lion that was part of the Burgundian arms. The specificity with which the artist has depicted the scene, down to the highly detailed costumes and jewellery, suggests that the artist was representing actual clothing and textiles. The cloth at the duke's feet supports this theory: it bears the quadripartite arms adopted by Philip the Good, an armorial that Charles the Bold reused. The Swiss captured an identical foot cloth at Grandson, today on display in the Bern Historical Museum. Given the wide variety of motifs found within Lathem's borders, most of which have no armorial significance, it is unlikely that these borders directly refer to such cloths of honour; however, the new border type in the *Prayer Book of Charles the Bold* may have been inspired by such heraldic textiles, and may be interpreted as an obliquely flattering Burgundian reference.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> This border can be found around at least three miniatures: James Major (fol. 22'), Margaret (fol. 49'), and Anthony Abbot in the Wilderness (fol. 33'). I would like to thank Anne Margreet As-Vijvers for bringing these miniatures to my attention.

<sup>58</sup> Mille-fleur tapestries with the Burgundian arms were also among the booty captured by the Swiss; see Deuchler, *Die Burgunderbeute*, cat. 77 and 78.

<sup>59</sup> The link to heraldic textiles is more explicit in a book of hours made for Jean Carpentin by the Dresden Master, which contains borders similar to those in the *Hours of Charles the Bold*, but which clearly incorporate armorial and emblematic motifs to identify the owner. See *Illuminating the Renaissance: The Triumph of Flemish Manuscript Painting in Europe* [exhibition catalogue], ed. by Thomas Kren and Scot McKendrick (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003), cat. 48.



Figure 42. Master of the Girart de Roussillon. Presentation miniature, Roman de Girart de Roussillon, Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, cod. 2549, fol. 6<sup>r</sup>. Brussels, after 1448.

*Related Textile Borders: Jewels on Cloth*

Beginning in the fifteenth century, another common border type in Flemish manuscript illumination was introduced, comprising interlocking metallic letters or jewels on a coloured textile background, which may also have roots in another Burgundian textile tradition.<sup>60</sup> Burgundian historical chronicles and accounts document the embroidering of jewels and precious metals onto clothing.<sup>61</sup> For example, in 1490 Isabella of Castile gave her daughter silk dresses that were embroidered with jewels and gold plaques.<sup>62</sup> The dress worn by Jacqueline de Bourgogne in the portrait by Jan Gossaert (c. 1520–25, now held by the London National Gallery) also reflects this practice, as does the hennepin worn by Maria Portinari in Hugo van der Goes' *Portinari Altarpiece*; it is embroidered with pearls forming alternating initials of *M* and *T*.<sup>63</sup> This practice of incorporating monograms into textiles also occurs in the northern Netherlands, as seen in the miniature of St Cecilia in the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves* (found on p. 308), in which the saint carries the attributes of aristocratic hawk-hunting and stands before a red tapestry with a border embroidered with birds' feathers and charged with gold letters.

Within late Flemish manuscript illumination, the textile border with embroidered letters appears with some regularity, although it is distinct from the more common border of letters fashioned out of acanthus branches or rustic twigs, neither of which concerns us here. In the *Breviary of Isabella of Castile*, for example, a textile border consisting of diagonal stripes with lettering embroidered in gold on a rose ground surrounds a miniature depicting the Seven Brothers of Christ (fol. 404<sup>v</sup>). The vaguely Marian text embroidered on the hanging relates to the tradition of incorporating embroidered texts on ecclesiastical textiles such as vestments, curtains, and other hangings.

<sup>60</sup> For example, Cambridge, MA, Houghton Library, MS typ. 443, fol. 62<sup>r</sup>; reproduced in Bodo Brinkmann, *Die Flämische Buchmalerei am ende des Burgunderreichs: Der Meister des Dresdener Gebetbuchs und die Miniaturisten seiner Zeit* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), fig. 187, and the *Hours of Engelbert of Nassau* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 219-220), fol. 190<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> See Huizinga, *The Autumn*, p. 325; Wescher, 'Fashions and Textiles', p. 1842, and Goehring 'Taking Borders Seriously', pp. 31–33.

<sup>62</sup> Lewis May, *Silk Textiles*, p. 233.

<sup>63</sup> For further discussion on the role of jewels in the Renaissance, see *Princely Magnificence: Court Jewels of the Renaissance, 1500–1630* [exhibition catalogue] (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1981).

Related to these border types is the practice of representing pilgrimage badges, either modelled on actual badges or inventions of the artist, and shown as 'sewn' onto a coloured ground.<sup>64</sup> It is no coincidence that this iconography was introduced at a period when actual pilgrimage badges were collected and sewn into books of hours.<sup>65</sup>

### *The Use and Transmission of Textile Patterns*

While art historians have long acknowledged the prolific use of iconographic patterns, attention has only been recently turned to the study of how textile patterns appear in paintings. In particular, research such as Stephen Goddard's analysis of the use of brocades by the Antwerp artist known as the Master of Frankfurt, has proven to be of significant value in understanding the scope of his workshop and identifying its followers.<sup>66</sup> Likewise, northern European manuscript illuminators often used actual textiles as sources of inspiration but did not copy them verbatim. Their working method was analogous to that of Northern panel painters who, unlike their Italian counterparts (who have been shown to have documented textiles with relative accuracy), often created their own variations. In Jan Van Eyck's *Altarpiece of Canon Van der Paele* of 1436, St Donatian wears a sumptuous blue velvet and gold cope that was woven using the pile-on-pile technique for velvet ('veluti alto e basso').<sup>67</sup> While this image has been considered by some to document the introduction of such velvets, it is not clear whether Van Eyck copied the pattern from an actual cloth, or whether he altered it according to his own specifications.<sup>68</sup> No surviving cloth matches the

<sup>64</sup> For example, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 311, fol. 21<sup>r</sup>; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 219, fol. 16<sup>r</sup>; London, British Library, Add. MS 18852, fol. 184; and Brukenthal Breviary (Sibiu, Muzeul National Brukenthal, MS 761), p. 4.

<sup>65</sup> See Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Virginia Roehrig Kaufmann, 'The Sanctification of Nature: Observations on the Origin of Trompe l'oeil in Netherlandish Book Painting of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal*, 19 (1991), 43–64 (p. 56); As-Vijvers, 'More than Marginal Meaning?', pp. 8–10.

<sup>66</sup> Stephen H. Goddard, 'Brocade Patterns in the Shop of the Master of Frankfurt: An Accessory to Stylistic Analysis', *Art Bulletin*, 67 (1985), 401–17.

<sup>67</sup> Bruges, Stedelijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten.

<sup>68</sup> However, as Lisa Monnas points out, this painting may not be an accurate documentation of this velvet's introduction, as it was not until the perfection of oil painting at this time that artists could even represent this type of fabric with any degree of accuracy. See

saint's cope exactly; however, blue velvet copes are listed in the 1417 inventory of St Donatian's. Furthermore, in addition to this panel, Canon van der Paele also donated ecclesiastical vestments and other items to St Donatian's in 1434.<sup>69</sup> However, Van Eyck often manipulated patterns so as to make important pictorial or symbolic statements.<sup>70</sup> At the very least, if this painting is not the literal representation of an existing garment, it clearly communicates the sumptuous largesse on the part of the Canon.

Among the most intriguing research in Flemish manuscript studies today is the analysis of the use and transmission of patterns. There is some evidence that individual workshops preferred specific patterns. For example, Willem Vrelant used a wide range of motifs in fabricating textile patterns including the ubiquitous pomegranate-type brocaded velvet; however, a couple do stand out for the regularity of their appearance: a large painterly lotus pattern, notable for its lack of firm contour lines,<sup>71</sup> and a pattern of spread-winged raptors,<sup>72</sup> which reflects the fantastic animal patterns found in Italian weaving at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Another pattern in mid-fifteenth-century Burgundian illumination consists of parallel vertical sinuous vines connecting alternating rows of stylized palmettes containing a thistle motif and a feather-like foliate motif. This pattern appears in Burgundian illumination from the 1450s to the 1470s, after which time it disappears; dates that correspond to its appearance in textile production as well.<sup>73</sup> Simon Marmion used this pattern in the St Petersburg *Grandes Chroniques*,<sup>74</sup> the

Lisa Monnas, 'Developments of Figured Velvet Weaving in Italy during the 14th Century', *Bulletin du CIETA*, 63–64 (1986), 63–100.

<sup>69</sup> Lisa Monnas, 'Silk Textiles in the Paintings of Jan van Eyck', in *Investigating Jan Van Eyck*, ed. by Susan Foister, Sue Jones and Delphine Cool (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 147–62 (p. 151).

<sup>70</sup> Cottrell, 'Birds, Beasts, and Blossoms'; Monnas, 'Contemplate What Has Been Done', p. 103.

<sup>71</sup> Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 9511, fol. 252<sup>r</sup>, and MS 9270, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>72</sup> See Bernard Bousmanne, 'Item à Guillaume Wyelant aussi enlumineur'. *Willem Vrelant: Un aspect de l'enluminure dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux sous le mécénat des ducs de Bourgogne Philippe le Bon et Charles le Téméraire* (Brussels: Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique; Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), fig. 42, plate 17, and a variation on plate 31.

<sup>73</sup> See *Tessuti serici italiani 1450–1530*, ed. by Grazietta Butazzi and others (Milan: Electa, 1983), cat. 11, and Karkowsky, *Europäische Seidengewebe*, cat. 29.

<sup>74</sup> In the cope worn by Guillaume Fillastre: St Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Erm. 88, fol. 1<sup>r</sup>.

Huntington Library Hours (Figure 43),<sup>75</sup> and in the cloth of honour behind Philip the Good in the presentation miniature of Guy Parat's *Traité de la conservation de la santé*, to name but a few examples.<sup>76</sup> This pattern also appears in the painting of the Master of Jean Mansel, an artist believed to have been an early collaborator or teacher of Marmion, as well as with Loyset Liédet,



Figure 43. Simon Marmion. St Luke and the Virgin, Book of Hours, San Marino, Huntington Library, HM 1173, fol 15<sup>v</sup>. Valenciennes, c. 1475.

<sup>75</sup> See also fol. 79<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>76</sup> St Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Fr. Q. v. VI, 1, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>.

an artist also known to have collaborated with the Mansel Master and Marmion.<sup>77</sup> Later, Flemish artists in the circle of the Ghent Associates of the Master of Mary of Burgundy used this pattern in the *'Voustre-Demeure' Hours*, now in Madrid, a manuscript to which Marmion also contributed.<sup>78</sup> After the late 1480s, coincidentally at the time when these artists had either died or disappeared, there are no further examples of this particular pattern.<sup>79</sup>

How artists transmitted such textile patterns is not quite clear. Among the few drawn studies or models for Flemish illumination, none specify textile patterns. Similarly, in looking at the scant evidence of tracings and under-drawings, it seems that, while basic iconographic outlines were established, details such as landscape setting, architectural details, and textile patterns were unspecified.<sup>80</sup> One method of pattern-transmission was through direct copying. For example, the Master of the 'Older' Prayer Book of Emperor Maximilian I (henceforth called the Maximilian Master), who painted the Adoration of the Magi miniature in the *Hours of Isabella of Castile* in Cleveland (Figure 44), copied this detail for detail from a miniature by Simon Marmion, down to the exact pattern of the cloth.<sup>81</sup> The Maximilian Master is also connected to another

<sup>77</sup> See Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5087, fol. 121<sup>v</sup>, and Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 9307, fol. 1<sup>r</sup> (reproduced in L. M. J. Delaissé, *De Gouden Eeuw der Vlaamse Miniatuur: het Mecenaat van Filips de Goede 1445-1475* [exhibition catalogue] (Brussels: Paleis van Schone Kunsten, 1959), plates 30, 32.

<sup>78</sup> Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Vit. 25-5, fol. 187; see Brinkmann, *Die Flämische Buchmalerei*, fig. 181.

<sup>79</sup> The Mansel Master, a problematic artist yet to be clearly identified, was active only until the mid-century, while the last mention of Liédet is in 1478. Marmion died in 1489. The Ghent Associates also seem to disperse at this point, or become conflated with the Master of the 'Older' (that is, 'First') Prayer book of Maximilian and his associates.

<sup>80</sup> The model sheet in the British Museum (1883.7.14.78), depicting Mary and Joseph at the Inn, suggests the basic outlines of architecture and landscape; however, these elements are only roughly marked, thus leaving significant room for the further articulation of details and developing of the composition, should the artist choose to do so. See *Illuminating the Renaissance*, ed. by Kren and McKendrick, cat. 21.

<sup>81</sup> Naples, Biblioteca nazionale, MS I B. 51, 'Flora' Hours, fol. 125<sup>v</sup>, reproduced in Romeo De Maio, *Il codice Flora: Una pinacoteca miniata nella Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli* (Naples: Pironti, 1992). The Maximilian Master also painted a variation of this composition in a single leaf miniature; see Patrick de Winter, 'A Book of Hours of Queen Isabel la Católica', *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 67 (1981), 342-427, fig. 91. For a discussion of the role of the Flora Hours in transmitting patterns among Flemish illuminators, see Brinkmann, *Die Flämische Buchmalerei*, pp. 201-14.



textile pattern, in this case consisting of individual motifs of clumps of three leaves with small thistles on a pink ground with cross-hatching in red ink. This

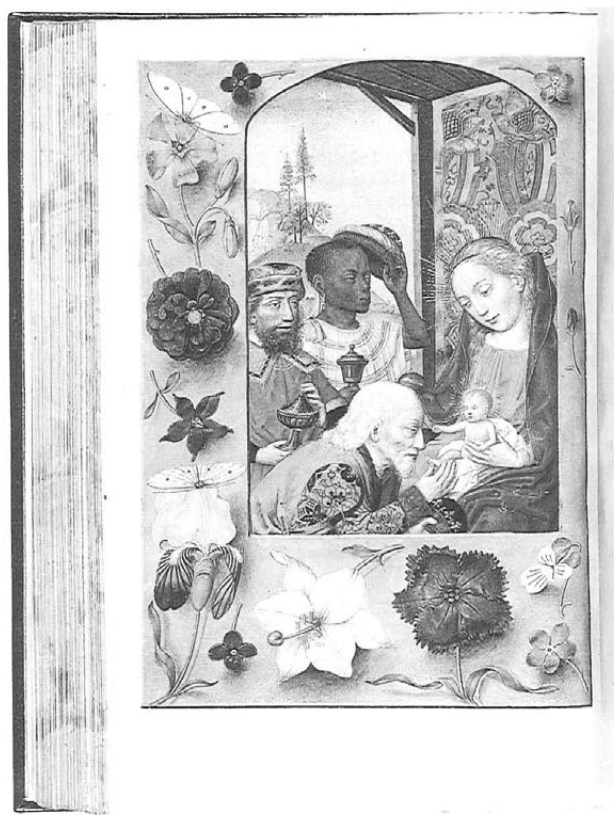


Figure 44. Master of the 'Older' Prayer book of Maximilian I. Adoration of the Magi, Hours of Isabella of Castile, Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund, 63.256, fol. 136r.

c. 1497–1500.

border type appears in the *Emerson-White Hours* (which dates from before 1482), the *Huth Hours* (created before 1489), the *Mayer van den Bergh Breviary* (which dates to around the late 1490s) and the *Grimani Breviary* (c. 1515; Figure 45).<sup>82</sup> These manuscripts were all collaborative projects, although the Maximilian

<sup>82</sup> Cambridge, MA, Houghton Library, MS typ. 443, fol. 51r; London, British Library, Add. MS 38126, fol. 241r; Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, MS lat. I, 99, fol. 99r.



Master only contributed miniatures to the last two. In each case, this particular border does not accompany a miniature; rather it surrounds text.<sup>83</sup> Although this evidence is limited, it suggests that there was a hierarchy of border types in use, which were dependent on the context.

Among the most common type of cloth of honour to appear in late Flemish manuscript illumination is cloth of gold, particularly the velvet brocade 'pomegranate' pattern. The variations on this basic pattern are truly staggering, attesting to the monopoly this design had at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>84</sup> While the specificity of certain representations suggests direct copying, manuscript painters also created freely adapted variations of well-established patterns. Simon Marmion exhibited this freedom of invention, especially in his early manuscripts, in which he rarely repeated exact patterns. Even in his most conservative miniatures that rely on stock patterns (such as in the book of hours in the Huntington Library), Marmion refrained from exact repetition. When portraying Bishop Guillaume Fillastre for the presentation scene in the *Grandes Chroniques*, and again in the donor panel of the *St Bertin Altarpiece*, Marmion did not represent the same cope, although the two are similarly made, with luxurious brocade trimmed with an embroidered gold orphrey depicting various saints. Yet, the similarity of saints on the orphreys represented in the two works of art (including Andrew, John the Evangelist, and other male saints) suggests that an actual cope inspired them both.

In other cases, the study of textile patterns can help to determine the relationships among artists and workshops. The distinctive textile border surrounding the miniature of St Barbara in the *Breviary of Isabella of Castile* consists of a dark green diagonal vegetal pattern against a light grey ground with

<sup>83</sup> The only exception is the folio in the Emerson-White Hours, which includes a small historiated initial. While the Maximilian Master did not contribute any miniatures to this manuscript, it is possible that he may have contributed to the borders. Certainly, some connections between the Maximilian Master and the artists of this manuscript can be seen, as many compositions later used by the Maximilian Master are first introduced here; however, the nature of this relationship is not yet understood.

<sup>84</sup> It is interesting to note, however, that one of the most popular manifestations of this pattern, the Venetian ferronerie pattern, virtually never appears in Flemish illumination. The only Northern example I know appears in the *Hours of Marie de Vronensteyn* (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS II 7619) made in Utrecht, c. 1460; see Albert Brouts, *Noordnederlandse miniaturen* [exhibition catalogue] (Brussels: Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1971), cat. 40.

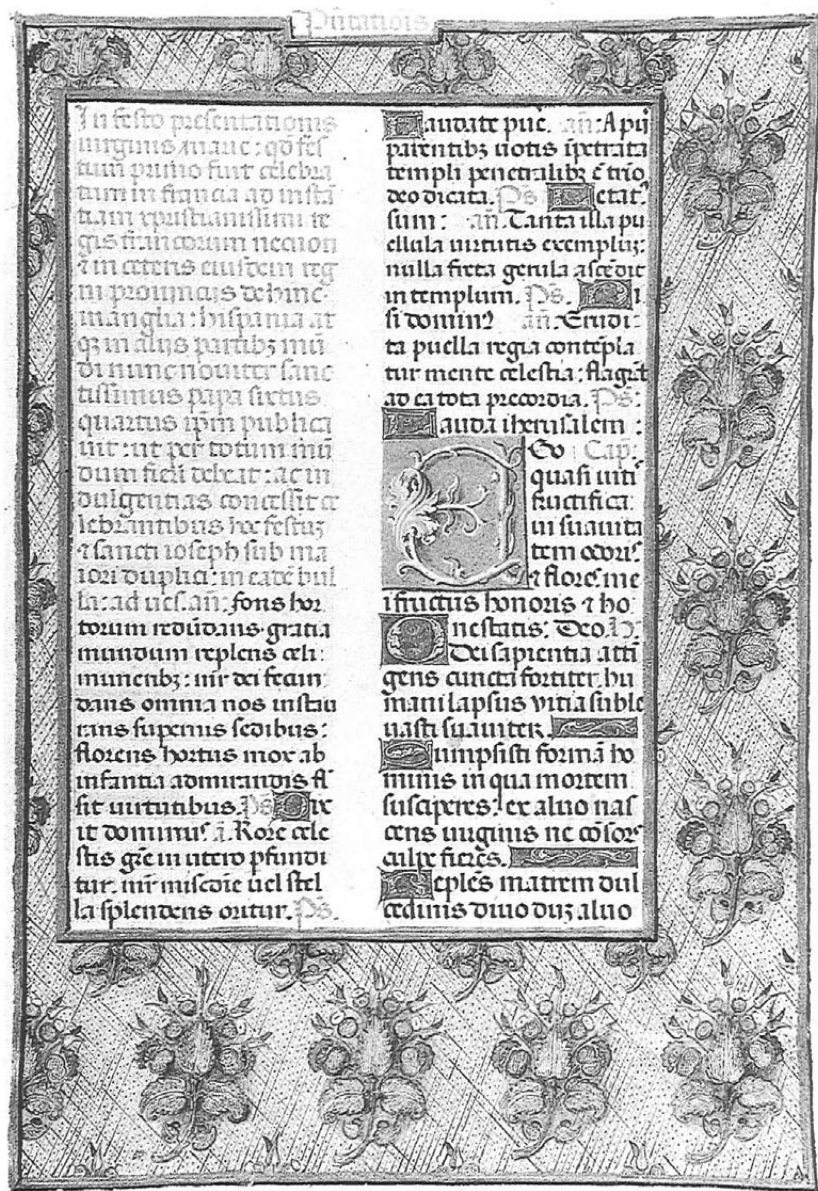


Figure 45. Workshop of the Master of the 'Older' Prayer book of Maximilian I. Textile border around text page, with the office of the Presentation of the Virgin, Mayer van den Bergh Breviary, Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh, MS 946, fol. 688r. Flanders, c. 1500.

details penned in red ink (Figure 46). The pattern includes a stylized thistle within a five-lobed palmette connected by thick vines, alternating with a sparse vine decoration with thistle bud and leaf terminals. Despite the specificity of the



Figure 46. Gerard David. St Barbara, Breviary of Isabella of Castile, London, British Library, Add. MS 18851, fol. 297<sup>r</sup>. c. 1497.

pattern, it is not likely to have been copied from an actual textile. Its rather dull, muted palette contrasts with the richly saturated, bold velvet textiles of the period (although it may be intended to represent a silver brocade), and the particularly stylized and flat quality of the pattern is also out of step with the greater interest in naturalism and three-dimensional effects of contemporary textiles. Instead, the artist may have chosen the hues in order to better harmonize with the accompanying miniature (attributable to Gerard David), which is notable for its delicate brushwork and a palette that emphasizes pale blues and delicate greens.

Later manuscript illuminators used this border, and copies appear in the Brukenthal Breviary in Sibiu (Romania) produced by the workshop of the Master of the David Scenes in the Grimani Breviary.<sup>85</sup> The use of this border type, which generally accompanies text pages, underscores the disjunction that often occurs between border and miniature. Whereas the luxurious textile provides an appropriate foil to the St Barbara miniature, reflecting the association of textiles with saintly relics, this meaning disappears in the Sibiu manuscript. In this, however, it remains consistent with most late Flemish illumination, where borders rarely connect, symbolically or iconographically, to the miniatures they surround.

### *Textiles in the Illuminations of Simon Bening*

Brocaded velvets do not play as prominent a part in the illuminations of Simon Bening, nor indeed, in the work of the panel painter most closely associated with Bening, Gerard David. This reflects the general shift in taste that occurred after the demise of the last Burgundian duchess, Mary of Burgundy. In contrast, textiles are more commonly seen in the panel paintings of Hans Memling and Hugo Van der Goes, as well as in Ghent manuscript illumination from the beginning of the last quarter of the fifteenth century, especially during the reign of Charles the Bold.

Bening's use of elaborate cloth of gold is limited to the clothing of female saints (particularly St Barbara and St Catherine), and only occasionally appears

<sup>85</sup> Sibiu, Muzeul National Brukenthal, MS 761, pp. 115, 116, and 526; variations of this border, in other colours, also appear on pp. 92, 93, 517, 521, 525, 535, and 601. This manuscript is paginated, not foliated. I would like to thank Anne Margreet As-Vijvers for generously sharing her notes and slides of the manuscript.

in a border, as a ground cloth, or as a cloth of honour.<sup>86</sup> Bening relied instead on simpler silk textiles, with smaller-scaled patterns comprised of individual motifs. This may reflect a shift in fashion that occurred during the first quarter of the sixteenth century. Although figured velvets with the 'pomegranate' pattern were still produced well into the seventeenth century, their popularity had begun to decline by the second decade of the sixteenth century when a greater interest in more subdued patterns with smaller repeats and motifs developed. This was due in part to the influence which Spain began to exercise over the cultural climate of Europe from the end of the fifteenth century, not only through its profound economic and geographic expansion at this time, but due to the double marriage of the children of Maximilian I, the husband of Mary of Burgundy, and Isabella of Castile in 1495. This ensured a strong connection between Flanders and Spain, so that, while Spanish costume would become fashionable throughout Europe, the court of Margaret of Austria particularly favoured it. The more tailored, stiff, and tightly constructed styles of Spanish clothing better suited the newer, less flamboyant patterns; this was in contrast to the longer, more flowing textiles of the Burgundian court fashionable two generations earlier, which were better suited to the larger-scaled, bolder patterns of the earlier period.

Bening made greater use of textiles as border decorations than did earlier Flemish illuminators. Among the patterns he most commonly employed was a diamond *reseau* pattern with floral motifs within each unit, which he used in manuscripts spanning his career (Figure 47).<sup>87</sup> This pattern had been popular at the end of the fourteenth century and was inspired by Chinese diamond patterns to which Italian and Spanish designers added more naturalistic floral or animal motifs.<sup>88</sup> While few fifteenth- or sixteenth-century examples of this pattern are extant, we know the pattern through several fourteenth-century examples, and through its representation in some contemporary panel paintings, such as Lucas

<sup>86</sup> Such a border appears in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Clm. 23637, fol. 190<sup>v</sup>; it also appears as a ground cloth in Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, M 426, fol. 60<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>87</sup> Montserrat-Munich Hours (Montserrat Abbey, MS 65), fol. 337; Hours of Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg (Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, II, fol. 15<sup>v</sup>); Grimani Breviary, fols 50<sup>v</sup>, 58<sup>r</sup>, 61<sup>r</sup>, and 193<sup>r</sup>. This pattern originated in the workshop of the Master of the 'Older' Prayer book of Maximilian I, as seen in the Mayer van den Bergh Breviary (Antwerp, Mayer van den Bergh Museum, MS 946) fols 697<sup>v</sup> and 575, and the *Hours of Isabella of Castile* (Cleveland Museum of Art, MS 63.256), fol. 163<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>88</sup> Wardwell, 'The Stylistic Development', pp. 182–83.



Figure 47. Workshop of the Master of the 'Older' Prayer book of Maximilian I. St Cecilia, Mayer van den Bergh Breviary, Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh, MS 946, fol. 575<sup>v</sup>. c. 1500.



Cranach the Elder's St Barbara in Antwerp, suggesting that there may have been a revival of this pattern in the early sixteenth century.<sup>89</sup>

Bening's stylized patterns are rooted more in the Hispano-Moorish tradition than the Italian one. Various examples of Spanish textile-remnants exhibit this diamond *réseau* pattern, in addition to its appearance in pictorial representations.<sup>90</sup> Bening's use of a continuous circle and foliate pattern shows a further connection to Spanish weaving, although its roots are in the Chinese lotus pattern.<sup>91</sup> While the dearth of research on Spanish textiles should make one wary of making any firm identification, this interest in Iberian textile design does reflect the pattern of Bening's patronage, much of which was associated with members of the Spanish and Portuguese courts.<sup>92</sup>

What is lacking in Bening's miniatures is the sense of the formalized representation of textiles that underscored illumination during the reigns of Philip the Good and Charles the Bold. Rarely does Bening pay as close attention to the particular details of a rich pattern; instead, he relies on easily repeatable motifs. The progressive simplicity of textile patterns in Bening's art, as well as his more frequent usage of textiles in border decorations that have little relation to the miniature or text they surround, indicates that, by the sixteenth century, the power of textiles to communicate power and authority had become but a shadow of what it had been during the height of the Burgundian era.

<sup>89</sup> Antwerp, Mayer van den Bergh Museum, MS 946. This pattern also was occasionally used by the Ghent Associates and appears as a border in the Hours of William Lord Hastings (London, British Library, Add. MS 54782, fol. 125<sup>v</sup>). A late sixteenth-century Italian *ciselé* velvet with alternating crosses and disks among the lattice is preserved in the Keir collection; see King and King, *European Textiles*, cat. 133.

<sup>90</sup> The diamond *réseau* mentioned above is comparable to a textile reproduced in a panel by the fourteenth-century Spanish artist, Pedro Serra (see Lewis May, *Silk Textiles*, fig. 98), and in miniatures in late fifteenth-century Toledo and Sevilla Choirbooks, for which, see Lynette Bosch, *Art, Liturgy and Legend in Renaissance Toledo* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), figs 92, 95-97. Ultimately, this pattern finds its roots in Byzantine weaving; see von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, figs 202-03.

<sup>91</sup> Monserrat-Munich Hours, fol. 340; Hours of Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg, II, fol. 56. See Von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, fig. 314; Lewis May, *Silk Textiles*, figs 94 and 95.

<sup>92</sup> See Judith Testa, 'Fragments of a Spanish Prayerbook with Miniatures by Simon Bening', *Oud Holland*, 105 (1991), 89-115, and also her 'Addendum: Fragments of a Spanish Prayerbook with Miniatures by Simon Bening', *Oud Holland*, 106 (1992), 32. See also *Illuminating the Renaissance*, ed. by Kren and McKendrick, cat. 140, 142, 147, 149, 150, and 151.





## Part Two: Veiling



## VEILING

Barbara Baert

The texture of textiles turns them into veils. The material, with its fluid folds, possesses the capacity both to mask and to unveil. Between the shifts from transparency to opacity, a mysterious dynamic of concealing and revealing emerges. The veil floats inside the nearly boundless symbolic apparatus that relates to 'revelation'. The revealing veil embraces theological premises, iconographical motives, and devotional practice.

Whereas Moses had to accept that he could not simultaneously see God and remain alive, God became 'visible' in the New Covenant through his son. The visibility of Christ is at the same time, therefore, the veil of the invisible father. This mystery between father and son, between the concealed image and the revealed image, is the legitimization of iconophilic culture. The image of the son stands out from the biblical prohibition of images, because it does not feign to be the face of God, his father, but is the image that leads us to the father, lingering behind the veil. As the son of God, Christ is the veiled face. As Veronica showed humanity the true face of Christ on a cloth — a veil — she showed the absolute love of images of Christendom.

The second section of this volume contributes to the narrativization, symbolization, and practice regarding the paradox of the concealing and revealing that the Middle Ages, at its deepest core of visibility, has nourished.

Christine Sciacca makes the thematic and methodological link from the symbolic meaning of weaving in medieval manuscripts to the practice of tangible textiles in codices. Her 'Raising the Curtain on the Use of Textiles in Manuscripts' researches the function of materials that were sewn into books. How must we understand the woven tissues that alternate with the parchment folios within the manuscript, as they conceal the images and the written word of God as a *sanctum sanctorum*? Examples from the early medieval period suggest

that the role of the bound-in silk was not linked to an exclusively bibliophilic conservation technique, but rather, the subtlety of concealing and revealing ensured that the intensity of the meditation, over word and image, became stronger. The sewn-in textiles can be described as bringing the divine revelation back to its most intimate form and allow the revelation to be experienced in its most individual incarnation.

In his 'Curtains, *revelatio* and Pictorial Reality', Victor M. Schmidt presents a theoretical framework in which he examines the role of the veil in the area between real presence and imagined, or represented, reality. The author takes as his starting point the corpus of Italian panel painting from the end of the Middle Ages, when artists sounded out the boundaries and the possibilities of illusion and mimesis in representations. Schmidt's quest steers a course between the veil 'outside' the representation — curtain or Lenten cloth, for example — and the veil 'inside' the representation — such as the suggestion of depth. In this nuanced disclosure, the author shows the complexities of these dichotomies. It becomes clear that between 'inside' and 'outside' a series of connections arise, in which the altarpiece screens themselves contain images. Some textile curtains were, in turn, copied onto panel, as with the *paliotti*. Curtains in iconography refer to curtains from actual practice, but can also function as carriers of symbols referring to the revealing function of the pictorial medium itself. Schmidt brings the series of connections under the denominator of the 'auto-poetical' system, leading toward a 'self-reference' that flows into the 'creation of self-conscious reality'. The veil contributes, in other words, both formally and thematically, to the origin of the new visuality below the Alps that we call the Renaissance.

Barbara Baert closes the Veiling section with a study of the symbolism of veiling in the reception and perception of the female martyr's body. In her discussion of the *martyrologium* of Agnes of Rome, the author exposes the layers of meaning in the narrative functions of veiling which surround the arena of virginity and martyrdom, of *virgo* and *virago*. The article focuses, above all, on a special, natural veil: the growth of hair. When her aggressor strips Agnes, for instance, God gives her a pelt of hair that not only protects her but also makes her abject in the eyes of the male attacker. Baert suggests that the hirsute veil in the medieval tradition is a physical symptom of a climactic moment: the possibility of receiving divine revelation through mystical union. In her epilogue, 'The Lamb, the Loom, and the Bones', the author adds an anthropological reflection about the papal pallium which, according to tradition, is made from the fleece of Agnes' attribute, the lamb.

Translated by Kathryn M. Rudy

## RAISING THE CURTAIN ON THE USE OF TEXTILES IN MANUSCRIPTS

Christine Sciacca

Throughout the Middle Ages textiles enhanced the function and meaning of manuscripts. Dedication images often depict cloth-covered hands presenting codices to holy or royal recipients, and some famous Ottonian books contain leaves painted to simulate Byzantine silks. Less frequently discussed is the medieval practice of sewing actual textiles into manuscripts, covering illuminated areas of their pages. Scholars have assumed that these 'curtains' were added at the time of a manuscript's creation in order to protect the images from wear and damage, but they have received little further discussion. Perhaps because so many of the textiles have been lost or removed, one easily overlooks the fact that these fabrics were shields between viewer and image. A brief survey of the forms and functions of textiles in manuscripts will reveal their role in mediating the medieval reader's experience of text and image, foregrounding the important place of curtains in liturgical performance and devotional practice.

The interaction between manuscripts and textiles is perhaps most familiar from narrative images, specifically those depicting the presentation of a book to an earthly or spiritual patron. One famous example is the dedication miniature from the ninth-century Vivian Bible (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS lat. 1), in which three monks proffer a large manuscript, held on a white cloth, to Charles the Bald (Figure 48).<sup>1</sup> Their handling of the codex in this way expresses

<sup>1</sup> This manuscript is also referred to as the First Bible of Charles the Bald. For a thorough discussion of this book, see Paul Edward Dutton and Herbert L. Kessler, *The Poetry and*



Figure 48. Presentation of the Bible to Charles the Bald, Vivian Bible, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS lat. 1, fol. 423<sup>r</sup>. Tours, 845–46.

*Paintings of the First Bible of Charles the Bald* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), and Wilhelm Koehler, *Die Karolingischen Miniaturen*, 6 vols (Berlin: Cassirer, 1930–99), 1, Part 2.

the holy nature of the object that they present.<sup>2</sup> It also reflects the careful treatment lavished on precious codices, liturgical objects, and relics. For example, many of the relics from the Guelph treasure were wrapped in medieval silks from Spain, Italy, and the eastern Mediterranean, and the relics of St Siviard in Sens Cathedral were swaddled in Byzantine and Sassanian silks.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, such dedication miniatures also share the iconographic details of images of the Presentation in the Temple. In many Byzantine and Western medieval examples, Mary hands the Christ Child to Simeon, who receives him with cloth-covered hands (the rabbi often uses his own garment for this purpose).<sup>4</sup> This fluid relationship between representations of God, both in body and in text, is encapsulated in the opening lines of John's Gospel, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'.<sup>5</sup> It follows, not only that the birth of Christ represents the Word made flesh, but also that Scripture is the embodiment of God. This idea lies at the root of the enshrinement of liturgical and devotional books with gold leaf and expensive pigments, treasury bindings, and luxurious textiles.

In light of the intermingling of manuscripts and textiles in medieval ceremonial and devotional practice, the incorporation of fabrics into the structure of manuscripts themselves seems a natural progression. To begin with, Anna Muthesius has pointed out that medieval bookbindings prominently incorporated silk textiles into their structure and decoration. She focuses, in particular, on the eleventh-century Mondsee Gospel Lectionary (Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W.8), the spine of which is swathed in a particular type of patterned monochrome silk.<sup>6</sup> Most textiles of this variety were produced

<sup>2</sup> Regula Schorta, 'Reliquienhüllen und Textile Reliquien im Welfenschatz', in *Der Welfenschatz und sein Umkreis*, ed. by Joachim Ehlers and Dietrich Kötzsche (Mainz: von Zabern, 1998), pp. 139–76; Robert G. Calkins, *Programs of Medieval Illumination* (Lawrence, KS: Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art, 1984), p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> Robert G. Calkins, *Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the earliest extant Presentation image appears in the fifth-century mosaic on the triumphal arch at Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. See Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, trans. by Janet Seligman, 2 vols (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1971–72), I, pp. 90–91, fig. 230.

<sup>5</sup> John 1. 1

<sup>6</sup> Anna Muthesius, 'The Silk over the Spine of the Mondsee Gospel Lectionary', *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, 37 (1978), 50–73 (p. 51). Appendix A to the article is 'A Handlist of the Most Important Extant Incised Twill Silks, Also Known as Monochrome Compound

in Byzantine or Islamic centres in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and probably travelled to the West as precious diplomatic gifts. Other manuscripts with spines covered in this type of silk were Mass books meant for display, such as the Codex Aureus of Echternach (Nürnberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, MS 156142), which I discuss further below.<sup>7</sup> One later extension of the wrapping of codices was the thirteenth-century development of the chemise binding. Michelle Brown describes the chemise as a sort of medieval dust jacket made from either textile, alum-tawed skin, or leather, which was slipped over the book's binding, extending beyond the fore edge of the volume and providing it with an extra protective layer.<sup>8</sup> In all of these cases, by wrapping the codex or the binding in silk, the book is, again, enshrined by precious materials, much in the same way as a metalwork binding set with gemstones might transform the book into a kind of relic contained within a reliquary.

A closer juxtaposition of text and textile developed during the Ottonian period, as illuminators began to paint simulated representations of fabrics in manuscripts. Numerous examples survive, including several in an early twelfth-century Gospel book from Helmarshausen, now in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles (MS Ludwig II 3).<sup>9</sup> Each of its Gospel texts begins in the traditional fashion with an Evangelist portrait and a decorative incipit page. In

Twills'. For a discussion of this manuscript and its binding, see Frauke Steenbock, *Der Kirchliche Prachteinband im frühen Mittelalter, von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn der Gotik* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1965), pp. 181–83, no. 87; Dorothy E. Miner, Victor I. Carlson, and P. William Filby, *2,000 Years of Calligraphy* (Baltimore: The Walters Art Gallery, 1965), p. 32 and p. 35, no. 16, and see also *The History of Bookbinding, 525–1950 A.D.: An Exhibition Held at the Baltimore Museum of Art, November 12, 1957 to January 12, 1958* (Baltimore: The Walters Art Gallery, 1957), pp. 8–9, no. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Muthesius, 'The Silk over the Spine', p. 55. An extensive discussion of the incorporation of silk textiles into bookbindings is Leonie von Wilckens, 'Zur Verwendung von Seidengeweben des 10. bis 14. Jahrhunderts in Bucheinbänden', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 53 (1990), 425–42.

<sup>8</sup> Michelle P. Brown, *Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts: A Guide to Technical Terms* (Malibu, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1994), p. 38. For an in depth study of chemise bindings see Frederick Bearman, 'The Origins and Significance of Two Late Medieval Textile Chemise Bookbindings in the Walters Art Gallery', *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, 54 (1996), 163–87.

<sup>9</sup> See Anton von Euw and Joachim M. Plotzek, *Die Handschriften der Sammlung Ludwig*, 4 vols (Cologne: Schnütgen-Museum, 1979–85), I, pp. 153–58, and Anton von Euw, 'Zur Problematik Stilverwandter Phänomene: von Evangeliar Ludwig MS II 3 in Malibu zum Evangeliar Herzog Heinrichs des Löwen (1139–1195)', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, 29/30 (1987/1988), 37–46.



three of the four decorative openings the illuminator incorporates painted purple patterns meant to emulate the appearance of Byzantine silks. In this instance, the simulated textiles exclusively form the background for text. They appear behind the introductory titulus written in gold and silver letters above the Evangelist's head ('Incipit sancti evangelii secundum...'), and they also form the background for the beginning of the Gospel text on the facing folio (Figure 49). Therefore here, as in the dedication images discussed above, even simulated textiles become appropriately splendid 'bearers' of the Word of God.

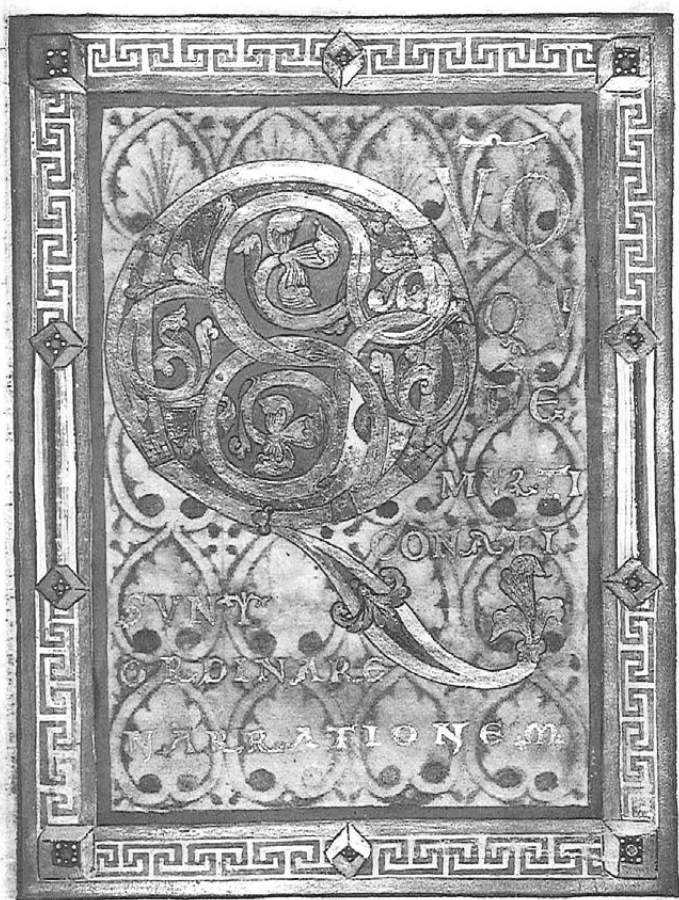


Figure 49. Incipit to the Gospel of Luke, Gospel book, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig II 3, fol. 84r. Helmarshausen, 1120–40.

Several particularly lavish eleventh-century Gospel books from Echternach further extend the use of purple textile pages. In a mid-eleventh-century Gospel book now in the British Library (Harley MS 2821), the margins around both the full-page Evangelist portrait and the narrative images which face each other at the beginning of each Gospel text are filled with a textile pattern. The miniatures, therefore, appear as if they have been laid atop an Eastern silk. In the Codex Aureus of Echternach, textile patterns cover the entire opening prefacing each Gospel. The folios before Luke's text receive a mock-textile lattice pattern filled with lions facing right or left to oppose their neighbours head-to-head (Figure 50).<sup>10</sup> Turning this folio to reveal the Evangelist portrait and textual incipit that appear on the next opening is therefore akin to lifting a curtain to reveal a painted altarpiece or a miniature in a manuscript. As Robert Calkins has stated about these simulated textiles, 'When these pages are turned, the Word of God is similarly unveiled'.<sup>11</sup>

Due to the fragmentary nature of the extant manuscript evidence, it is difficult to determine whether the painting of simulated textiles developed from the inclusion of actual textiles in books, or if both practices occurred contemporaneously. Oftentimes, the presence of fabric curtains in various manuscripts is not as immediately apparent as richly-painted purple pages. In

<sup>10</sup> For a full discussion of this manuscript, see the facsimile edition, *Das Goldene Evangelienbuch von Echternach: Codex Aureus Epternacensis Hs. 156142 aus dem Germanischen Nationalmuseum Nürnberg* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer; Stuttgart: Müller und Schindler, 1982), and Rainer Kahsnitz, Ursula Mende, and Elisabeth Rücker, *Das Goldene Evangelienbuch von Echternach: Eine Prunkhandschrift des 11. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1982). See also Peter Metz, *Das Goldene Evangelienbuch von Echternach im Germanischen Nationalmuseum zu Nürnberg* (Munich: Prestel, 1956), and Egon Verheyen, *Das Goldene Evangelienbuch von Echternach* (Munich: Prestel, 1963). A double-page simulated textile also appears at the beginning of the Ottonian manuscript known as the Codex Caesareus (Uppsala, University Library, Cod. C. 93) [see *Codex Caesareus Upsaliensis: A Facsimile Edition of an Echternach Gospel-Book of the Eleventh Century* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1971)] and London, British Library, Harley MS 2821, playing the role of a shroud, or a second book cover for the manuscripts. Paired textile pages also originally prefaced at least two Gospels in Harley MS 2821; however, during rebinding the pages before Mark and Luke were separated from each other, and one leaf from each pair became the last two folios in the manuscript. As a result, only a single textile page precedes each of these two Gospels. It does not appear that Matthew and John's Gospels received similar treatment, although the rebinding makes this difficult to prove with certainty. For a discussion of these textile pages, see Albert Boeckler, *Das Goldene Evangelienbuch Heinrichs III* (Berlin: Deutscher Verein für Kuntwiss., 1933), p. 44, n. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Calkins, *Illuminated Books*, p. 147.

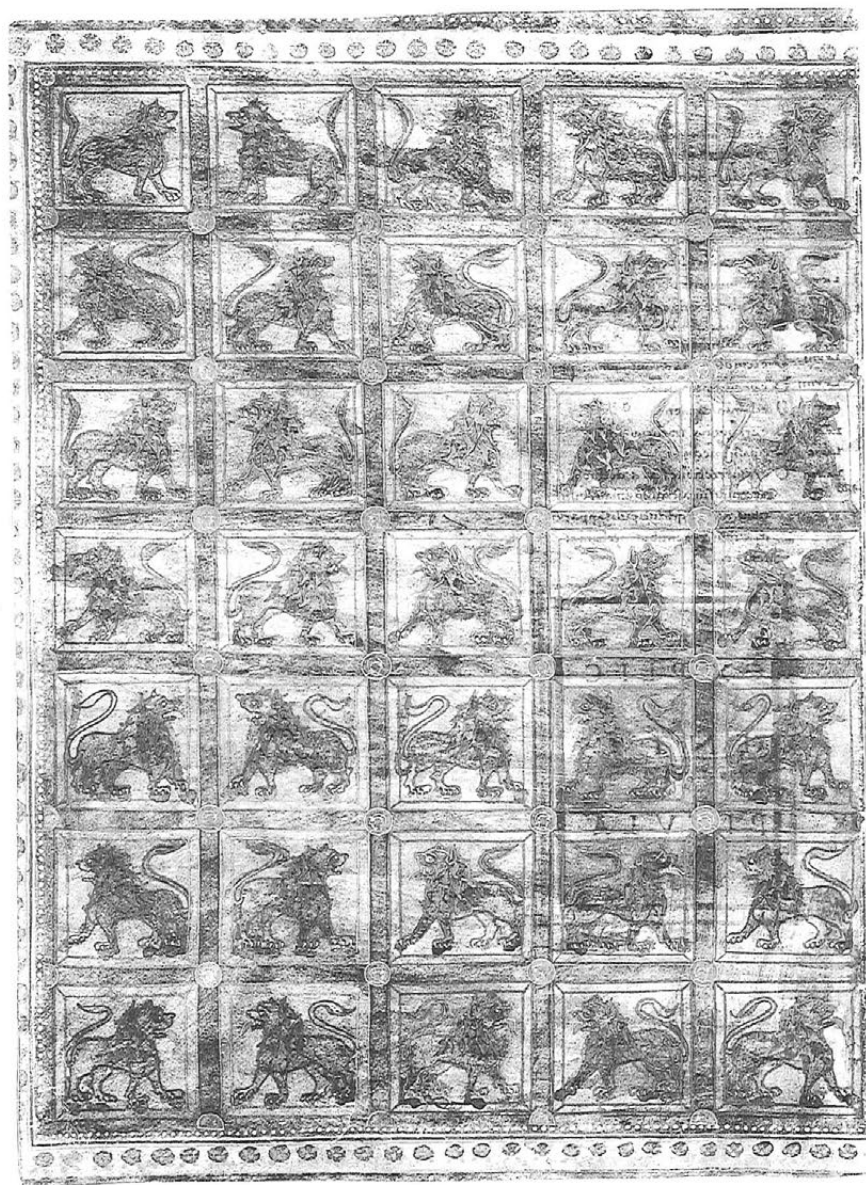


Figure 50. Textile pages, Codex Aureus of Echternach, Nürnberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, MS 156142, fols 75<sup>v</sup>–76<sup>r</sup>. Echternach, c. 1030.

many cases, the pieces of cloth have loosened and fallen out, or they have been removed; however, close inspection often reveals needle holes or remnants of thread in the margins around manuscript images, indicating the initial presence of a textile. For example, the horizontal line of holes that runs along the top of the full-page initial *S* in a mid-thirteenth-century Psalter from Würzburg (Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig VIII 2) is all that remains of the long running stitches used to attach a piece of fabric to the parchment (Figure



Figure 51. Initial *S* with Griffin and Rider, Psalter, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig VIII 2, fol. 76v. Würzburg, 1240–50.

51).<sup>12</sup> Additionally, a thirteenth-century Byzantine Gospel book, also at the J. Paul Getty Museum (MS Ludwig II 5), exhibits a row of needle holes across the top of most full-page miniatures. A few of the pages retain the thread used to attach a curtain: above the Transfiguration miniature, for example, the knots are clearly visible in the upper-right- and left-hand corners of the folio (Figure 52).<sup>13</sup> Moreover, even a fairly cursory survey of manuscripts of various geographic and chronological origins reveals that a wide range of illuminated books once contained curtains, including examples from Byzantium, Germany, England, Spain, and Flanders, and dating from at least as early as the ninth century through the late Middle Ages.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The somewhat haphazard arrangement of the holes into what appears to be two lines may indicate two sewing 'programs' during the manuscript's history. For a complete discussion of this manuscript, see von Euw and Plotzek, *Die Handschriften der Sammlung Ludwig*, I, pp. 311–17; Helmut Engelhart, *Die Würzburger Buchmalerei im hohen Mittelalter: Untersuchungen zu einer Gruppe illuminierten Handschriften aus der Werkstatt der Würzburger Dominikanerbibel von 1246* (Würzburg: Kommissionsverlag F. Schöningh, 1987), pp. 46–97, 340–43, and Hanns Swarzenski, *Die lateinischen illuminierten Handschriften des XIII. Jahrhunderts in den Ländern an Rhein, Main und Donau* (Berlin: Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft, 1936), pp. 69–74, p. 122, n. 1, pp. 155–56. Indeed, textile curtains were occasionally added to medieval manuscripts some time after their creation. For example, it has been suggested that the silk curtains sewn into the Anglo-Saxon Gospel book of Judith of Flanders (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 709) were added sometime after she bequeathed the book to Weingarten Abbey in 1094. This is possible, since the Weingarten scriptorium did regularly include silk curtains in the luxury manuscripts they produced in the early thirteenth century; however, determining the date of the M. 709 curtains requires first-hand study. Nonetheless, in many of the examples I have encountered in which manuscripts contain textiles of a later vintage, the stitching patterns used to affix them indicate they are replacements for curtains added to the book at its creation.

<sup>13</sup> Threads are also still extant above the Ascension miniature on fol. 188<sup>r</sup>. The blue silk curtains (now detached) that originally covered the images are stored separately from the manuscript. For information on this manuscript, see von Euw and Plotzek, *Die Handschriften der Sammlung Ludwig*, I, pp. 164–70, and Hugo Buchta, 'An Unknown Byzantine Manuscript of the Thirteenth Century', *The Connoisseur*, 155 (1964), 217–24.

<sup>14</sup> The mid-ninth-century Moutiers-Grandval Bible from Tours (British Library, Additional MS 10546) displays several concentrated areas of needle holes along the outer left-hand margin of the pages that contain full-page miniatures. I thank Suzanne Lewis and Asa Mittman for informing me about the curtains in two thirteenth-century English Apocalypse manuscripts in London (Lambeth Palace Library, MSS 75 and 209), although the silks may have been added sometime after the books' creation. In researching the curtains in his own thirteenth-century French copy of Prosper of Aquitaine, which he bequeathed to the British Library (Additional MS 78830), Brian Cron compiled a list of seven manuscripts, gathered

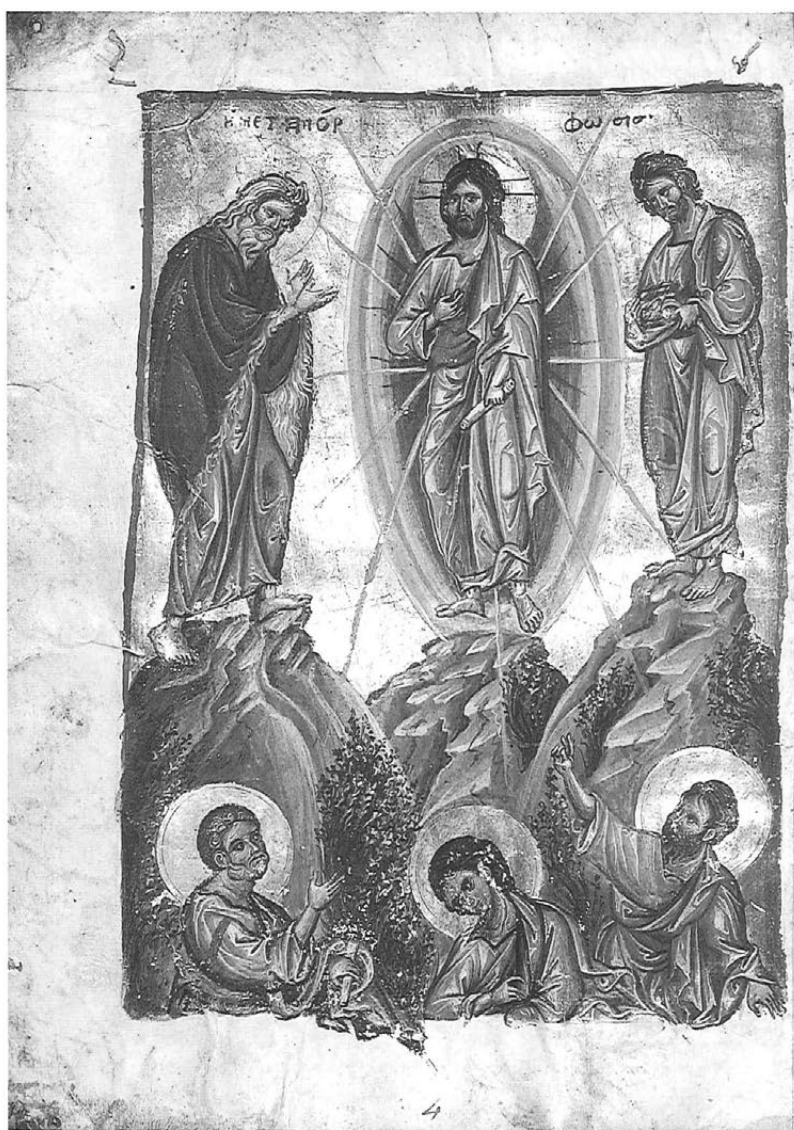


Figure 52. Transfiguration, Gospel book, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig II 5, fol. 45<sup>v</sup>. Nicaea or Nicomedia, early and late thirteenth century.

mostly from catalogues of manuscript collections in Great Britain and Ireland, and also London auction catalogues, that contain textile curtains. Although brief, the list indicates, in a nutshell, the wide use of curtains in many parts of Europe and throughout the Middle Ages. This document can be found among other papers relating to Cron's gift, Additional MS 78831.



Some scholars have debated whether or not textile curtains are simply later additions to preserve the quality of the miniatures. While some manuscripts clearly contain curtains that are of a later date, these are most likely replacements for damaged or lost medieval textiles or at the very least, their insertion emulates a medieval practice which was well known to later generations of bookmakers and bibliophiles.<sup>15</sup> Two sources will suffice to demonstrate the medieval practice of inserting textile curtains in manuscripts. A passage from the early twelfth-century *Life* of Queen Margaret of Scotland describes a luxurious Gospel book that she owned and prized above her other books. The book fell into a river one day when she was crossing a ford with it, and after much searching:

At last it was found lying open in the bottom of the river, its leaves being constantly kept in motion by the current of the water; and the little sheets of silk [*panniculi de serico*] that had covered the golden letters to prevent their being dimmed by contact with the leaves, had been torn out by the rapidity of the river.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The final curtain in New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 711, which covers the initial on fol. 136<sup>r</sup>, is deep blue, and quite unlike the other curtains in the manuscript, which are either yellow, green, salmon, or ruby, and of a much finer quality material. Also, unlike the other textiles, it has stained the parchment beneath it, and is probably a later replacement. The thirteenth-century Marquette Bible in the J. Paul Getty Museum (MS Ludwig I 8) contains four extant curtains, three of which (on fols 50<sup>r</sup>, 105<sup>r</sup>, 126<sup>r</sup>) are nearly-transparent, fine-gage, off-white silks similar to the single curtain found in Cron's Prosper of Aquitaine manuscript (see n. 14 and n. 25). The curtain covering the initial on fol. 171<sup>r</sup> in the Marquette Bible appears to be modern cotton, and Nancy Turner has suggested that it may have been added by Katherine Adams who rebound the books in the early decades of the twentieth century. Nearly all of the initials in the Marquette Bible, however, exhibit needle holes in their margins, thus Adams's addition most likely replaces a lost medieval curtain. For discussions of the Marquette Bible, see von Euw and Plotzek, *Die Handschriften der Sammlung Ludwig*, I, pp. 85–92, and Willene B. Clark, 'A Re-united Bible and Thirteenth-Century Illumination in Northern France', *Speculum*, 50 (1975), 33–47.

<sup>16</sup> *Early Sources of Scottish History, A.D. 500 to 1286*, ed. and trans. by Alan Orr Anderson, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1922), II, p. 80. For the original text in Latin, see *De Sancta Margarita Scotie Regina, Edimburgi Civitate Regia, Vita*, in *Acta sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur*, ed. by the Société des Bollandistes, new edn (Paris: Palmé, 1863–), 10 Jun, II, pp. 333–34. The *Life* of Queen Margaret of Scotland was composed by Turgot, her confessor, some time between 1104 and 1107, shortly after her death in 1093. Jane Rosenthal alerted William Voelkle to this passage, and he, in turn, published it in his discussion of the codicology of the Berthold Sacramentary (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 710): 'Kodikologische Beschreibung', in *Das Berthold-Sakramentar: Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe der Handschrift Ms. M. 710 der Pierpont Morgan Library New York*, ed. by Felix Heinzer and Hans Ulrich Rudolf (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1999), pp. 49–57 (p. 54). Margaret's manuscript

This anecdote reveals much about textile curtain use. Repeated contact with parchment was apparently thought to dull gold leaf, and cloth interleaving was especially crucial in these areas. Ironically enough, the passage also indicates the impermanence of these protective barriers, as has been discussed above.

This practice of inserting curtains continued into the late Middle Ages as well. Jonathan Alexander has noted that a late fifteenth-century copy of Philippe de Mezières's *Le songe du vieux pèlerin* in Paris (Bibliothèque nationale, MS fr. 22542) contains instructions from the author that pieces of silk should be sewn onto the parchment to cover the miniatures.<sup>17</sup> This directive indicates Mezières's concern for the protection and preservation of the illuminations in the manuscript; it also suggests that there was an established practice of using textiles for such purposes.

The actual textiles that appear in manuscripts are usually small pieces of silk that cover illuminated areas of the page.<sup>18</sup> Most often off-white thread, or thread that matches the colour of the textile, secures the cloth, but in some cases a brightly-coloured thread such as red or blue affixes an off-white textile. Stitching patterns vary from manuscript to manuscript and do not appear to exhibit regional characteristics. Sometimes the curtains are attached with evenly spaced stitches, and on other occasions three or four concentrated areas of stitches fasten the cloth. The textiles are sewn almost exclusively along the upper or left-hand edge of the image (see Figures 51 and 52), and sometimes these two methods are used interchangeably within the same manuscript. This sewing configuration

survives as Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Lat. liturg. F. 5 (29744). A Latin inscription in a late eleventh-century hand on fol. 2<sup>r</sup> describes the miracle of the book surviving after it fell into a stream. See Elzbieta Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts, 900–1066*, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, 2 (London: Harvey Miller, 1976), pp. 106–07, cat. 91, figs 277–80; Averil G. Hassall and William Owen Hassall, *Treasures from the Bodleian Library* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1976), pp. 33–36; Otto Pächt and Jonathan J. G. Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library Oxford, Volume 3: British, Irish, and Icelandic Schools with Addenda to Volumes 1 and 2* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 6–7, cat. 44, plate v, and Herbert H. E. Craster, 'St Margaret's Gospel-Book', *Bodleian Quarterly Record*, 4 (1925), pp. 202–03. In keeping with Turgot's description of the book's watery fate, none of the above descriptions of the manuscript mention extant silk curtains; however, Rebecca Rushforth informed me that no needle holes are evident on the illuminated pages.

<sup>17</sup> Jonathan J. G. Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators and their Methods of Work* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 164, n. 18.

<sup>18</sup> Occasionally, curtains are sewn onto the text page facing a miniature, as in several instances in the Silos Apocalypse (London, British Library, Add. MS 11695). See discussion below and also n. 33.





Plate 1. The Master of Erfurt. The Virgin Spinning (oil on canvas on wood panel), Berlin, Staatliche Museen / Gemäldegalerie. Upper Rhine, c. 1400.



Plate 2. Virgin of the Sun, prefacing Alanus de Rupe's commentary on the Rosary, single-leaf miniature stitched to fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, Leuven, Maurits Sabbibliotheek van de Theologische Faculteit, MS Mechelen 15, fols 2<sup>v</sup>–3<sup>r</sup>.



Plate 3. Cornelia van Wulfschkercke. Tripartite rosary, Book of Hours, London, Sotheby's, 17 November 1999, Lot 3, fol. 82<sup>v</sup> (present whereabouts unknown). Bruges, c. 1500–10.



Plate 4. The Holy Family in an enclosed garden with a Tertiary, hand-coloured woodcut sewn into a prayer book, London, British Library, Add. MS 14042, fol. 61<sup>v</sup>. Mariënwater, c. 1500.



Plate 5. The Holy Family in an enclosed garden with a Birgittine, hand-coloured woodcut, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-P-1955-328. Mariënwater, c. 1500.



Plate 6. Domenico Ghirlandaio. Virgin and Child enthroned with saints  
(tempera on panel), Lucca, San Martino. c. 1473–74.



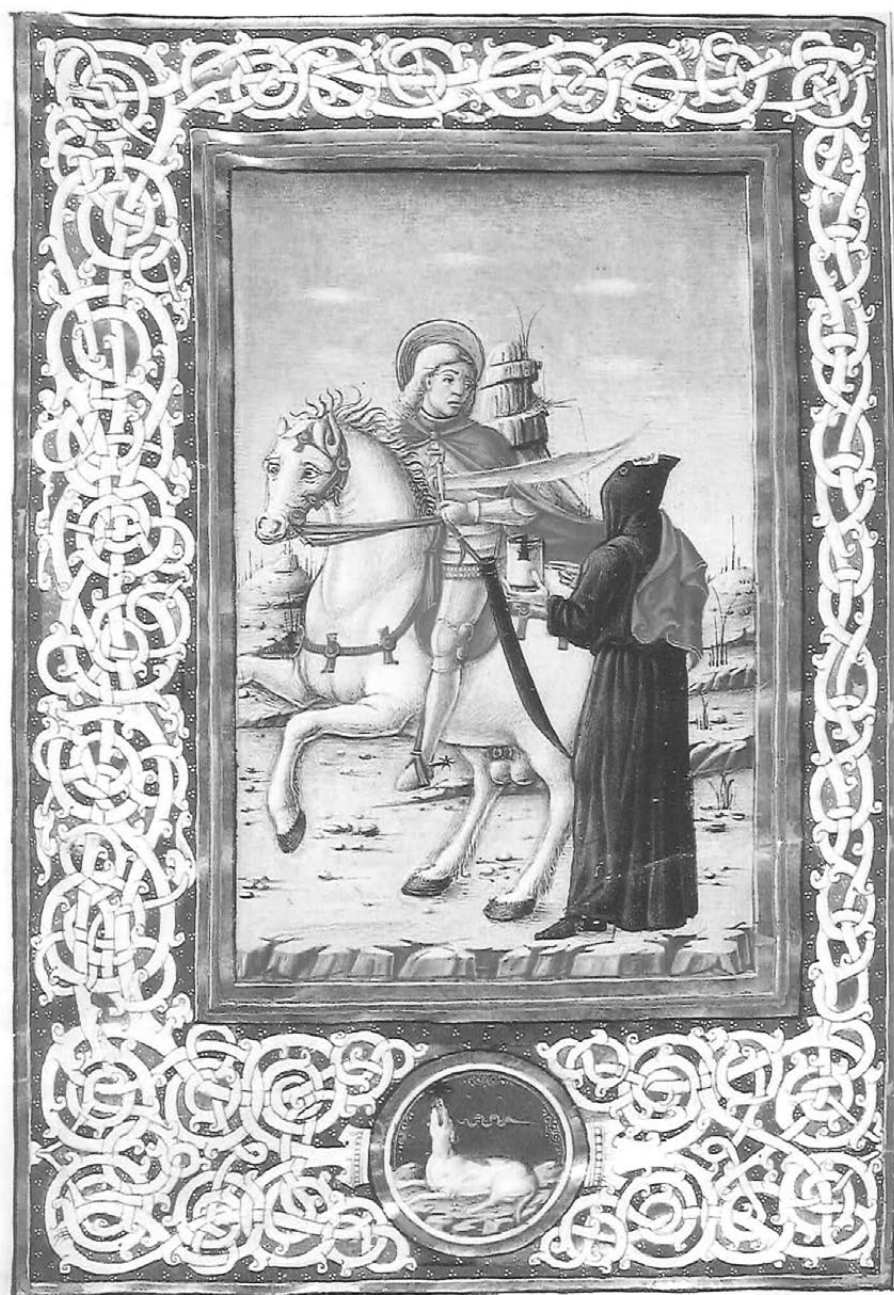


Plate 7. St Martin sharing his cloak, Statuti della confraternita di San Martino,  
Ferrara, Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea, MS Cr I, 346. 1494.



Plate 8. Rogier van der Weyden. Altarpiece of the Seven Sacraments (detail of children with 'chrisom' bands across their foreheads), Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten. c. 1440–45.



prevents the curtains from falling away from the image immediately upon turning the manuscript page. The significance of this technique will be discussed below.

Textile curtains most often cover full-page miniatures, and the pieces of fabric generally cover the entire surface of the image. In some examples, however, textiles cover initials if they are at least partially painted, rather than outline-drawn. These veils are typically cut to the shape of the initial itself, and they cover only the area of the page occupied by the letter. In these cases, it is often only the major initials that receive such treatment. For example, in the case of the early thirteenth-century Gradual and Sacramentary of Hainricus Sacrista from Weingarten (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 711), each of the thirty-three fully painted historiated initials originally lay beneath a curtain (Figure 53).<sup>19</sup> The only such initial that does not receive a curtain or display needle holes along its margin is the initial for the feast of John in the sequentiary portion of the codex (fol. 33<sup>v</sup>). It is also the only historiated letter lacking gold leaf or silver paint. This further supports the idea implied by the Margaret of Scotland text that textiles were reserved mainly for instances where gold or silver pigment appears in a miniature or initial. In more unusual cases, minor initials may also receive curtains. In a late tenth-century Gospel lectionary from Reichenau in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles (MS 16), the margin next to every initial — the majority of which are foliate — displays either needle holes or threads where a curtain was once attached.<sup>20</sup> This is presumably because even smaller initials in the manuscript are decorated with gold and silver. Textile curtain use seems most extensive in these and other German manuscripts. In particularly lavish examples, such as the so-called Michaelbeuren Breviary (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 8271), nearly every third folio received some sort of decoration.<sup>21</sup> Subsequently, each of these illuminated pages still exhibits evidence of having been covered by a textile, although no curtains

<sup>19</sup> For a brief discussion of this manuscript, see Meta Harrsen, *Central European Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1958), pp. 27–29.

<sup>20</sup> See 'Acquisitions/1985', *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal*, 14 (1986), 175–286 (pp. 208–09, and Eric G. Millar, *The Library of A. Chester Beatty: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927–30), 1, pp. 139–41.

<sup>21</sup> See Elizabeth Klemm's catalogue entry in *Die Romanischen Handschriften der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek*, pt. 1, *Die Bistümer Regensburg, Passau und Salzburg* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1980), pp. 164–66.

survive. This codex, therefore, comprised almost as much silk as parchment in its original state.



Figure 53. Assumption, Gradual and Sacramentary of Hainricus Sacrista, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 711, fol. 112v. Weingarten, second quarter of the thirteenth century.

As the above passage from the *Vita* of Margaret of Scotland indicates, the purpose of textile curtains is first and foremost a protective one. Manuscript conservators have not reached consensus on the issue of their actual protective function, sometimes suggesting that they cause more damage than they prevent. As a result, they are often removed and either preserved or simply discarded.<sup>22</sup> In the manuscripts I have examined that maintain their medieval curtains, the fabric-covered areas generally exhibit less pigment loss, and gold and silver paint is less tarnished, while those areas exposed due to the loss of a curtain, or where the textile is bunched up, partially revealing the illumination, are less well-preserved. It should be said, however, that the curtains are often in poor condition in their present state, and their handling by careless users may be detrimental to the medieval textiles and to the miniatures themselves.

It would be difficult to argue that medieval users ignored or flung aside the textiles inserted into manuscripts without regard or a second glance.<sup>23</sup> In cases where the original textile curtains survive, the quality of the fabric is generally fine and typically off-white or beige in colour. The numerous extant curtains in the Berthold Sacramentary (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 710) and the Hainricus Sacramentary from Weingarten, for example, are simple in their construction and appearance, but they are nonetheless of a fine gage silk. In the latter manuscript, the curtains are richly coloured, ranging from pea green to salmon pink, and bright yellow to ruby red. William Voelkle has suggested that in the Berthold Sacramentary these textiles might enhance the symbolic meaning of the images they cover. He notes that, while most of the curtains are red, some of the Marian images receive white curtains. This colour might be a reference to Mary's purity, though Voelkle cautions that, '...kann nicht mit Sicherheit auf ein konsequent durchgehaltenes Programm von Farbsymbolik geschlossen

<sup>22</sup> Deborah Evetts devised a very effective housing for the curtains belonging to New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, G. 44. The curtains were removed from the manuscript and then matted and suspended between two sheets of clear Mylar so that both sides of the textile fragments are visible.

<sup>23</sup> Both John Lowden and Sandra Hindman have briefly pointed out that the presence of textile curtains affected a reader's experience of a manuscript, and, therefore, the cloth fragments require further consideration. See John Lowden, *The Making of the 'Bibles Moraliseses', Volume 1: The Manuscripts* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), p. 101, and Sandra Hindman, *Sealed in Parchment: Rereadings of Knighthood in the Illuminated Manuscripts of Chrétien of Troyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 46.

werden'.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, white curtains accompany illuminations for non-Marian feasts in the Berthold Sacramentary, as is the case in the initial for the feast of St Thomas (fol. 132<sup>v</sup>). Although the white silks in this manuscript do not solely signify Mary's virginity, nonetheless, a monastic viewer may have understood the curtain colour in this way when juxtaposed with a Marian image.

In a more limited number of extant examples, the curtains themselves were further embellished. For example, the single silk curtain in a thirteenth-century copy of Prosper of Aquitaine (London, British Library, Additional MS 78830) displays a decorative, zigzag 'hem' around its outer borders executed in red and green thread (fol. 34<sup>r</sup>).<sup>25</sup> In rarer cases, patterned textiles were fashioned into curtains for illumination. The full-page miniatures and two initials in a mid-eleventh-century Gospel lectionary from the abbey of St Peter in Salzburg (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, G. 44) were originally covered with off-white curtains decorated with a monochrome geometric and foliate pattern, which was created by adjusting the way in which the warp and the weft are woven together.<sup>26</sup> Regula Schorta has suggested that other extant textiles of a similar construction were used either to wrap relics, or they were considered relics themselves.<sup>27</sup> In a Carolingian Gospel book from Tours (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 16, Aug. 2<sup>o</sup>), patterned silks, most likely made in Persia, were cut into curtains and sewn over the illuminated pages. The piece

<sup>24</sup> Voelke, 'Kodikologische Beschreibung', p. 54. For a full discussion of this manuscript, see *Das Berthold-Sakramentar: Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe*, and Hanns Swarzenski, *The Berthold Missal: The Pierpont Morgan Library MS 710 and the Scriptorium of Weingarten Abbey* (New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1943).

<sup>25</sup> At the beginning of his list of medieval manuscripts containing curtains (see n. 14), Cron writes, 'I showed the above to Mr. Donald King of Textile Dept. of V & A Mus. on 11 December 1968. He said that the material and the stitches were of silk, and were more likely medieval than modern. Furthermore the colour of the stitches is not inconsistent with this opinion. If this opinion is correct, the silk was probably of eastern [*sic*] origin'.

<sup>26</sup> Regula Schorta, 'Les Rideaux du Lectionnaire G. 44 de la Pierpont Morgan Library, New York', *Bulletin du CIETA*, 73 (1995-96), 54-62 (p. 55). For more information on this manuscript, see John Plummer, *The Glazier Collection of Illuminated Manuscripts* (New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1968), pp. 12-13.

<sup>27</sup> Schorta, 'Les Rideaux', p. 57. The author cites several examples from the treasures of Chur, Sens, Saint-Maurice-d'Agaune, Utrecht, and Augsburg. Her reconstruction drawing of the pattern displayed on the G. 44 curtains indicates that they were probably cut from one larger piece of fabric. It is tempting to accept her suggestion that the textile was a used liturgical garment, such as a dalmatic or tunic; however, the author herself states that her hypothesis is difficult to substantiate.

covering fol. 5<sup>r</sup> is decorated with rows of large beige and brown birds set on a gray and brown background.<sup>28</sup> In all of the above cases, it seems likely that the curtains would have been handled delicately by a medieval user, if only due to the fact that they were made of imported and exotic material. Textiles, therefore, added further importance and value to manuscript images, as did the use of gold or other precious pigments in miniatures themselves.

A similar idea applies to Byzantine icons, which were also adorned with textile hangings referred to as *encheiria* or *peploi* in contemporary sources. Valerie Nunn has suggested that these fabrics were seen as luxury objects and, like manuscript curtains, they were probably made of silk and other precious materials.<sup>29</sup> Surviving eleventh- and twelfth-century epigrams describe donations of new textiles for this purpose, and they suggest the meaning of this gesture for Byzantine patrons. One example is the Sebaste Lady Anna's plea as she presents a textile curtain for an icon of the Virgin:

Do Thou become a fresh adornment unto Thyself, O Virgin,  
[Whom] I delineate with gold and purple;  
Do Thou deck Thyself with glorious radiance for my sake  
In purple tinged with the pallor of gold...<sup>30</sup>

According to this passage, then, adding a textile covering to the icon effectively dresses the Virgin in a new robe. Perhaps something of this idea is reflected in the covering and re-covering of manuscript images with precious fabrics.

Due to the way in which the curtains are attached to manuscript pages, as described above, they do not typically fall away when the page is turned. Thus, the image remains veiled (and protected) until the curtain is physically lifted. In some cases, such as in Morgan Library, M. 711, the fine gage of the silk allows a faint outline of the image to show through from beneath its curtain. Figure 53 demonstrates this occurrence, as the text on fol. 112<sup>v</sup> is visible through the raised curtain of the Assumption initial. Thus, the image, in its veiled form, might

<sup>28</sup> Schorta, 'Les Rideaux', p. 55. Helmar Härtel, writing in the Wolfenbüttel catalogue, calls these textiles Byzantine [*Wolfenbütteler Cimelien: Das Evangeliar Heinrichs des Löwen in der Herzog August Bibliothek* [exhibition catalogue], ed. by Peter Ganz and others (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1989), pp. 52–56]; however, they appear most similar to a group of textile-fragments referred to as 'Ostmuslimische Seidenstoffe', in Otto von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei* (Berlin: Wasmuth, 1921), pp. 16–17, fig. 101.

<sup>29</sup> Valerie Nunn, 'The Encheirion as Adjunct to the Icon in the Middle Byzantine Period', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 10 (1986), 73–102 (pp. 73–76).

<sup>30</sup> Nunn, 'The Encheirion', p. 99.

assume even greater power. By heightening the viewer's anticipation, the spiritual mystery of the obscured image is increased. In describing the similar silks that most likely covered Byzantine icons, Nunn states, 'A sheer fabric of this sort seems a suitable choice for a veil intended as much to enhance the icon's mystery as to obscure its presence'.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, curtains might also act as a protective barrier between the viewer and a particularly powerful or disturbing image. This is especially true in the case of scenes drawn from the Apocalypse, itself based on the concept of revelation. Some of the most striking images of this genre are found in Spanish Apocalypse books, such as the early twelfth-century Silos Apocalypse (London, British Library, Additional MS 11695).<sup>32</sup> The manuscript's miniatures exhibit only very minimal use of gold, and yet, more than half were once covered by curtains.<sup>33</sup> The images in Spanish Apocalypse books were generally executed in large areas of bright, flat colour, which emphasize the dramatic aspects of the events they illustrate. For example, fol. 172<sup>r</sup>, which still displays thread in the lowermost hole that attached the curtain, depicts the formidable scene of the seven plague angels issuing from the sanctuary. The hieratic and almost geometric layout of the page and the bold palette of bright orange, red, deep blue, and dark brown, conveys the magnitude of this event. The visual impact of this miniature is further increased when the reader is actively engaged in lifting the curtain, revealing a disquieting image of one of the events leading to the end of the earthly world.

Examples of apocalyptic images where the use of curtains is perhaps even more integral to their meaning are found in the Gradual and Sacramentary of Hainricus Sacrista. Unlike most utilitarian books of this type, the Morgan

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 76–77.

<sup>32</sup> For a full discussion of this manuscript see John Williams, *The Illustrated Beatus: A Corpus of the Illustrations of the Commentary on the Apocalypse, Volume 4: The Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (London: Harvey Miller, 2002), pp. 31–40, and also *Beatus of Liébana: Codex of the Monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos* [facsimile] (Barcelona: Moleiro, 2003).

<sup>33</sup> Whether or not an image was veiled in the Silos Apocalypse does not appear to depend on its iconography or the quality of the illumination. At several points in the manuscript, miniatures extend across a bifolio opening. In these instances, a curtain is sewn onto only one of the two pages, so that the textile protects the facing miniatures from rubbing against each other, but does not obscure the entire image. An unusually large number of curtains in the Silos Apocalypse were sewn onto the page that faces the miniature, rather than over the miniature itself. In these cases, the illumination is exposed without the reader's manipulation of the curtain (although his or her physical act of turning the page does expose it).

manuscript is extensively illuminated, and it is even more remarkable for the six images it contains of the man who commissioned it, the monk Hainricus.<sup>34</sup> Following the manuscript's calendar are two full-page scenes drawn from the Book of Revelation. First, lifting the green silk curtain covering fol. 9<sup>r</sup> reveals an image of the Last Judgment (Figure 54). Christ is seated at the centre,



Figure 54. Last Judgment, Gradual and Sacramentary of Hainricus Sacrista, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 711, fol. 9<sup>r</sup>. Weingarten, second quarter of the thirteenth century.

<sup>34</sup> Morgan Library, M. 711 is a juxtaposed missal. This is a transitional book type used mainly in southern Germany and Austria around the turn of the thirteenth century, wherein the gradual, sequentiary, and sacramentary portions of the text are kept distinct from each other, but bound together and written continuously from one section to the next. This type of book was generally used for private and low masses, and therefore it is not often highly illuminated. The Morgan manuscript offers a rare opportunity to examine a juxtaposed missal as a kind of devotional text for the celebrant. I discuss this book fully in my dissertation, 'The Gradual and Sacramentary of Hainricus Sacrista (Pierpont Morgan Library, M.711): Liturgy, Devotion, and Patronage at Weingarten Abbey' (doctoral dissertation, Columbia University; forthcoming).



surrounded by the twelve Apostles and Mary. The lowest register is divided vertically in half, with the saved souls on the left, and the damned on the right. Hainricus, identified by the inscription above his head, kneels among the saved, and extends his book upward to the figure of John above him. The continuation of the inscription states the monk's plea to John: 'To you, St John, beloved of God, I bring this book. Do not forsake me, but grant me the rewards of rest'. Following immediately on the verso of this folio, beneath a salmon-coloured curtain, is an image of Christ and the Four Elders (of the Four and Twenty Elders of the Apocalypse) (Figure 55). Each of the men holds a crown which he presents to Christ, who sits enthroned in the centre of the composition. In the lowest register John sits at his writing stand, and Hainricus prostrates himself at the Evangelist's feet.

The fact that Hainricus appears in these two images, in particular, suggests his reliance on John as his intercessor. These are moments when Hainricus gains access, through the Evangelist, both to the apocalyptic vision John records and, more importantly, to salvation. In the very likely scenario that the monk used the manuscript himself to celebrate Mass, the book then becomes a kind of devotional text. These images are part of a larger program of full-page miniatures that begins with the Annunciation on the first folio of the manuscript, followed by the two apocalyptic miniatures, and finally, a scene of Mary's Coronation. When viewed as a series, the events depicted illustrate the beginning of Christ's mortal life, the end of earthly time, and the glory given to Christ and Mary in Heaven at that final moment. The Virgin's acceptance of God's call at the beginning of the manuscript, and her eventual Coronation, provides a repeated visual example of her life as the means through which an individual might obtain the final redemption expressed in the other miniatures. Raising the brightly coloured silk curtains that cover each full-page miniature in the series, therefore, reveals the path to salvation to the reader in an increasingly dramatic way.<sup>35</sup> This example indicates that textile curtains not only shield the viewer from a powerful image, but also perhaps make it more didactically effective. Because the reader

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Dale discusses a similar effect in the frescoes in the crypt of the Cathedral of Aquileia. The lowermost zone of the wall contains a continuous image of a white linen textile hung from rings like a curtain and embroidered with secular themes. Dale argues that, when viewed in conjunction with the sacred Christian imagery above it, the curtains act as 'allegorical veils' which highlight the promise of salvation portrayed in the upper registers of the wall. See his *Relics, Prayer and Politics in Medieval Venetia: Romanesque Painting in the Crypt of Aquileia Cathedral* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), esp. Chapter 7, 'The Fictive Curtain as Allegorical Veil', pp. 66–76.



must physically interact with the book in order to gain access to its images, the fairly passive act of reading is transformed into active participation, and this focuses attention on the image itself in a more concentrated way.

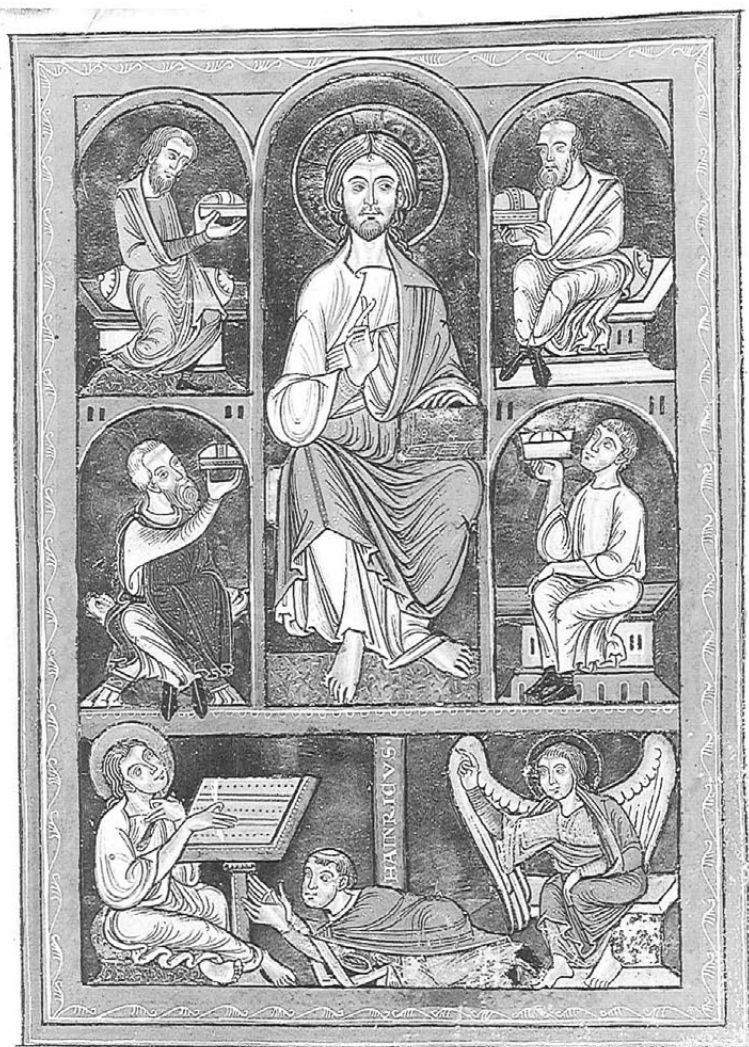


Figure 55. Christ and the Four Elders, Gradual and Sacramentary of Hainricus Sacrista, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 711, fol. 9v. Weingarten, second quarter of the thirteenth century.

At the same time, the Gradual and Sacramentary of Hainricus Sacrista was a book used in corporate devotion. The raising and lowering of manuscript curtains might also shape the congregation's experience of Mass books and their contents. It is possible that textiles sewn into these types of manuscripts may only have been raised on special feast days. Thus, the faint outline of the image may have been the celebrant's only indication of what lay beneath the textile, and the miniatures would have been obscured from the congregation entirely. This is especially true of luxury service books, such as the *Codex Aureus* of Echternach, and the *Berthold Sacramentary*, which were probably displayed on the altar and used only for the high Mass. On the occasion when the celebrant raised the curtains, those assembled might then catch a glimpse of flashing gold leaf and brightly coloured pigments, emphasizing the glory of the Word of God, and arguably increasing the mystical aspect of the Mass. The fact that secular manuscripts seldom contain curtains reinforces the idea that the textiles have a devotional purpose.<sup>36</sup>

This brief survey of the frequent intersection between medieval textiles and manuscripts suggests a few ways in which we might understand the integrality of shrouds, veils, and curtains to the functioning of a book. Textiles have been used variously to enshrine manuscripts and increase their preciousness, to protect their bindings and their images, and to enhance the devotional experience of the reader. Particularly overlooked by the modern scholar are the often absent textile curtains which once mediated the medieval viewer's experience of manuscript illumination. By placing these curtains back in the mind's eye, we can begin to recover the effects of these textile layers on image reception, filling a lacuna in our understanding of medieval liturgical and devotional practice.

<sup>36</sup> I thank Anne D. Hedeman for pointing out to me how few curtains appear in secular manuscripts.

## CURTAINS, *REVELATIO*, AND PICTORIAL REALITY IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE ITALY

Victor M. Schmidt

Textiles are the fabric of our earthly existence. We are covered in clothes, wrapped in sheets and blankets, surrounded by curtains. We handle a variety of other textiles for various other purposes. We choose them because of quality, cost, colour, pattern, texture, decorum. We imbue them with a meaning and significance. Yet the material does not last very long. During the preparation of this essay, I realized that, with the exception of some tablecloths, I own nothing older than a quarter of a century. Even though people in the past may have possessed fewer goods and chattels (and were usually more careful about them), the losses are nevertheless enormous. Textiles represent a lost chapter in the history of material culture. This holds particularly true in the case of the subject I want to discuss in this essay, the use of curtains and protective cloths in relation to the arts of late medieval and Renaissance Florence.

### *Protective Curtains for Paintings*

The *Vita* of the thirteenth-century Florentine recluse, Umiliana de' Cerchi, includes the following story. During one night, she woke up to pray, and noticed that her room was covered in refulgent light. She looked at her picture of the Madonna on the wall and saw that, from the textile that protected it, an enormous flame flared up right to the ceiling. Stupefied, she ran to the picture, grabbed the curtain, and rubbed it with her hands so as to prevent it from burning the painting. To her surprise, she saw that the textile was burning with fire but that it was not consumed. At that point she understood it was a miracle

and the fire vanished.<sup>1</sup> The story provides, not only an example of divine presence analogous to the miracle of the Burning Bush (Exodus 3. 2–5), but also, and more down to earth, an interesting insight into an aspect of late medieval and early modern material culture: the protection of panel paintings by a piece of cloth against dust and light.

Although now almost totally forgotten, the practice of protecting panel paintings with a curtain was extremely widespread. It is documented in Byzantium as early as the middle Byzantine period<sup>2</sup> and may go back to classical antiquity. In his *Natural History* (Book XXXV, Chapter 65), Pliny tells us that Parrhasius painted a picture of an illusionistically-rendered curtain (*lintheum*) to deceive his colleague Zeuxis. The story would make much more sense if protective cloths for pictures really existed at that time.<sup>3</sup> The documentary evidence for Florence is also abundant. As in Byzantium, such a curtain (*cortina, tenduccia*) could be of costly material. The inventory of the Florentine residence of Francesco di Marco Datini, the well-known merchant of Prato, lists a 'tabernacle with Our Lord with a curtain of green taffeta and gold borders'.<sup>4</sup> The 1418 inventory of the old Medici palace in Via Larga in Florence (present-day Via Cavour) includes a 'panel of Our Lady in a tabernacle with two painted shutters

<sup>1</sup> 'Nocte quadam, cum surgeret a somno ut oraret, aperiens oculos vidit totam cellam insolito fulgore splendentem, et respiciens versus tabulam, in qua erat imago Dominae nostrae, vidit quamdam ignis copiosam flammam in panno, quo tegebatur tabula, usque ad cellae supercilium ascendentem: et stupefacta nimis, timens ne combureretur tabula, cucurrit ad tabulam; et apprehenso panno et ipso compresso confricabat cum manibus ne tabulam lederet, credens penitus quod ignis iste noster materialis esset. Et cum cerneret illaesum esse pannum, et ignem manibus non sentiri, eo quod non calefaciebat nec comburebat; intellexit quod quid esset: et cum intellexisset miraculum, verecundata est ignorantia suae opinionis et pia deceptione signi: et ignis evanuit modica mora contracta'. See *Acta sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur*, ed. by the Société des Bollandistes, new edn (Paris: Palmé: 1863–), May, IV, pp. 398–99.

<sup>2</sup> For Byzantium, see Valerie Nunn, 'The Enchirion as Adjunct to the Icon in the Middle Byzantine Period', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 10 (1986), 73–102. For the use of textiles in manuscripts, see the contribution by Christine Sciacca in this volume.

<sup>3</sup> 'Descendisse hic [sc. Parrhasius] in certamen cum Zeuxide traditur et ... ipse detulisse lintheum pictum ita veritate repraesentata, ut Zeuxis ... flagitaret tandem remoto lintheo ostendi picturam'. See Pliny l'Ancien, *Histoire naturelle: livre XXXV*, ed. and trans. by Jean-Michel Croisille (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1985), p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> 'I tabernacolo dove sta Nostro Signore con una cortina dentrovi di tafetà verde co listre d'oro'. See Renato Piattoli, 'In una casa borghese del secolo XIV', *Archivio storico pratese*, 6 (1926), 112–23, esp. p. 113.

with a silk veil in front' and a 'panel of Our Lady with a silk veil and a curtain painted with two large images of St Laurence'.<sup>5</sup> Not only small panel paintings, but also large altarpieces were covered by textiles and many documented cases show that the *cortina* belonged to the normal accoutrements of an altarpiece.<sup>6</sup> In the church of Santo Spirito in Florence, a number of late fifteenth-century *pale* still have their curtain rail.<sup>7</sup> In these cases, the rail was easy to apply, as the altarpieces follow the format of the 'tavola quadrata all'antica', and thus have a straight cornice. For polyptychs with pointed gables, the application of the curtain rail on the altarpiece itself was apparently no option. In the case of a side chapel, the rail could be set in the wall, as in the Bartolini-Salimbeni chapel in Santa Trinita, Florence. Lorenzo Monaco not only supplied the *Annunciation Triptych* for the altar, but also painted the walls with scenes from the life of the Virgin. To accommodate the triptych he left a rectangular space on the wall above the altar. It was above this space that the rail was applied, as can still be seen in old photographs.<sup>8</sup> For freestanding altarpieces, another solution had to be found. Sodoma, in one of his frescoes in the cloister of Monte Oliveto

<sup>5</sup> 'Una tavola di Nostra Donna in uno tabernacolo con due sportelli dipinti con uno vello di seta innanzi, [...] Una tavola di Nostra Donna con velo di seta e con cortinuzza dipinta due immagini grandi San Lorenci'. Quoted in John Kent Lydecker, 'Il patriziato fiorentino e la committenza artistica per la casa', in *I ceti dirigenti nella Toscana del Quattrocento*, ed. by Donatella Ruggiadini (Monte Oriolo, Impruneta: Papafava, 1987), pp. 209–21, esp. p. 210, n. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Alessandro Nova, 'Hangings, Curtains, and Shutters of Sixteenth-century Lombard Altarpieces', in *Italian Altarpieces, 1250–1550: Function and Design*, ed. by Eve Borsook and Fiorella Superbi Gioffredi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 195–219; Caroline Villers, 'Four Scenes of the Passion Painted in Florence around 1400', in *The Fabric of Images: European Paintings on Textile Supports in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. by Caroline Villers (London: Archetype, 2000), pp. 1–10, esp. p. 8; Johannes Tripps, 'Retabel und heilige Schau. Funde zur Inszenierung toskanischer Retabel im Tre- und Quattrocento', *Das Münster*, 57 (2004), 87–95. For some other documented cases, see Christoph Merzenich, *Vom Schreinerwerk zum Gemälde. Florentiner Altarwerke der ersten Hälfte des Quattrocento. Eine Untersuchung zu Konstruktion, Material und Rahmenform* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2001), pp. 150–51, no. 12.7.2; p. 154, no. 12.9.6.; p. 157, no. 12.13.

<sup>7</sup> Elena Capretti, 'La pinacoteca sacra', in *La chiesa e il convento di Santo Spirito a Firenze*, ed. by Cristina Acidini Luchinat (Florence: Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, 1996), pp. 239–301. Even some of the Baroque altarpieces still have their rail.

<sup>8</sup> Christa Gardner von Teuffel, 'Lorenzo Monaco, Filippo Lippi und Filippo Brunelleschi: die Erfindung der Renaissancepala', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 45 (1982), 1–30, esp. p. 11, n. 27.

Maggiore, depicted a large triptych in the apse of a church; the rail is simply set into the side walls, in front of the altarpiece (Figure 56). Yet another option was to apply the rail and curtain to a separate structure. Various sources testify to the use of a *sopracciolo*, or canopy, above an altarpiece. The many payments



Figure 56. Sodoma. St Benedict excommunicates two religious women and absolves them after they are dead (fresco detail from cloister), Monte Oliveto Maggiore Abbey (near Asciano). 1505–08.

concerning Taddeo Gaddi's polyptych for San Giovanni Fuorcivitas in Pistoia mention the curtain, the rail, and the *sopracielo*, and although it is not explicitly said that the rail was attached to the latter, it seems likely that it was.<sup>9</sup> A canopy could also be part of a wooden structure enclosing the polyptych. No such construction has been preserved, but it can be seen in a frescoed altarpiece by Benozzo Gozzoli in the church of San Francesco in Montefalco; as in Sodoma's fresco, the curtain is also visible, pushed to the side so as to display the polyptych.<sup>10</sup>

As with domestic panel paintings, such as the *Madonna* in Palazzo Medici mentioned above, the curtains for altarpieces could be decorated with images as well. In his *Ricordanze*, the Florentine painter Neri di Bicci recorded several. None have been preserved, but in three cases the altarpieces for which the curtains were intended do survive. The curtain for his altarpiece in San Sisto at Viterbo showed the Magdalen, whereas the saints in the altarpiece as executed are Sixtus, John the Baptist, Felicity, Jerome, Laurence, and Nicholas. The (now permanently exposed) altarpiece is still in San Sisto, Viterbo.<sup>11</sup> The curtains for the two altarpieces painted for Santa Maria al Morrocco near Tavarnelle showed 'nel mezo uno Giesù'.<sup>12</sup> The altarpieces show the Pietà between Saints, and the Enthroned Virgin with the Child and Saints, respectively. In the case of the Viterbo altarpiece, it is not known why the Magdalene was chosen for the curtain. At any rate, the iconography of all the three curtains is at least complementary to the representations in the altarpieces itself. As is to be

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Ladis, *Taddeo Gaddi: Critical Reappraisal and Catalogue Raisonné* (Columbia, MI: University of Missouri Press, 1982), pp. 255–58.

<sup>10</sup> Diane Cole Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 231–32, who rightly relates the frescoed altarpiece to similar frescoes in San Francesco in Assisi (p. 68). As Nova notes in 'Hangings, Curtains, and Shutters', p. 179, it is advisable to distinguish such curtains from altar veils, which were used, particularly in the North, to close off the sides of an altar during the celebration. See also Joseph Braun, 'Altarvelen', in *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, I, ed. by Otto Schmitt (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1937), cols 621–23.

<sup>11</sup> Neri di Bicci, *Le ricordanze (19 marzo 1453–24 aprile 1475)*, ed. by Bruno Santi (Pisa: Edizioni Marlin, 1976), pp. 118–19, no. 231 (28 July 1459). For the commission by a certain Piero, archpriest in Viterbo, see Neri di Bicci, *Le ricordanze*, pp. 86–87, no. 168 (8 November 1457). For the altarpiece itself, see also *Il Quattrocento a Viterbo*, ed. by Roberto Cannatà and Claudio Strinati (Rome: De Luca, 1983), pp. 205–07.

<sup>12</sup> Neri di Bicci, *Le ricordanze*, p. 412, no. 767 (27 April 1473). For the altarpieces, now in the local museum, see Rosanna Caterina Proto Pisani, *Il Museo di Arte Sacra a Tavarnelle Val di Pesa* (Florence: Becocci/Scala, 1995), pp. 30–31, nos 5–6.



expected, hardly any curtain from the early period survives, but a rare fragmentary monochrome canvas with an image of Christ on the cross (Figure 57) by the Umbrian painter Matteo da Gualdo, which was recently shown at the exhibition devoted to him in his hometown of Gualdo Tadino, may give us an idea of the curtains described by Neri.<sup>13</sup>

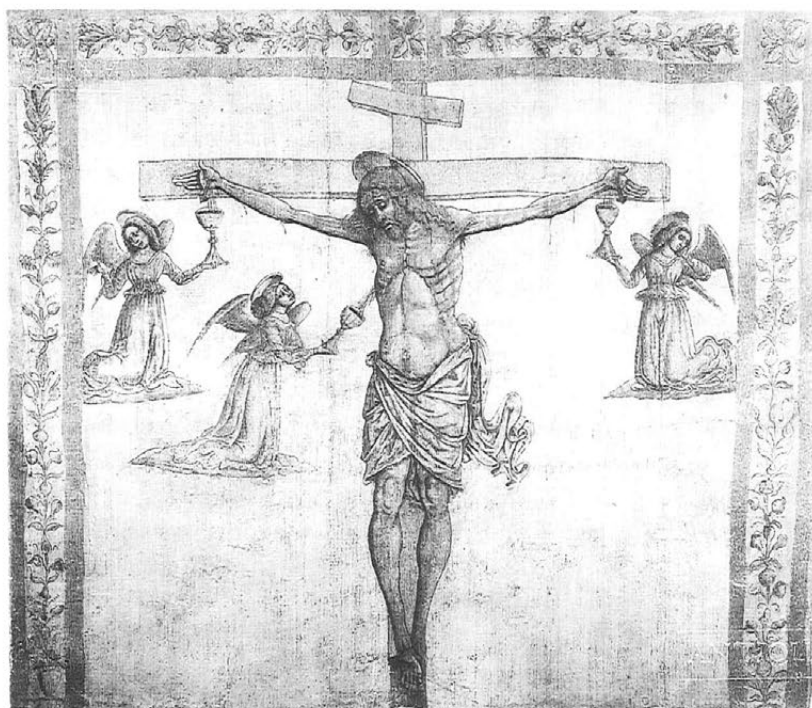


Figure 57. Matteo da Gualdo. Christ on the Cross (tempera on canvas), London, private collection. Late fifteenth century.

The presence of curtains on altarpieces raises the question: to what extent were they kept closed? It would seem likely that the coverings were opened when mass was said at the altar. In the case of figurative curtains, however, the

<sup>13</sup> London, Amati Collection, 152 × 174 cm. See *Matteo da Gualdo: Rinascimento eccentrico tra Umbria e Marche*, ed. by Eleonora Bairati and Patrizia Dragoni (Perugia: Electa Editori Umbri Associati, 2004), pp. 92–93, no. 11. In my review of the exhibition and catalogue [*Burlington Magazine*, 146 (2003), 493–95], I suggested that the canvas may have been a hanging used during Holy Week.



situation is less clear. It is certainly possible that such curtains could have been kept closed during the celebration of ordinary masses, in cases where the imagery on the curtains had a relation to the dedication of the altar or was Christological in general (as in the case of Neri's two altarpieces in Tavarnelle). However, the situation may have been far more complex, as is suggested by the side altars in Santo Spirito in Florence (Figure 58). Here we have the interesting phenomenon that the dedications of the altars in the side chapels were made visible in various media, not just on the altarpieces themselves. Some chapels still have their original figural stained glass, and it is not unlikely that the windows in all the chapels were to receive such a decoration.<sup>14</sup> Most altars, however, have painted frontals, or *paliotti*, with images of the saints to whom they were dedicated.<sup>15</sup> Even with the curtains closed, the *titulus* of the altar would have been visible and mass could have been said without uncovering the altarpieces. Interestingly, these frontals imitate textiles, often costly brocades. Some of them even show the titular saint being revealed by angels pulling the painted textiles aside, thus presenting an imagery that would have rhymed even more with the real curtains of the altarpieces.<sup>16</sup>

The use of protective cloths for paintings must have continued well into the seventeenth century, also in the North.<sup>17</sup> The most valued paintings were thus displayed. Joachim von Sandrart claims that he advised covering Caravaggio's *Amor vincit omnia*, then in the Giustiniani Collection in Rome, with a green silk and to unveil it only at the end of a tour through the gallery, because otherwise

<sup>14</sup> Alison Luchs, 'Stained Glass above Renaissance Altars: Figural Windows in Italian Church Architecture from Brunelleschi to Bramante', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 48 (1985), 177–224, esp. pp. 185–92. If Brunelleschi's original plans had been followed, the side chapels were to receive no altarpieces at all; see Barbara Markowsky, 'Eine Gruppe bemalter Paliotti in Florenz und der Toskana und ihre textilen Vorbilder', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 17 (1973), 105–40, esp. p. 115, and Victor M. Schmidt, 'Filippo Brunelleschi e il problema della tavola d'altare', *Arte cristiana*, 80 (1992), 451–61.

<sup>15</sup> Markowsky, 'Eine Gruppe bemalter Paliotti'; Capretti, 'La pinacoteca sacra', pp. 245–47.

<sup>16</sup> Markowsky, 'Eine Gruppe bemalter Paliotti', p. 126, no. 5 (Jacopo del Sellaio, St Laurence), and p. 127, no. 6 (Neri di Bicci, St Luke).

<sup>17</sup> John Loughman and John Michael Montias, *Public and Private Spaces: Works of Art in Seventeenth-century Dutch Houses* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2000), pp. 119–24. Unfortunately, the authors are unaware of the older Italian material.



Figure 58. Altarpieces and *paliotti* in the left transept, Florence, Santo Spirito. Late fifteenth century to early sixteenth century.

it would have downgraded all the other paintings by its art.<sup>18</sup> The example is interesting because it shows that the curtain was not always there just to protect a painting against light and dust. It could also be a property in a deliberate *mise en scène* of the painting. Keeping the painting covered was therefore as important as unveiling it. This *mise en scène* was also known in the late Middle Ages — only the paintings were of a different nature.

### *Revelatio*

A painting in the Cathedral of Padua, supposedly a seventeenth-century copy of a late thirteenth-century original, represents the Virgin, who, enclosed by a painted niche, is holding up a heavily swaddled Child to the viewer (Figure 59). The importance of the action is underscored by the inscription below: 'This is God and man whom I as parturient Virgin bring forth (or 'show')'.<sup>19</sup> The painted act is given a deeper meaning by the use of the panel. It very probably functioned as a stage prop for a liturgical play enacted during Christmas Eve in the cathedral. Set up near the main altar and covered with a cloth, it would have been revealed by two canons, representing the wet nurses, at the moment when the shepherds, represented by the choir, came to visit the Child.<sup>20</sup> Thus the mystery of the Incarnation was literally revealed to the shepherds, and to the congregation in general.

<sup>18</sup> 'Dieses Stuck [Caravaggio's painting] ware, neben andern hundert und zwanzigen von den fůrtreflichsten Kűnstlern gemacht, in einem Zimmer und offentlich zu sehen, aber es wurde auf mein Einrahten mit einem dunkelgrűn seidenen Vorhang bedeket, und erst, wann alles andere zu Genűge gesehen worden, zuletzt gezeigt, weil es sonst alle andere Raritűten unansehentlich gemacht, so daű es mit guten Fug eine Verfinsterung aller Geműlden mag genennet werden' (Part II, Book II, Chapter XIX). See Joachim von Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie der Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey-Kűnste, Nűrnberg 1675-1680*, 3 vols (Nűrdlingen: Uhl, 1994-95), I, p. 190. The painting is now in the Geműldegalerie, Berlin.

<sup>19</sup> The original Latin inscription runs: 'Hic Deus est et homo quem virgo puerpera promo'. The verb *promere* can mean both 'to show' and 'to bring forth'. For the painting (canvas glued to panel, 117 x 82 cm), see *Da Giotto al Mantegna*, ed. by Lucio Grossato (Milan: Electa, 1974), no. 2.

<sup>20</sup> H. W. van Os, 'The Madonna and the Mystery Play', *Simiolus*, 5 (1971), 5-19. The relevant passages from the *liber ordinarius* are quoted on p. 8. See also Klaus Krűger, *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren. űsthetische Illusion in der Kunst der frűhen Neuzeit in Italien* (Munich: Fink, 2001), pp. 25-26.



Figure 59. Virgin and Child, Padua, Cathedral.  
Seventeenth-century copy of a thirteenth-century original.

It is not known whether the Paduan Madonna was normally kept covered, but it can safely be assumed that she was. The sanctity and power of cult images was best guaranteed by keeping them out of sight.<sup>21</sup> As some Florentine examples

<sup>21</sup> Hans Dünninger, 'Gnad und Ablass – Glück und Segen. Das Verhüllen und Enthüllen heiliger Bilder', *Jahrbuch für Volkskunde*, n.s. 10 (1987), 135–50. In ancient cults, the most sacred space in a temple was closed off by curtains. The temple in Jerusalem, too, had a curtain for the most holy place (Exodus 26. 31–33; Matthew 27. 51). See Johann Konrad Eberlein, *Apparitio regis – revelatio veritatis. Studien zur Darstellung des Vorhangs in der bildenden Kunst von der Spätantike bis zum Ende des Mittelalters* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1982), pp. 21–29.

show, the practice exists to the present day. The venerable Madonna of Impruneta was enclosed in the 1340s in a tabernacle with painted shutters, and in the middle of the fifteenth century in a tabernacle attributed to Michelozzo with enamelled terracotta elements by Luca della Robbia. Located on the altar to the left of the chancel of the Collegiata, it still keeps the Madonna under lock and key.<sup>22</sup> Another Florentine miraculous image, the Annunciation fresco in Santissima Annunziata, is normally covered by a roll-down shutter, which is lifted every day at 5 p.m. for a short period by an electric device.<sup>23</sup> If people wanted to see such a cult image for devotional reasons in the past, more ceremonious measures were taken. The 1294 statutes of the Florentine Compagnia della Madonna d'Orsanmichele include a chapter stipulating that the Virgin of Orsanmichele could only be revealed with two lit torches and only for a short period; similar provisions were included in the statutes of 1333.<sup>24</sup> The present Madonna of Orsanmichele, that is, the version by Bernardo Daddi (1347) enclosed in Orcagna's monumental tabernacle (1352–60), is now permanently 'exposed', but the sculpted angels in the frame lifting a curtain still recall the veiling and unveiling of old. Gert Kreytenberg has shown that originally even the three arcades of the tabernacle could be closed off by wooden shutters; the slits through which they were lowered are still visible in the structure (Figure 60).<sup>25</sup>

The *mise en scène* of holy images indicates that great importance was attached to seeing and beholding on the part of the public. This circumstance can be contextualized by a variety of developments in the cult of saints and the Eucharist. The rise during the thirteenth century of a new type of reliquary, the ostensory, provides a conspicuous indication of the growing importance of seeing in the cult of saints. As the name suggests, the prime function of this reliquary was to display the relic in such a way that everybody could see it. Whereas previously reliquaries suggested their contents by their shapes (such as 'speaking reliquaries' in the form of an arm or a bust), or expressed their significance in the form of a house as the symbol of the Heavenly Jerusalem, now it was essential

<sup>22</sup> For the Madonna and its history, see Miklós Boskovits, *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting: Section I, I* (Florence: Giunti, 1993), pp. 198–205; for the tabernacle see John Pope-Hennessy, *Luca della Robbia* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1980), pp. 245–46, no. 15.

<sup>23</sup> See Walter and Elisabeth Paatz, *Die Kirchen von Florenz: ein kunstgeschichtliches Handbuch*, 6 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1952–55), I, p. 98.

<sup>24</sup> Gert Kreytenberg, *Orcagna. Andrea di Cione. Ein universeller Künstler der Gotik in Florenz* (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2000), pp. 100–02.

<sup>25</sup> Kreytenberg, *Orcagna*, pp. 106–07, and figs 230–34.

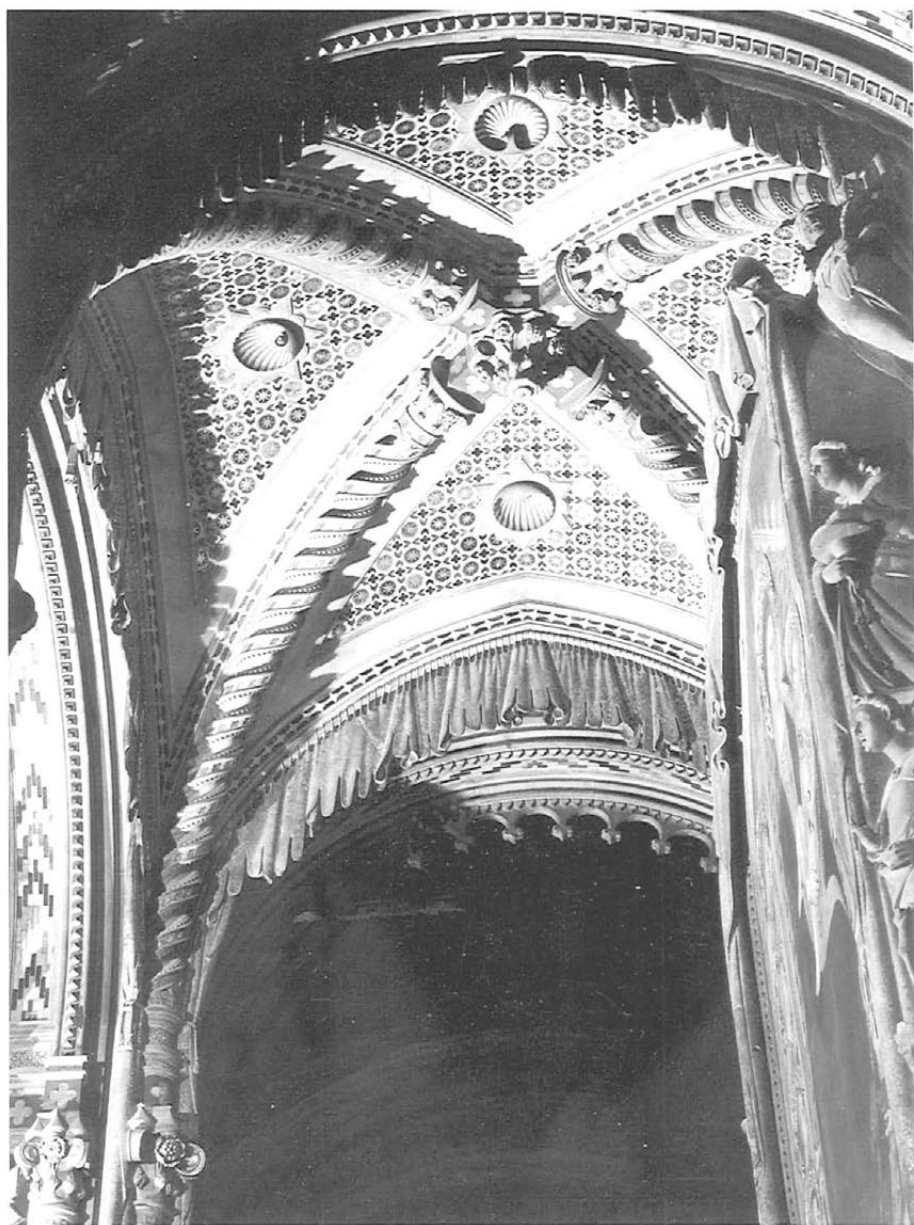


Figure 60. Inside of Orcagna's tabernacle of the Virgin, Florence, Orsanmichele.  
1352-60.

that the sacred particles were clearly visible in a glass container. Sometimes angels ostentatiously displayed the relics by thrusting the transparent container in front of the viewer.<sup>26</sup>

Similar developments occurred in eucharistic devotion. Although theologians were keen to distinguish actual, 'true' communion from substitutes such as 'spiritual communion', exposing the Eucharist on the part of the clergy and viewing it on the part of the congregation became essential. This development was no doubt reinforced because actual reception by the laity was rather infrequent.<sup>27</sup> By the middle of the thirteenth century, it had become common practice to elevate the host to mark the consecration, and hence the transubstantiation.<sup>28</sup> In the wake of the introduction of the feast of Corpus Christi in 1264, it gradually became common to carry the consecrated host in a procession and to expose it for public veneration.<sup>29</sup> This in turn led to the creation of a special container for the exposition of the host, the monstrance. This is, in fact, the 'eucharistic version' of the ostensory, and in practice it is sometimes hard to distinguish between the two.<sup>30</sup>

Theologians such as William of Auxerre (who died in 1231) also underscored the importance of sight in eucharistic devotion. In the context of a discussion about whether someone in a state of sin would commit a mortal sin by viewing Christ's body, William even claimed that viewing it is 'an appeal to the love of

<sup>26</sup> Joseph Braun, *Die Reliquiare des christlichen Kultes und ihre Entwicklung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1940), pp. 301–80.

<sup>27</sup> Edouard Dumoutet, *Le désir de voir l'hostie et les origines de la dévotion au Saint-Sacrement* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1926). For spiritual communion, see Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 64, 150; G. J. C. Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist: A Process of Mutual Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 291–93.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Browe, *Die Verehrung der Eucharistie im Mittelalter*, 2nd edn (Rome: Herder, 1967), pp. 26–39; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp. 55–58.

<sup>29</sup> Browe, *Die Verehrung*, pp. 88–185; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp. 288–94; Snoek, *Medieval Piety*, pp. 283–90.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Braun, *Das christliche Altargerät in seinem Sein und in seiner Entwicklung* (Munich: Hueber, 1932), pp. 348–411. See also Snoek, *Medieval Piety*, pp. 288–90.



God'.<sup>31</sup> The seventh and last strophe of the poem 'Adoro devote', a private eucharistic oration traditionally attributed to Thomas Aquinas, runs:

Jesus, whom veiled I now behold,  
When will what I desire so much happen,  
That I will see you with unveiled face  
And be blessed by beholding your glory?<sup>32</sup>

The poem rightly draws a distinction between the 'veiled' presence of Christ in this world and the unveiled beatific vision in the next. In practice, however, this distinction must have been rather blurred because the eucharistic presence was so strongly felt. The dogma of transubstantiation declares that Christ is really present in the host after consecration. The *substantia* changes, but the outer appearance (*accidentia*) remains the same. Despite these theological refinements, for most of the laity the consecrated host was simply Christ himself. As Michael Camille has rightly remarked, the 'notion of the "real presence" in eucharistic practice must have deeply influenced people's perception of images, for here a visual thing was itself capable of becoming and not just signifying its prototype'.<sup>33</sup>

A fine example of the blurring of boundaries in eucharistic devotion is the glazed terracotta tabernacle by Andrea della Robbia in the Florentine church of

<sup>31</sup> *Summa aurea*, Book IV, Tract VII, Chapter VII, Qu. 3: '[...] dicimus quod aspicere corpus Christi non est peccatum, immo bonum est, quia, "cum caritas, ut dicit Augustinus, idem sit quod desiderium videndi et fruendi Deo", aspicere corpus Christi provocativum est ad dilectionem Dei'. William of Auxerre, *Summa aurea, liber quartus*, ed. by Jean Ribailier, *Spicilegium Bonaventurianum*, 19 (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique; Rome: Collegio S. Bonaventura, 1985), p. 170.

<sup>32</sup> 'Ihesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio, / Quando fiet illud quod tam cupio, / Ut te revelata cernens facie / Visu sim beatus tue glorie?' For the text and history, see Igino Cecchetti, 'Adoro te devote', in *Enciclopedia cattolica*, 12 vols (Vatican City: Ente per l'Enciclopedia cattolica e per il libro cattolico, 1949–54), I, cols 326–27.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 217. For early Netherlandish painting a similar notion is elaborated by Heike Schlie, *Bilder des Corpus Christi. Sakramentaler Realismus von Jan van Eyck bis Hieronymus Bosch* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2002). See also Thomas Lentz, 'Auf der Suche nach dem Ort des Gedächtnisses. Thesen zur Auswertung der symbolischen Formen in Abendmahlslehre, Bildtheorie und Bildandacht des 14.–16. Jahrhunderts', in *Imagination und Wirklichkeit. Zum Verhältnis von mentalen und realen Bildern in der Kunst der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Klaus Krüger and Alessandro Nova (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2001), pp. 21–46.

Santi Apostoli (1512).<sup>34</sup> The container for the Host is a small temple-like structure, with angels standing in the aisles to adore the sacred Species. When closed, the door shows the Resurrection of Christ (a later addition, but originally there would have been some other Christological image); when opened, it shows the Host itself (Figure 61). In an effective way the tabernacle therefore suggests



Figure 61. Andrea della Robbia. Tabernacle (of glazed terracotta), Florence, Santi Apostoli. 1512.

<sup>34</sup> John Pope-Hennessy, *The Study and Criticism of Italian Sculpture* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980), p. 186; Giancarlo Gentilini, *I Della Robbia. La scultura invetriata nel Rinascimento*, 2 vols (Florence: Cantini, 1991), I, p. 264 and p. 253 (colour ill.).

that Christ, the image of Christ, and the Host are actually substitutes for each other. But that is not all. The tympanum shows God the Father between angels, and the complete structure is literally revealed by the two angels to the left and right who open the curtains for us. Indeed, the 'living bread' has come down from heaven, as the inscription states ('*Hic est panis qui de celis descendit*', cf. John, 6. 51). Essentially, the entire structure blatantly contradicts Aquinas's 'veiled' presence.

### *Curtains in Painting*

The curtains in Andrea della Robbia's tabernacle are a fairly late occurrence of a motif which had become quite popular. Curtains had been represented in art since late Antiquity, but only during the course of the fifteenth century did the motif become highly fashionable, particularly in Florentine painting with religious subjects.<sup>35</sup> As the early example of the Orsanmichele tabernacle shows, the motif has a basis in the practice of covering paintings by protective cloths in general and solemnly uncovering cult images in particular. The meaning of *revelatio* is made even more explicit when it is angels who are opening the curtains to literally reveal the sacred image to the beholder.

There is, however, another aspect to the popularity of the motif in Florentine art — the sheer delight in costly textiles, particularly brocades. In the course of the fourteenth century, the reproduction of actual brocades in painting became ever more refined. Not surprisingly, Cennino Cennini describes in his *Handbook* the procedures for rendering brocades, as well as other types of material.<sup>36</sup> The depiction of such textiles has an obvious relation to actual textiles and what they represented. Costly as they were, they represented status for the buyers and

<sup>35</sup> Brigitt Andrea Sigel, 'Der Vorhang der Sixtinischen Madonna. Herkunft und Bedeutung eines Motivs der Marienikonographie' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Zurich, 1977); Eberlein, *Apparitio regis - revelatio veritatis*; Johann Konrad Eberlein, 'The Curtain in Raphael's Sistine Madonna', *Art Bulletin*, 65 (1983), 61–77.

<sup>36</sup> Cennino d'Andrea Cennini, *Il libro dell'arte*, ed. by Franco Brunello (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1971), pp. 143–48, Chapters CXLI–CXLIV. For the English translation, see Cennino d'Andrea Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook, 'Il libro dell'arte'*, trans. by Daniel V. Thompson (New York: Dover, 1960), pp. 86–91. See also Brigitte Klesse, *Seidenstoffe in der italienischen Malerei des 14. Jahrhunderts*, Schriften der Abegg-Stiftung, 1 (Bern: Stämpfli, 1967).

commissioners and, in a religious context, underlined the solemnity of the liturgy. Transposed in painting, they constitute an 'iconography of riches'.<sup>37</sup>

Fra Angelico was one of the first Florentine painters to include illusionistic curtains in his work, a prime example of his being the altarpiece that once adorned the main altar of San Marco.<sup>38</sup> In the upper corners, ropes keep the brocade curtains to the sides. Behind the throne of the Virgin a costly brocade hangs as a cloth of honour, a motif that goes back to the thirteenth century at the latest. On either side of the throne a curtain is spread out to close off the space as another cloth of honour for the angels and saints, who are standing on an Oriental carpet, the pattern of which functions as a spatial organizer. Clearly, the careful depiction of the curtains corresponds with the rendering of other costly textiles. But it is precisely the costliness of these textiles which should be a warning not to take the curtains for a simple transposition of actual coverings into painting. The curtains depicted in altarpieces, and also in smaller religious paintings for domestic use, are invariably brocades and other costly textiles. Painters like Andrea del Verrocchio and Francesco Botticini went even so far as to include curtains lined with fur or ermine.<sup>39</sup> Although one may find, for instance, silk hangings mentioned in inventories, it is doubtful whether the majority of the coverings for paintings were that expensive. In their sumptuousness, the curtains are certainly exaggerated.

In the second half of the Quattrocento the curtain had become so common in painting that one might be tempted to consider it as just a stock-in-trade motif, devoid of any meaning. There are at least two arguments against such an

<sup>37</sup> Rembrandt Duits, 'Gold Brocade in Renaissance Painting. An Iconography of Riches' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Utrecht, 2001). See also: Margaret L. Goehring's essay, 'The Representation and Meaning of Luxurious Textiles in Franco-Flemish Manuscript Illumination', in this volume.

<sup>38</sup> See most recently Miklós Boskovits and David Alan Brown, *Italian Paintings of the Fifteenth Century, The Collections of the National Gallery of Art: Systematic Catalogue* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2003), pp. 13–20 (with bibliography).

<sup>39</sup> *The Virgin and Child with Two Angels*, from the workshop of Verrocchio can be found in the National Gallery, London; Botticini's *Virgin and Child with Sts Mary Magdalene and Bernard of Clairvaux* is in the Louvre, Paris; while *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Angels and Four Saints* is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and *Coronation of the Virgin with Four Saints* is in the Galleria Sabauda in Turin. See Patricia Lee Rubin and Alison Wright, *Renaissance Florence: The Art of the 1470s* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1999), pp. 172–73, no. 23; Lisa Venturini, *Francesco Botticini* (Florence: Edifir, 1994), p. 121, no. 60; pp. 128–29, no. 83; pp. 129–30, no. 86.

opinion. First there is the basic observation that the motif occurs almost exclusively in non-narrative religious painting.<sup>40</sup> Pictorial 'unveiling' was therefore considered particularly relevant in the case of sacred figures. Secondly, a closer analysis reveals that the motif could fulfil an important compositional role, as exemplified by Domenico Ghirlandaio's altarpiece in the cathedral of San Martino in Lucca (Plate 6).<sup>41</sup> The curtain 'reveals' the Virgin and the Child, but also brings about a subtle differentiation in hierarchy. The subordinate place of the saints is made clear by their spatial position in the painting: lower in respect to the Virgin and Child and also closer to the picture plane; that is, in front of the curtain. Thus Ghirlandaio is not just representing a costly curtain, he is also using it as a compositional device to indicate differences of level. He does so in a way that goes beyond an actual unveiling — it is part of a pictorial strategy.

The curtains depicted in altarpieces and smaller religious paintings belong to a repertoire of compositional devices that serve to give the sacred figures a pregnant presence for the beholder. They include the plinth or balustrade, usually employed for half-length figures, and the dais or platform for full-length figures (as in Fra Angelico). Although these devices were already developed in the fourteenth century, they became current in the fifteenth and were expanded by such motifs as the window and the painted curtain.<sup>42</sup> In general, these devices echo the presentation of relics and the Eucharist both in sacred vessels and in actual ritual, as described above. In painting, however, these devices created their own dynamics. They establish a relation with the viewer, but simultaneously act like a barrier between viewer and pictorial space. As markers of the 'aesthetic boundary' of a painting, they emphasize its fictionality and, by implication, also the role of the artist as mediator between the viewer and the transcendent reality the sacred figures represented.<sup>43</sup> The fictionality of religious painting runs the

<sup>40</sup> The exception confirming the rule are the *spalliere* of the Morelli-Nerli wedding chests in the Courtauld Gallery, London, painted by Biagio d'Antonio and Jacopo del Sellaio. See Rubin and Wright, *Renaissance Florence*, pp. 316–17, nos 78–79.

<sup>41</sup> Jean Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 245–46, no. 21.

<sup>42</sup> See Victor M. Schmidt, *Painted Piety: Panel Paintings for Personal Devotion in Tuscany, 1250–1400* (Florence: Centro Di, 2005), pp. 141–54. For the later period, see Victor I. Stoichita, *L'instauration du tableau. Métapeinture à l'aube des temps modernes*, 2nd rev. edn (Geneva: Droz, 1999), pp. 53–99.

<sup>43</sup> For the problem, see Krüger, *Das Bild als Schleier*; Stoichita, *L'instauration du tableau*. See also Jeffrey Hamburger, 'Seeing and Believing: The Suspicion of Sight and the Authentication of Vision in Late Medieval Art and Devotion', in *Imagination und*

risk of becoming problematical the more that artists presented the holy figures in a way that seemed to extend the earthly reality of the viewer into the painting. How can the viewer be sure that what he sees is in fact supposed to be a transcendent reality?

The tension between pictorial realism and transcendency becomes particularly interesting in the case of Alesso Baldovinetti's altarpiece from Santa Trinita in Florence, now in the Accademia (Figure 62).<sup>44</sup> The main elements themselves are not very surprising and can be easily explained by the original location. The painting was commissioned in 1470 for the main altar of Santa Trinita by the Gianfigliuzzi family, who held the *ius patronatus* over the *cappella maggiore*. The Trinity, here represented as the so-called Throne of Mercy, obviously refers to the dedication of the church. The church belonged to the Order of Vallombrosa and this is reflected by inclusion of the founder, St John Gualbert, and of St Benedict, whose rule the order followed. It is the theatricality of the representation that is surprising. Two angels to the left and right pull the curtains apart to reveal the Trinity, which is surrounded by a halo of cherubim in a cloud. To focus the central image even more, six other angels behold the Trinity, as do St John Gualbert and St Benedict. All these figures are hovering upon clouds as well.

The Trinity is perhaps the most complex theological concept in Christianity, and to represent it in a comprehensible manner is nearly impossible.<sup>45</sup> The Trinity in the form of the Throne of Grace goes back to the thirteenth century, and was first formulated in Florentine painting in the course of the second half of the Trecento. It is essentially an image of the Crucifixion, to which God the Father and the dove of the Holy Spirit have been added. God the Father, either

*Wirklichkeit*, ed. by Krüger and Nova, pp. 47–69.

<sup>44</sup> Ruth Wedgwood Kennedy, *Alesso Baldovinetti: A Critical and Historical Study* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), pp. 167–72. Baldovinetti was also to decorate the *cappella maggiore* with frescoes, fragments of which are still visible, especially in the vault. See Kennedy, *Alesso Baldovinetti*, pp. 172–81, and Anna Padoa Rizzo, 'Gli affreschi di Alesso Baldovinetti nella Cappella Maggiore', in *La chiesa di Santa Trinita a Firenze*, ed. by Giuseppe Marchini and Emma Micheletti (Florence: Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, 1987), pp. 145–50.

<sup>45</sup> For the iconography of the Trinity in general, see W. Braunfels, 'Dreifaltigkeit', in *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, ed. by Engelbert Kirschbaum, 8 vols (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1968–76), 1, cols 526–37.

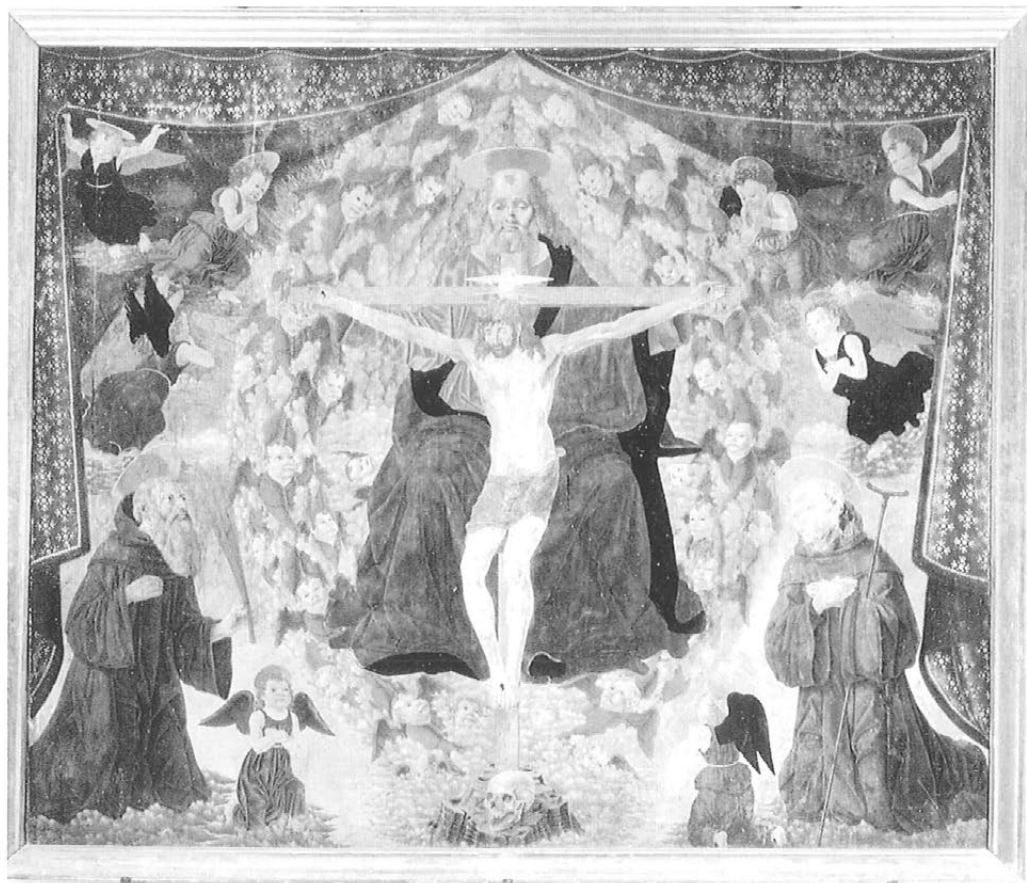


Figure 62. Alesso Baldovinetti. Trinity with Sts John Gualbert and Benedict (tempera on panel), Florence, Galleria dell'Accademia. 1470–72.



standing or sitting, is holding the cross by its ends from behind.<sup>46</sup> It is almost a diagram and as such it worked well — as long as the setting was kept to a minimum. The cross is set on Calvary, which thus defines the position of God the Father in an essentially earthly sphere and makes this space ‘visible’ to the human eye. As a consequence, a growing attention to the setting entailed a rethinking of the position of God the Father. Masaccio presented the most radical solution in his famous fresco in Santa Maria Novella, originally the decoration of a private chapel. A vaulted hall serves as the setting for the figures, fixing the cross with Christ, the Virgin, and St John, and especially God the Father, in a position in space. Whatever the architecture may actually represent, it looks like a well-ordered space that presents itself as the continuation of the real space. That it was *not* meant to be like this is shown by the two donors, who are placed on a separate dais before the threshold. While they share the same space as the viewer, they are excluded from the hall. Indeed, they are not even looking inside, because they are not meant to ‘see’ the transcendental reality of the holy figures.<sup>47</sup>

Not surprisingly, other painters did not take up Masaccio’s radical solution. Instead, painters adapted the Trecento formula to a certain degree, as is shown by the *Trinity Altarpiece* in the National Gallery, London. Commissioned by the Confraternity of Priests in Pistoia from Pesellino in 1455, it was finished after his death in 1457 by Filippo Lippi.<sup>48</sup> Whereas in a fourteenth-century polyptych every single figure would have had his own compartment, here the figures are united in a *sacra conversazione* set in a landscape. This required an adaptation of the Throne of Grace. Pesellino surrounded God the Father by a halo of seraphim

<sup>46</sup> For precedents in Florentine painting, see Paul Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino: A Complete Catalogue* (London: Phaidon, 1993), pp. 357–60; Dillian Gordon, *The Fifteenth Century Italian Paintings, Volume I*, National Gallery Catalogues (London: National Gallery Company, 2003), p. 281.

<sup>47</sup> There is no certainty as to the identity of the patrons. For a recent discussion of the evidence and a new hypothesis, see Rita Maria Comanducci, “L’altare nostro de la Trinità”: Masaccio’s Trinity and the Berti family’, *Burlington Magazine*, 145 (2003), 14–21. The depicted architecture may look convincing at first sight, but proves difficult to reconstruct exactly; the inconsistencies also affect the position of the holy figures. See Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, pp. 360–65, for a discussion. The impossibility of reconstructing the exact position of the figure of God the Father in a ground-plan has led some scholars (most recently, Krüger, *Das Bild als Schleier*, pp. 34–36) to believe that Masaccio did this deliberately to show that God the Father cannot be ‘caught’ within the categories of time and space.

<sup>48</sup> Gordon, *The Fifteenth Century Italian Paintings*, pp. 260–87.

and cherubim, so as to indicate His transcendental nature. The little clouds at the foot of the cross have the same purpose, showing that the whole group is hovering above the landscape and therefore not part of the same reality as the four saints.

It is against these precedents that Baldovinetti's solution needs to be considered. To avoid any ambiguity about the reality of the subject depicted, he represented the Trinity as truly celestial. A greater contrast with Masaccio's setting could not have been possible. In Pesellino's version, the saints are still set in a landscape, however ideal or paradisiacal it may have been understood. Baldovinetti transposed them instead to the heavens by placing them, like the adoring angels, upon clouds, so as to indicate that what they experience is a heavenly vision. This representational mode acquires an extra poignancy by the circumstance that the sacred figures are being presented by the angels who unveil them for us. The pictorial unveiling, in combination with this particular subject, needed visual clues about the nature of the revelation. By transposing everything to heavenly spheres, Baldovinetti made clear that the Throne of Grace is indeed the representation of a mystery of faith. Seen in this light, the altarpiece can even be considered as a critique of previous renderings of the theme. Be that as it may, some later altarpieces by Botticini and Pollaiuolo with similar 'celestial' subjects as the Virgin and Child in glory, and the Coronation, show that Baldovinetti's example was well understood.<sup>49</sup>

### Coda

The first purpose of this essay is to draw attention to the once-common practice of protecting paintings by a hanging. In the case of special paintings, such as cult images, the hanging was an essential property used to heighten their impact by keeping them covered — or unveiling them on special occasions. It is important to recall these practices because they testify to a use of paintings that is all but gone today and invite us to reconsider some basic assumptions about the

<sup>49</sup> Francesco Botticini, *Coronation of the Virgin with Saints and Angels*, formerly in the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, Berlin; *Virgin and Child with Sts Mary Magdalene and Bernard of Clairvaux* is in the Louvre, Paris; *Coronation of the Virgin with Four Saints* is in the Galleria Sabauda, Turin; Piero del Pollaiuolo, *Coronation of the Virgin with Saints* is found at Sant'Agostino, San Gimignano. See Venturini, *Francesco Botticini*, pp. 111–12, no. 33; p. 121, no. 60; pp. 129–30, no. 86; Nicoletta Pons, *I Pollaiuolo* (Florence: Octavo, 1994), pp. 104–05, no. 19.

function and reception of paintings, which, consciously or not, tend to be coloured by the almost total musealization of art works of the present. Precisely because it was so common to protect paintings by a protective curtain, the depiction of such curtains in fifteenth-century Florentine altarpieces and other religious paintings had a practical basis. But that was not all: 'pictorial unveiling' inevitably entailed, to a greater or lesser degree, a reflection upon the nature of painting itself. This is not to say that every Renaissance painting is automatically an artificial, almost post-modernist meta-pictorial discourse. The 'auto-poetical' or self-referential elements stem from the delight in rendering figures and objects in an ever-changing realistic and convincing manner. In this context, the careful depiction of textiles in their exaggerated opulence decisively contributed to making painting such a fluid medium for the creation of a self-conscious reality.



MANTLE, FUR, PALLIUM:  
VEILING AND UNVEILING IN THE  
MARTYRDOM OF AGNES OF ROME\*

Barbara Baert

*L'homme,  
en nouant son vêtement de fibres,  
d'écorce battue ou de peaux,  
retrouve par les symboles  
la place qu'il pense occuper dans le monde,  
vêtu de lumière*

The present anthology, *Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing*, seeks to tease out the meaning of textiles in various iconographic, symbolic, and social aspects during the Middle Ages. In the *martyrologium* of Agnes of Rome and its literary and iconographic *Nachleben*, there seems to be both a direct and an indirect articulation of the three aspects explored in this book. The *persona* Agnes of Rome operates within a triangle that binds together fibre, veiling/unveiling, and investiture. The triangle extends across various models of knowledge. In this contribution, I attempt to outline these insights and thematize them on the basis of a discursive analysis of the *martyrologia*. I then contextualize the motif-complex within the concept of *raptus*. Against this

\* This article is the further development of earlier research results presented as: 'More Than an Image. Agnes of Rome: Virginity and Visual Memory', in *More than a Memory: The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Religious Identity in the History of Christianity*, ed. by J. Leemans (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), pp. 139–68.

<sup>1</sup> Jean Servier, *L'homme et l'invisible* (Paris: Éditions du Rocher, 1964), p. 257.

background, it becomes clear that the chain linking the fibre of veiling/unveiling and investiture also enters into a connection with female hair growth. The anthropological approach of this article extends to cover a ritual practice still enacted in Rome today: the weaving of the pallium with the wool of the so-called lamb of St Agnes.

### *Virgo-Virago*

In the catacomb of Panfilo, a preserved piece of gold-glass presents the earliest iconographical evidence of Agnes (Figure 63).<sup>2</sup> The image depicts a young woman standing in an attitude of prayer — the *orans* position — and identified by the inscription A.G.N.E.S. Along both sides are a scroll, a star, and a dove on a socle (a plain low block or plinth serving as a support for a column). The woman's headdress and hairstyle are aristocratic. The scroll and the star refer, respectively, to the knowledge, wisdom, and heavenly glory of the martyr, while the dove represents a broader spectrum of symbolism, including baptism, the bird of paradise, love, and the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> The posture of prayer originated in the late Antique period.<sup>4</sup> One usually encounters it in Rome in funerary contexts, where it symbolizes *pietas*. *Pietas* means surrendering to relations in the hereafter as well as those in the here-and-now. In an early Christian context the physical act of prayer was taken up in the paintings and objects found within catacombs. Not only were the deceased portrayed in this position but biblical figures and martyrs were as well. Within the latter category, as in the representation of Agnes, the meaning of *pietas* is expanded to include divine bliss and ascent into paradise. The attributes of the star and the dove support this symbolism.

The image on the gold-glass was conceived during the same period as when Ambrose exclaimed, 'This is a new sort of martyrdom!' He considered Agnes'

<sup>2</sup> Charles R. Morey and Guy Ferrari, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library with Additional Catalogues of Other Gold-Glass Collections* (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica, 1959), ill. 75.

<sup>3</sup> See also *Dictionnaire des symboles*, ed. by Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrandt (Paris: Laffont, 1982), p. 269.

<sup>4</sup> Fabrizio Bisconti, 'Il gesto dell' orante tra atteggiamento e personificazione', in *Aurea Roma. Dalla città pagana alla città cristiana* [exhibition catalogue], ed. by Serena Ensoli and Eugenio la Rocca (Rome: Bretschneider, 2000), pp. 368–72, ill. 5.



Figure 63. Gold-glass depicting Agnes, Rome, Catacomb of Panfilo. Fourth century.



martyrdom innovative for three reasons: her youth, her chaste love, and the cause of her death.<sup>5</sup> According to the Latin *martyrologia*, Agnes was stabbed in the throat at the age of twelve during the reign of Diocletian because she chose chastity and the Christian faith. According to the Greek Menologia, Agnes, because she refused to serve idols, was brought to a brothel. If a man tried to rape her, however, she was protected by a white angel.<sup>6</sup> The *martyrologia* further relate that Constantia, daughter of Constantine the Great, had suffered from leprosy but was healed by sleeping on Agnes' tomb. Consequently, Constantia had a church built on that spot, Sant' Agnese fuori le Mura.<sup>7</sup> Agnes' skull relic is now preserved in Sant' Agnese in Agone on the piazza Navona.<sup>8</sup> Her martyrdom has been celebrated on January 21 since AD 354.

In the Greek sources, as well as the wider tradition surrounding Agnes, love is a particularly central theme. Although men quickly notice her youthful beauty, she renounces it in favour of a higher love. The hymn of praise to, and satisfaction of, spiritual love stands in contrast to the episode of near rape in the brothel. I would like to examine this tension between aggression, virginity, and martyrdom in more detail.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *De virginibus*, in *Patrologia cursus completus. Series Latina* [hereafter cited as *Patrologia Latina*], ed. by J.-P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Garnier, 1844–55), XVI, col. 200. For an overview of the literary sources: Pio Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione e nella leggenda', *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Alterthumskunde und für Kirchengeschichte*, 10 (1899), 1–67; Paul Allard, 'Agnès (Sainte)', in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, 15 vols (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1924–58), I, pp. 905–18; Yves-Marie Duval, 'L'Originalité du De virginibus dans le mouvement ascétique occidental: Ambroise, Cyprien, Athanase', in *Ambroise de Milan. XVI<sup>e</sup> Centenaire de son élection épiscopale* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1974), pp. 9–66.

<sup>6</sup> Prudentius, *Peristephanon*, Chapter XIV, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. by Migne, LX, col. 580 (fifth century). See Anne-Marie Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 57–97; John Petruccione, 'The Persecutor's Envy and the Rise of the Martyr Cult: Peristephanon Hymns 1 and 4', *Vigilae Christianae*, 45 (1991), 327–46.

<sup>7</sup> The literature is out-of-date: Florian Jubarú, *Sainte Agnès, vierge et martyre de la voie Nomentane* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1907).

<sup>8</sup> Sante Sciubba and Lucia Sabanti, *Sant' Agnese in Agone* (Rome: Marietti, 1962); Simona Ciofetta, 'Sant' Agnese in Agone', *Roma Sacra*, 7 (1996), 45–50. The skull relic refers to a later offshoot of the *martyrologia*, in which Agnes is supposedly beheaded. The skull is surprisingly small, and suggests that it belonged to an adolescent girl.

<sup>9</sup> This area of research received new impetus beginning in the 1990s. I oriented myself in the field on the basis of the following studies: Elisabeth A. Clark, 'Ideology, History, and the Construction of "Woman" in Late Ancient Christianity', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 2 (1994), 155–84; Suzanna Elm, *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*

In his study, *Dying for God*, Daniel Boyarin discusses the identity of the early Christian female martyrs of Rome.<sup>10</sup> He finds that a 'transgender' mechanism, which develops between the second and fourth centuries, operates in these *martyrologia*. Another scholar, Virginia Burrus, applies an analogous discursive analysis to the *martyrologium* of Agnes.<sup>11</sup> The approach of these two authors helps us to penetrate the characteristics and central idea of the Agnes narrative.

With striking frequency, hagiographers of Roman female martyrs describe them as having masculine characteristics. To take a notable example: Perpetua (d. 7 March 203) described her martyrdom in a vision. When her attackers violated her sexually, she showed the strength of a man; she even 'became male': *facta sum masculus*.<sup>12</sup> The first virgins were portrayed as heroines with the qualities of a gladiator and, as virgins, they died a 'virile' death. They are at once *virago* and *virgo*.<sup>13</sup>

In fourth-century accounts, the tension between genders becomes more complex. In the version of Agnes' legend authored by Prudentius, we learn that Agnes bared her breast in a warlike fashion when she received the death-blow. It must be noted that a sword in the breast was considered a masculine death. But Agnes' executioners refused to plunge their swords into her breast and chose to cut her throat instead. In contrast to the hard pectoral muscle, the slender

(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text*, ed. by Elaine Fantham and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); *Maenads, Martyrs, Matrons, Monastics: A Sourcebook on Women's Religions in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. by Ross S. Kraemer (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1994); Gillian Cloke, *This Female Man of God: Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, AD 350–450* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); Lynda L. Coon, *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Elisabeth A. Clark, 'Holy Women, Holy Words: Early Christian Women, Social History, and the "Linguistic Turn"', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 6 (1998), 413–30.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 67–92.

<sup>11</sup> Virginia Burrus, 'Reading Agnes: The Rhetoric of Gender in Ambrose and Prudentius', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 3 (1995), 25–46.

<sup>12</sup> *Acta sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur*, ed. by the Société des Bollandistes, new edn (Paris: Palmé, 1863–), March, I, pp. 629–34, col. 634: 'Veniunt et ad vme adolescents decori, adjutores edt favourites mei: et expoliata sum, et facta sum masculus'.

<sup>13</sup> Boyarin, *Dying for God*, p. 76; Burrus, 'Reading Agnes', p. 25. See also Virginia Burrus, 'Word and Flesh: The Bodies and Sexuality of Ascetic Women in Christian Antiquity', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 10 (1994), 27–51.

neck presents a rather more feminine topos for violence.<sup>14</sup> It is not the body part of a hero(ine) but that of a victim and, as such, the neck symbolizes female subordination. Prudentius seems to install a tension between the masculine woman and the return to the feminine essence. Here we are concerned with a rehabilitation of gender identity, as it were. It is not Agnes herself who chooses a 'feminine' death, but her executioners who force it upon her. More to the point: Agnes wants to be the masculine *virago* of the second century, but instead is forced to perish as the feminine *virgo* of the fourth century.

Agnes' martyrdom thereby concerns her compulsion to accept a feminine death. In this way, she is 'not after all audacious *virago* but docile *virgo*, not that is, triumphant warrior, but sacrificed virgin'.<sup>15</sup> What had been an unequivocal representation of second-century female martyrs as warlike heroines thereby enters a more ambiguous field in which the poles between feminine and masculine are constantly in flux. In other words, Agnes makes a leap from masculinized woman to female virgin. While the former characterization is subversive, it is converted by force of violence into a feminine, sacrificial death.<sup>16</sup> This gender exchange can be interpreted in light of social exemplarism on the one hand, and in terms of ideas concerning sexuality and virginity on the other.

The masculine pole of the female martyrs embodies a social protest. It is a gendered subversiveness that can be extrapolated to Christian dissatisfaction with Roman hierarchy and pagan social structures. Female martyrs who assume the characteristics of the opposite sex represent a contest of strength with the masculinely structured society that oppresses them. If the oppressor takes these masculine characteristics away from them, as is the case with Agnes, then this contest of strength is also negated.

The exemplary value of this type of fourth-century female martyr also became more complicated.<sup>17</sup> Were these martyrdoms supposed to provide examples for

<sup>14</sup> Boyarin, *Dying for God*, p. 76, n. 36: 'Strictly speaking it is death by piercing or slashing the throat that is marked as "feminine"'. On the 'feminine' *coup de grace*, see also Brent D. Shaw, 'Body/Power/Identity: Passions of the Martyrs', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 4 (1996), 269–312, esp. p. 273, n. 10, and p. 305; Nicole Loraux and Anthony Forster, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Boyarin, *Dying for God*, p. 77. See also Burrus, 'Reading Agnes', p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> See also David Hunter, 'Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late Fourth-century Rome: The Case of Jovinian', *Theological Studies*, 48 (1987), 45–64.

<sup>17</sup> For this line of reasoning see Boyarin, *Dying for God*, pp. 77–81; Burrus, 'Word and Flesh', p. 48.

women, men, or both genders? It is known that the first female martyrs served as examples for Christian women. These martyrs were usually from good families, were themselves aristocratic and intellectual, and their 'virility' also embodied spiritual autonomy and hard-won social freedom.<sup>18</sup> But there is more: if the virile woman is always re-feminized, then, according to Boyarin, the Christian man can also be involved in the identification process. It is not on the basis of their own sex-characteristics being ascribed to the female martyrs (*virago*), but precisely because of the return to a feminine essence that men will feel themselves addressed by the *martyrologia* of women. The explanation is as follows: the Christian man shares with the female martyr subjection to a masculine, pagan power and, as a consequence, this subjection concerns his own gender. His protest and subversivity must therefore tend toward a 'feminine' identity with respect to his social position. To be exact: in the rehabilitation of the death of the female martyr so typical of fourth-century Roman *martyrologia*, a masculine exemplary function was desired and in fact made possible. The man had to become feminine in order to escape the ethical dangers of the masculine state.<sup>19</sup>

The above line of reasoning implies a developing history of ideas concerning sexuality and virginity. On this score, I would like to introduce the hymn Agnes uttered just before her martyrdom, according to Prudentius's version of the events:

I revel more a wild man comes,  
A cruel and violent man-at-arms,  
Than if a softened youth came forth,  
Faint and tender, bathed in scent,  
To ruin me with chastity's death.  
This is my lover, I confess,  
A man who pleases me at last!  
I shall rush to meet his steps  
So I don't delay his hot desires.  
I shall greet his blade's full length  
Within my breast; and I shall draw  
The force of sword to bosom's depth.

<sup>18</sup> Anne E. Hickey, *Women of the Roman Aristocracy as Christian Monastics* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987), pp. 87–106; Kate Cooper, 'Insinuations of Womanly Influence: An Aspect of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 82 (1992), 150–64; Virginia Burrus, 'Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of the Apocryphal Acts', *Studies in Women and Religion*, 23 (1987), 53–57.

<sup>19</sup> Boyarin, *Dying for God*, pp. 80–81.

As bride of Christ, I shall leap over  
 The gloom of sky, the aether's heights.  
 Eternal King, part Heaven's gates,  
 Barred before to earth-born folk,  
 And call, O Christ, a virgin soul,  
 A soul that aims to follow thee,  
 Now a sacrifice to Father God.<sup>20</sup>

In her monologue, Agnes typifies the pagan man as sexually aggressive, and she reasons him away in favour of just one man: Christ. This One Man must be loved in a state of virginity.<sup>21</sup> In Agnes' compelling words, the contrast between *virago* and *virgo* is stretched to the limit. It is not the warlike ability of the female martyr that is able to cast off male supremacy in favour of the grace of God; only the virgin sacrifice is able to accomplish that.<sup>22</sup> It is in resolutely maintained chastity that God's reward resides.

This is a new sort of martyrdom indeed. Ambrose had understood that the old heroization of female martyrs could be enriched by the explicit theme of virginity.<sup>23</sup> The fourth-century female martyr is thus the heroine of mystical love. Agnes sings unequivocally of love, but the sensuality and eroticism that one usually associates with earthly love shifts into another figurative language: one representative of the singular, highest, chaste love. The power of the sword in the depth of the bosom sings of desire for reunion with the One Man.

In the *martyrologium* of Agnes, virginity, a desire for reunion with God, and martyrdom all fall in line. Or formulated otherwise: virginity is the precondition for a death that is not merely death but martyrdom, and hence the installation of theophany. 'This is my lover, I confess / A man who pleases me at last!', sings Agnes of Christ. With her final words, 'Now a sacrifice to Father God', she takes

<sup>20</sup> Translation in *Women in the Early Church*, ed. by Elisabeth A. Clark, *Message of the Fathers of the Church*, 13 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1983), p. 112.

<sup>21</sup> The so-called wild man splits into assailant and handsome youth: Burrus, 'Reading Agnes', pp. 36–38. The male gender is understood as a polarity between physical aggressor and spiritual lover.

<sup>22</sup> Sandra R. Joshel, 'The Body of Female and the Body Politic: Livy's Lucretia and Verginia', in *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*, ed. by Amy Richlin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 112–30.

<sup>23</sup> On this explicit thematization see Elisabeth Castelli, 'Visions and Voyeurism: Holy Women and the Politics of Sight in Early Christianity', in *Protocol of the Colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies*, 6 December 1992, n.s. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 43–44.

the ultimate step of martyrdom, thereby passing over the Son to the Father. This passage is precisely what was expressed in the iconography of the gold-glass in the catacomb of Panfilo: the transition over death towards unification with God: paradise.

### *Veiling/Unveiling the Body of the Female Martyr*

During the high Middle Ages, the eastern and western variants of the early Christian Agnes legend were combined. The new and enriched version of the legend was circulated in the *Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine, (c. 1260).<sup>24</sup>

One day when Agnes was only twelve years old, the son of the prefect saw her coming home from school and fell in love with her. But she was already acquainted with another, higher love. According to the story, the five virtues of humanity — nobility, beauty of the soul, generosity, courage, and transparent love — were rewarded by a saviour who likewise had five characteristics — noble origins, unconquerable strength, beauty, love, and grace. Moreover, Agnes explains to her rejected suitor:

this true bridegroom has placed a wedding ring on my finger, and a necklace of precious stones around my neck, and a gown woven of gold and jewels. He has placed a sign on my forehead as his chosen one, he has joined his body to mine, and he has shown me unique treasures, and promised them to me if I remain faithful to him.

When the young man hears this, he becomes sick with unrequited love, and the prefect offers Agnes a choice: she must either bring an offering to Vesta, goddess of virgins, or give her own body to a brothel. Agnes replies that an angel would protect her chastity. The prefect undresses her, but God causes her hair to grow so long that it covers her nakedness. In the brothel, an angel waits on her and provides her with a mantle of blinding white light. When the son of the prefect and several of his friends attempt to violate her, the devil takes possession of the young man and quickly dispatches him. Although Agnes prays, and the young suitor comes back to life, she is nevertheless sentenced to death. Fire cannot consume her, but death finds her in the form of a sword in the throat. After her martyrdom, Agnes appears to her parents surrounded by angels in radiant garments, with a lamb in her lap.

<sup>24</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Reading on the Saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), I, pp. 101–04.

This version of the story in the *Golden Legend* draws upon the symbolism of investiture several times. In the first instance, it takes the form of the gold- and jewel-adorned mantle that Agnes receives from the bridegroom. Its second manifestation occurs when she is undressed by the aggressor, and its third, when she is veiled with long hair. The final occurrence takes place when the angel hands her a mantle of white light. With these events, it is possible to speak of a chain reaction implicating dressing and undressing. The dynamic begins with the symbolic longing for the mantle of the bridegroom and it is fulfilled when she receives the mantle of light from the angel. The first episode serves as a foreshadowing of the mystic marriage; the second as a sign that the union has become possible. The final angelic mantle clothes Agnes' chastity, and the white light reinforces the symbolism of her virginity.

The theme of the 'intact body' has been explored in depth in recent scholarship. In her study, *The Resurrection of the Body*, Caroline Walker Bynum discusses the intellectual consequences of the medieval belief in the resurrection of bodies.<sup>25</sup> The idea that is naturally attached to bodily plasticity is linked with the cult of the relic. Salvation at the end of time takes place in the whole body. How is this to be reconciled with the fragmentary character of, say, a relic? Bynum's arguments are oriented towards the notion of the physical re-assembly of the saint or martyr.<sup>26</sup> The *Golden Legend*, once again, sheds some light on the issue.

Jacobus de Voragine describes the bodies of the decapitated Nazarius and Celsus as 'integrum et incorruptum', and the battered body of Margaret — beaten so severely that her bones lay strewn about — as untouched.<sup>27</sup> The status of martyrdom appears to transcend the fragmentation of the body. The explanation is of a metaphorical nature: in their death the martyrs have attained salvation *immediately*. This salvation *avant la lettre*, this direct access to paradise, demands the intact, reassembled body of the resurrection itself. Or rather: the saved body is always *integrum*.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Caroline M. Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

<sup>26</sup> In her chapter entitled 'The Hagiography and Iconography of Wholeness', see Bynum, *The Resurrection*, pp. 305–17.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 312.

<sup>28</sup> See also Caroline M. Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992).



It seems that, with female martyrs in particular, a great deal of emphasis is placed on the 'intactness' of the body. According to Jacobus de Voragine, Agnes utters: 'iam amplexibus eius castis adstricta sum; iam corpus eius corpori meo sociatum' ('my body is already embraced by his pure arms').<sup>29</sup> Salvation *already* installs itself in submission to martyrdom, that is, in the physical violence itself. This notion is radicalized in the conviction that martyrs feel no pain, while non-martyrs and regular people do feel pain. Martyrs escape pain because theirs is not the physical pain meted out as punishment for Original Sin. Consequently, the absence of pain is equivalent to the avoidance of, or reparation for, Original Sin. This reparation must make use of an institution that is commensurately powerful, which in this case is virginity itself. Here we have reached the heart of the meaning of the female martyr within the history of salvation. This meaning is embedded in the analogy between physical inviolability (painless), and physical intactness (the virgin martyrdom). From the standpoint of this analogy, the female martyr is actually able to offer salvation to the community and, by extension, to history.

The body of the martyr forges a relationship with the history of salvation. Specifically, the body of the martyr is a *locus* in which *salvatio* is played out and completed. The mantles in the story of Agnes of Rome reiterate such ideas. If the body is the *locus* of salvation, the mantle is the investiture of that salvation. The first, conceptual mantle contains a reference to union with the divine and access to paradise. The fulfilment of that longing is symbolized in the final mantle presented by the angel. Agnes is effectively dressed in the mantle of paradise; her intact virginity at the same time makes her *integrum*. The final mantle enshrouds the martyr's body at the entrance to paradise.<sup>30</sup> And, as a consequence, the first mantle is related to the last as a prefiguration.

Between the mantle itself, and the longing for the mantle of fulfilment, another dynamic of revealing and concealing takes place, which highlights the *transitio* between the two mantles more precisely. The aggressor undresses Agnes, but her nudity immediately finds a protective covering. Here, then, another veil is used. It is neither the mantle of the mystic marriage nor the mantle of heaven. Rather, it is a veil produced by the body itself — albeit by miraculous means — on the basis of a veiling capacity possessed by the body in nature: the growth of hair. The 'hair mantle' of Agnes is a crucial motif in the *martyrologium*. The hair

<sup>29</sup> Bynum, *Fragmentation*, p. 308; Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 1, p. 102.

<sup>30</sup> Ernst Benz, *Die Vision. Erfahrungsformen und Bilderwelt* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1969), pp. 341–52: 'Das himmlisches Kleid'.



growth externalizes Agnes' chastity and maintains the dictates of virginity through God's intervention. The body concealed by hair is a body that is 'open' to becoming a martyr's body. This literary passage is therefore crucial on account of the passage to reception. The notion of 'receptivity' is, moreover, deeply rooted in the symbolism of hair itself. As A. De Souzaenelle points out:

Les cheveux, avec les ongles au niveau du corps humain, sont faits des mêmes éléments biochimiques que les cornes animales. Ils sont les rayons célestes, racines par lesquelles descendent en l'Homme les énergies divines et la puissance qui lui donne vie, rayons qui deviennent les rameaux de son arborescence en son sommet. Les cheveux sont symbole de force divine. (...) Au niveau de la tête, la chevelure est couronne. (...) De toute éternité l'Epoux divin attend l'humanité son épouse pour la couronner.<sup>31</sup>

In her 'mantle of hair', Agnes shines under the crown of the mystic marriage.

### *Raptus and Fur*

In the church of Santa Maria Donna Regina in Naples, an extensive fourteenth-century fresco cycle depicts the life of Agnes.<sup>32</sup> The Agnes cycle is taken up along with countless other female martyrdoms in the painted choir of the Clares. In one scene, Agnes is led away by Roman soldiers to a brothel. In the fresco, Agnes is represented with hair covering her entire body according to the story in the *Golden Legend* (Figure 64).

Although the phenomenon of the hairy female saint in literature and art no longer passes unnoticed, research on the subject is still in its infancy.<sup>33</sup> Nor is this the place for addressing these greater ambitions. Nonetheless, the case study of

<sup>31</sup> Annick De Souzaenelle, *Le symbolisme du corps humain* (Paris: Michel, 1991), p. 407 and p. 412.

<sup>32</sup> George Kaftal and Fabio Bisogni, *Iconography of the Saints*, 4 vols (Firenze: Le Lettere, 1952–85), II, p. 22, fig. 24; Cathleen A. Fleck, "'To exercise yourself in these things by continued contemplation': Visual and Textual Literacy in the Frescoes at Santa Maria Donna Regina", in *The Church of Santa Maria Donna Regina: Art, Iconography, and Patronage in Fourteenth Century Naples*, ed. by Janis Elliot and Cordelia Warr (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 109–28, fig. 44. The cycle is not illustrated in Rosa A. Genovese, *La chiesa trecentesca di Donna Regina* (Naples: Edizione scientifiche italiane, 1993).

<sup>33</sup> Ilse E. Friesen, 'Saints as Helpers in Dying: The Hairy Holy Women Mary Magdalene, Mary of Egypt, and Wilgefortis in the Iconography of the Late Middle Ages', in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick (New York: Lang, 1999), pp. 239–56. With thanks to Kathryn Rudy, who brought this study to my attention.

Agnes of Rome can contribute in some measure to the symbolic meaning and social position of the 'hair woman' in the concept of veiling.

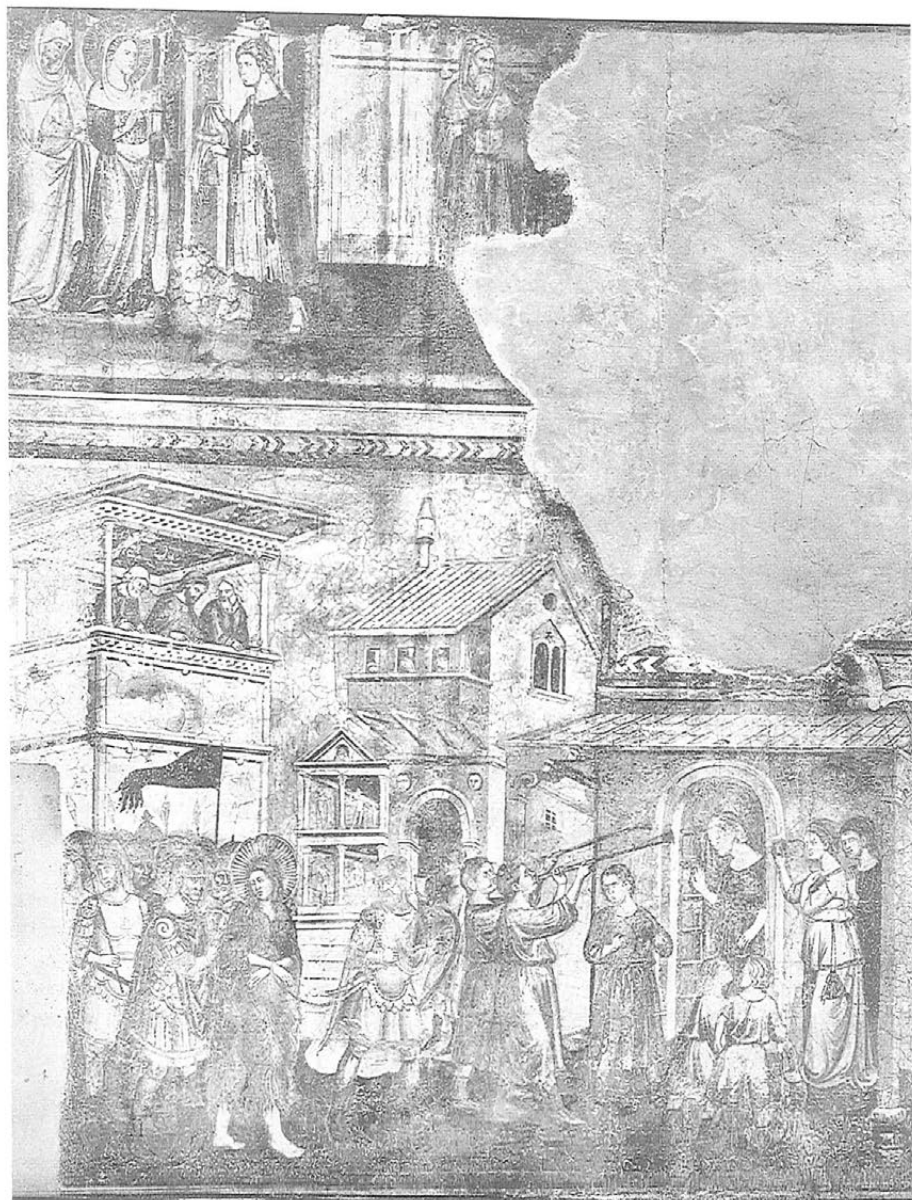


Figure 64. Agnes before the brothel (wall painting), Naples, Santa Maria Donnaregina. Early fourteenth century.

Hair appeals to an archetypal ambivalence between sexuality and asceticism, between magic and the gifts of God.<sup>34</sup> From time immemorial, hair has been a sign of power and feminine seduction. On the other hand, extreme body hair is reminiscent of the animal kingdom. Stories of female body hair crop up in unexpected places: for example, in the story of the Queen of Sheba's hairy feet. According to legend, the Queen of Sheba was sexually confident, and had inherited a tremendous sexual appetite from her demonic past, when people were still half-animal.<sup>35</sup> She carried the sign of this past in the form of her hirsute feet.

On the other hand, extreme hair growth recalls the purity of an animal, which is unfamiliar with the vulnerability of a naked body in need of protection. The contrast between the perfection of God's creation in nature, versus the cultivated human being, who must cover themselves in cloth, simultaneously evokes a return to purity, to a paradisiacal condition.<sup>36</sup> The miracle of Agnes suggests that, coupled with her chastity, she has reached this condition. The chaste layer of hair refers to the complete renunciation of worldly needs, that is, to asceticism. God gives her a new power, which is palpably externalized as hair growth.

Agnes was not alone in this tradition. Mary of Egypt and Mary Magdalene were also possessed of luxuriant long hair. What connects them to this motif? Mary of Egypt, from the Orthodox Church, was a converted sinner who did

<sup>34</sup> On this topic see the entry for 'Cheveux', in *Dictionnaire des symboles*, ed. by Chevalier and Gheerbrandt, pp. 235–37; Barbara G. Walker, 'Hair', in *The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, ed. by Barbara G. Walker (San Francisco: Harper, 1983), p. 367; Veda Cobb-Stevens, 'Speech, Gesture, and Women's Hair in the Gospel of Luke and First Corinthians', in *The Symbolism of Vanitas in the Arts, Literature and Music. Comparative and Historical Studies*, ed. by Lyana Cheney (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 322–29; Gisela Volland, 'Zwischen Weiblichkeit und Männlichkeit. Behaarte Frauen in der europäischen Kunst vom Mittelalter bis zum Barock', in *Sie und Er. Frauenmacht und Männerherrschaft im Kulturvergleich*, ed. by Gisela Völger, 2 vols (Cologne: Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, 1997), 1, pp. 199–204; Inge Stephan, 'Das Haar der Frau. Motiv des Begehrens, Verschlingens und der Rettung', in *Körperteile. Eine kulturelle Anatomie*, ed. by Claudia Bentien and Chrystoph Wulf (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 2001), pp. 28–48.

<sup>35</sup> Barbara Baert, "'Und mal yr auch eyn gensefuss". The Queen of Sheba's Goose-foot in Medieval Literature and Art', in *Authority in the Medieval West*, ed. by Martin Gosman and others, Mediaevalia Groningana (Groningen: Forsten, 1999), pp. 174–92.

<sup>36</sup> De Souzaenelle, *Le symbolisme*, p. 411: 'Cet être humain tel que nous le voyons, semble bien, du reste, avoir perdu ses poils et ses cheveux au cours des âges au fur et à mesure qu'il s'est opacifié au Divin et, de ce fait, aux mondes qui l'entourent et don't il ne sait plus qu'il les porte en lui'.

penance in the wilderness, in accordance with the tradition of the Byzantine anchorites.<sup>37</sup> The attributes of Mary of Egypt were then transferred to the western converted sinner, Mary Magdalene.<sup>38</sup> According to the apocrypha, Mary Magdalene withdrew to a grotto in nearby Sainte-Baume in Provence. There she was daily borne up to heaven to receive the host. Medieval iconography always provides her with a layer of hair in this ecstasy, as in the anonymous fifteenth-century painting in the Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum of Aachen (Figure 65).<sup>39</sup>

The transforming qualities of hair-growth represent the attainment of total disengagement and the reward that follows, which is paradise. The condition also appears to be associated with purification. To begin with, penances which result in purification are both spiritual and physical: the renunciation of food, for instance, is a typically female way to reach a mystical experience.<sup>40</sup> This

<sup>37</sup> See the holy communion of Mary of Egypt, represented in a capital from Alpsbach cloister (Alsace), c. 1150, preserved in Colmar, Unterlindenmuseum. See also Konrad Kunze, 'Maria Ägyptica', in *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, ed. by W. Braunfels (Rome: Herder, 1974), cols 507–10, ill. 2.

<sup>38</sup> For what follows concerning Mary Magdalene, see Daniel Arasse, 'Il vello di Maddalena', in *La Maddalena tra sacro e profano*, ed. by Marilena Mosco (Milan: Mondadori, 1986), pp. 58–59; Estrella Ruiz-Galvez, 'Une chevelure mythique. Les cheveux de Madeleine, enseigne du féminin et emblème d'un repentir. Illustrations littéraires et représentations iconographiques d'un thème (XV<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles)', in *Marie-Madeleine. Figure mythique dans la littérature et les arts*, ed. by Alain Montandon (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 1999), pp. 75–86.

<sup>39</sup> In a northern European context, the bestially hirsute Mary Magdalene is at the same time an offshoot of the probably proto-Christian myth of the wild man. This was a creature believed to dwell deep in the forest, where it lived in a state somewhere between the animal and the human. At the end of the Middle Ages, this myth was invested with socio-religious components. The wild man served as an example of life undefiled by the three estates. This relationship cannot be examined in more detail here, but see Timothy Husband, *The Wild Man: Medieval Myth and Symbolism* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980); Paul Vandenbroeck, *Over wilden en narren, boeren en bedelaars. Beeld van de andere. Verhaal van het zelf* (Antwerp: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 1987), pp. 63–78; Friesen, 'Saints as Helpers', p. 243. I cannot go into the important symbolic distinction between the body covered by the long hair of the head (as in the case of Agnes) and the body covered with an animal-like pelt or hirsute. The latter condition also incorporates the notion of the abject and transgressing in a 'male' hair growth. The former condition remains closer to a female perception of beauty.

<sup>40</sup> Martha J. Reinecke, 'This is my Body: Reflections on Abjection, Anorexia, and Medieval Women Mystics', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 58 (1990), 245–65. Extreme hair growth is also a medical consequence of undernourishment and anorexia: Caroline M. Walker

purification subsequently situates itself on the level of *conformitas*. Doing penance or accepting martyrdom is a form of *imitatio Christi* that leads to purity and redemption.<sup>41</sup> The body reacts to this *conformitas*, and the growth of hair



Figure 65. Mary Magdalene as 'hairy woman', Aachen, Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum. Fifteenth century.

Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Christina von Braun, 'Weibliches Fasten und christlichen Traditionen', in *Sie und Er*, ed. by Völger, I, pp. 179–86 (p. 181).

<sup>41</sup> Friesen, 'Saints as Helpers', p. 245.

symbolizes its attainment. This pinnacle must certainly be interpreted in terms of the relevance of the 'hair women' with respect to the history of salvation, as a *reversio* and restoration of Original Sin. In that restoration there lurks a paradisiacal and hence proto-domesticated condition. Hair women are always 'primordial'.

Let us return to Agnes. In her case, penance is not a prominent aspect of her story; martyrdom and the desire for complete surrender to mystical love are more significant components. The moment at which the miracle takes place is situated between the threat of male sexuality, on the one hand, and protection by the angel with the white veil, on the other. Against that background she briefly becomes the 'hair woman'. This transformation occurs in the narrative at the moment in which two extreme experiences are visited upon her, but which, in medieval commentaries, bear the same name: *raptus*.<sup>42</sup>

Both are actions of excess. One *raptus* is physical violence, the other *raptus* is the ecstasy in which one loses one's senses, also referred to *alienatio*, *excessus mentis*, or the state of remaining *in spiritu*.<sup>43</sup> Both instances harbour the notion of physical transportation, of being carried or cast away. Theological discussions of the second phenomenon take as their point of departure a passage by Paul:

I know a man in Christ; above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not, or out of the body, I know not; God knoweth), such a one caught up to the third heaven — *raptum huiusmodi usque tertium caelum* — And I know such a man (whether the body, or out of the body, I know not; God knoweth); That was caught up into paradise and heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter. (II Corinthians 12. 2–4)

Later theological commentaries were in the first place concerned with the physical dangers of such experiences. In the wave of mysticism among women in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, especially, these excesses were too numerous to record.

The instructions and observations of men were supposed to offer help in evaluating such raptures, in order to determine whether they were good or evil in nature. Dionysius the Carthusian (d. 1471) says that, if the raptures begin spontaneously, or:

<sup>42</sup> Dyan Elliot, 'The Physiology of Rapture and Female Spirituality', in *Medieval Theology and the Natural Body*, ed. by Peter Biller and Alastair J. Minnis (York: York Medieval Press, 1997), pp. 141–74.

<sup>43</sup> For further sources, see Elliot, 'The Physiology of Rapture', p. 143.

are caused suddenly on the peak of the affective or the tip of the intellectual power, so that the apex of affective and the tip of the intellectual are touched, illuminated, set aflame and bound in a marvellous way, it is certain that the source is not an evil spirit.<sup>44</sup>

His descriptions of raptures include such physical phenomena as stigmata, swooning, and red skin. Receptivity to the experience of raptures, Dionysius suggested, was in part determined by the alchemical doctrine of the temperaments. More specifically, it was the melancholic types who were most predisposed to visions.<sup>45</sup> The ecstasy of the sanguine type, on the other hand, was represented by a hair woman.<sup>46</sup> Dionysius, however, is the only source to make any direct connection between rapture and hair growth.<sup>47</sup>

Nevertheless, a few hypotheses can be formulated with caution, taking account of the fact that the analysis of symbolic hair growth in women is still in an experimental phase. To this end, I would first like to point out that, in medieval thought, there was often an area of overlap between physical and mental processes.<sup>48</sup> A mental excess expressed itself in a physical reaction. As a result, sudden, miraculous, extreme hair growth was understood by the medieval mind as a direct (physical) symptom of a spiritual transformation or new mental state.

In the context of the Agnes narrative, the hair externalizes, in a single motion, the turning away from one rapture (demonic sexuality) and the moving towards a second (ecstasy via the angel). If Agnes becomes a 'hair woman', she does so at the most characteristic point of the *reversio* itself. Miraculous hair growth seems to embody the concept of 'conversion' or the 'transition' that must/will lead to the pure status of being 'taken up' [into heaven, into paradise]. For Mary Magdalene, this conversion is one from sinner to penitent. But in both cases we are dealing with an 'in-between' state. The 'hair women' become *mediatrices* of

<sup>44</sup> Dionysius the Carthusian, *De discretione et examinatione spirituum*, Art. 6, Opera VIII, p. 274, cited in Elliot, 'The Physiology of Rapture', p. 153.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 158–59.

<sup>46</sup> Laurinda S. Dixon, *Alchemical Imagery in Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1981), pp. 37–39.

<sup>47</sup> Similar occurrences of sudden, extreme hair growth are often associated with the paranormal: Alain Assailly, 'Contribution à l'étude de la médiumnité', in *La science et le paranormal*, ed. by Robert Amadou (Paris: IMI, 1955), no page numbers.

<sup>48</sup> Elliot, 'The Physiology of Rapture', p. 147.



the divine. Indeed, it is as Agnes uttered at the last: 'Now a sacrifice to Father God'.

With the context of hair and rapture in mind, let us return to Santa Maria Donna Regina. One of the questions that emerges is whether the Clares of Naples made the kind of representations discussed above. Research has shown that the iconographic program of the sanctuary is highly complex and, moreover, is provided with Latin text bands, so it must be supposed that the nuns had literary, theological, and devotional knowledge.<sup>49</sup> Among iconographic programs, the saintly lives of three prominent aristocratic women, Catherine of Alexandria, Elizabeth of Hungary, and Agnes of Rome, especially contributed to religious inspirations relating to chastity and willing self-sacrifice in the convent. All three cycles also emphasize the learnedness of the respective martyrs. The education of these holy women was in accordance with the learning process that the pictorial program itself stimulated; this process of reading and looking engaged text and image in a mutual interplay along a path which led from knowledge to the sort of contemplation promoted by the Clares. This contemplation cannot be divorced from the notion of chastity and the mystic marriage. In the seclusion and segregation of their own sanctuary, the very place of the angelic guides, a Clare might have wondered about the meaning of all that hair as a sign of surrender and receptivity. Perhaps she might have even recalled how St Clara herself praised one of her sisters in the following terms: 'Another most holy virgin, St Agnes, also espoused most wondrously to the spotless Lamb'.<sup>50</sup>

### *The Lamb, the Loom, and the Bones*

In the mosaic of Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna, which was built in the sixth century, Agnes appears for the first time with what would become her standard attribute: the lamb (Figure 66). This animal was probably derived from the Latin corruption of Agnes' name: *agnus* (although her name really refers to the Greek *hagnos*, which means 'chaste').<sup>51</sup> If the lamb was originally coupled with Agnes for presumably nominal reasons, it immediately transferred its overflowing

<sup>49</sup> Fleck, "To exercise yourself", p. 120.

<sup>50</sup> Jeryldene M. Wood, *Women, Art, and Spirituality: The Poor Clares of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> Karl Michaelson, *Quelques observations sur le nom d'Agnès* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1931).

symbolism to the martyr herself. As Scripture asserted in John 1. 29 and Revelation 19. 7–9, Christ *is* the lamb. The lamb is not simply an attribute related to Agnes on the level of a visual identification process, but the bearer of a symbolism that begins to lead a life of its own.



Figure 66. Mosaic depicting Agnes, Ravenna, San Apollinare in Classe. Sixth century.

The meaning of Agnes' attribute is ramified between different levels of biblical exegesis and the nominal ambiguity between the animal itself and the chastity it embodied. Out of the growing autonomy and symbolic objectification of the lamb, the system of reference began to swell. Departing from its original *deixis* — 'this is Agnes' — the lamb became entangled in derivative rites, practices, and symbols that we can trace to the present, of which 'white wool' is the core.

Probably since early Christian times, on the feast day of St Agnes (January 21), two lambs would be chosen from the flock of the Trappists in the abbey of Tre Fontane in Rome. The lambs — one crowned with white roses for virginity, the other with red for martyrdom — would be brought to Sant'Agnese fuori le Mura. The animals would be blessed by the pope in the church, and then taken to the Vatican, where the Benedictine nuns of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere tended to them. Until the last century, the Sisters of St Agnes themselves fulfilled this task. Approximately one month before June 29, the wool was sheared and, with this wool, the sisters would make twelve pallia. On the night of June 28, before the feast of St Peter and St Paul, the pallia would be laid in a silver box under the main altar of St Peter's, near the bones of the patron saint himself. The following day, the pope would present the pallia to the archbishops during mass.

The pallium is a wool stole on which six crosses have been embroidered.<sup>52</sup> It is worn over the shoulders, so that the strips in front and behind form a 'Y'. The pallium is worn by the pope and, in the Orthodox Church, by the patriarchs. The pope gives the pallium to his archbishops or to worthy bishops, and the garment has a very old symbolic meaning.<sup>53</sup> When the pallium is laid on the shoulders of the pope, he becomes the 'shepherd' of Christ's flock. For the chosen leaders of the church, the pallium is an insignia of honour and jurisdiction under the Holy See. The earliest mention of the pallium dates from AD 204, when Pope Victor I gave it to St Feliciano of Foligno.

A connection between the early Christian martyr Agnes and the Holy See in Rome has been preserved in the pallium up to the present day. The connection

<sup>52</sup> Henry Leclercq, 'Pallium', in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, ed. by Fernand Cabrol, 15 vols (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1907–53), XIII, pp. 931–40; Joseph Braun, *Die liturgische Gewandung im Occident und Orient nach Ursprung und Entwicklung, Verwendung und Symbolik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), pp. 620–76.

<sup>53</sup> Robert A. S. Macalister, *Ecclesiastical Vestments: Their Developments and History* (London: Eliot Stock, 1896), p. 49; *Thesaurus of Religious Objects*, ed. by Joël Perrin and Sandra Vasco Rocca (Paris: Editions du Patrimoine 1999), p. 332.

is based on a rather complex cluster of virginity, the lamb, the wool, spinning and weaving, the mantle, the stole, and the symbolism of the shepherd. As so often happens, that cluster has been overgrown with countless associations and customs over the ages, so that the original pattern is no longer clear. If we try to distil this cluster down to its symbolic components, however, a constant becomes visible: the white colour. White is the purity of Agnes' virginity. White is the wool of her attribute. White is the mantle of the angel. Finally, white is the pallium, the stole of the pope.

White represents the absence as well as the sum of all colours. Symbolically, it is located at the extremes of various symbolic fields. White is the beginning and the end of life. In other words, white means genesis, as well as the fading away of life. As the colour of life and death — and rebirth as well — white symbolizes transformation. White is also the colour of the rite of passage. White is receptivity to purity and wisdom, and access to the invisible. White is, therefore, also the colour of theophany, as explained by Mircea Eliade.<sup>54</sup>

This entire complex is interwoven with the martyrdom and identity of Agnes. The moment Agnes receives the white mantle from the angel she is clothed, enveloped in the transition to martyrdom. She thereby becomes prepared to come into contact with theophany so that she can transform herself in the light and rebirth that defines martyrdom. The white of the mantle also refers to her virginity, which is much more than a motif. It is the hard nucleus that fuses with the meaning of martyrdom in terms of the history of salvation.

The white lamb plays on this fusion. As we know, the lamb came to Agnes nominally, but the lamb was also one of the earliest symbols of Christ. As such, the attribute becomes bipartite: at once 'chastity' and 'sacrifice', or 'white' and 'red', at it were. But the lamb harbours another, less obvious, symbolism which turns up far more symptomatically in the Agnes complex. Namely, this is the association with wool. The lamb provides the raw material for one of the most archetypal and symbolically laden techniques and artefacts of cultural history: the spinning and weaving of cloth.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Mircea Eliade, *La Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase* (Paris: Payot, 1951), pp. 32 onwards.

<sup>55</sup> Hélène Balfet, 'Textiles', in *Dictionnaire de l'ethnologie et de l'anthropologie*, ed. by Pierre Bonte and Michel Izard (Paris: PUF, 2000), pp. 705–07.

In his important study, *Azetta*, Paul Vandenbroeck explores the ideas and intuitive patterns of weaving and cloth.<sup>56</sup> He does so on the basis of anthropological research among Berber women, where the loom is still anchored — without contamination — in ancient rites, and where the fundamental functions and symbolic systems of weaving (by women) are still visible. Weaving is closely tied to social, cultural, cosmological, and ethical dimensions. The women weave fabrics that mark the most important events in a human lifetime: birth, marriage, death. In these three phases, textiles play a functional-ritual role. But there is more. In their essence, weaving and cloth reflect the transition between life and death, and the bearing of children. Cloth is compared to the fertile field, warp and weft to the plowing of the earth. Warp and weft are also interpreted cosmologically. Weaving is creation, and when the warp threads are cut, the creation is complete. Jean Servier formulates this comparison in powerful terms:

Par le mythe et les traditions, le tissage se trouve comme le labour, mais il est lui-même un labour, un acte de création d'où sortent, fixés dans la laine, les symboles de la fécondité et la représentation des champs cultivés. Porphyre, dans l'Antre des Nymphes disait: Quel symbole conviendrait mieux que le métier à tisser aux âmes qui descendent dans la génération?<sup>57</sup>

At the same time, the weaver imitates hierophany: the angels which travel up and down between heaven and earth. In this way they lay cosmic connections, and in the warp and weft they are capable of catching souls.<sup>58</sup> This process can be compared with the archangel Gabriel, who, on the occasion of the First Great Sacrifice, allowed the soul to descend in the *sitar*, the veil that enshrouds the tree of the world.<sup>59</sup> The ethical dimension presents itself in the power of the weaver and what they bring forth *regeneratively*. All righteous weavers bring forth 'beautiful' textiles, and only the righteous can animate them and summon the angels. Correspondingly, weaving is not only an act of creation but an act of salvation for the benefit of the community. The textile is laden with soteriology. The threads contribute to the one great 'textile' of salvation history. And the hands that work the loom are women's hands. In the cult of Agnes, analogous

<sup>56</sup> Paul Vandenbroeck, *Azetta. Berbevrouwen en hun kunst* [exhibition catalogue] (Ghent: Ludion, 2000).

<sup>57</sup> Jean Servier, *Les Portes de l'année* (Paris: Éditions du Rocher, 1962), pp. 132–36.

<sup>58</sup> Vandenbroeck, *Azetta*, p. 94.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 94, quoting Viviana Pâques, *La religion des esclaves* (Bergamo: Moretti e Vitali, 1992), p. 122.

symptoms appear in the usages surrounding the pallium. Here, too, 'good' women, nuns, have ruled over the secret for centuries. When it was suggested in 2001 that the design of the pallium be changed, a host of voices rose up in resistance. 'We've been told [by the pope] to keep making them [the pallia] the way we always have', said Sister Rosaria, aged 60.<sup>60</sup>

The pallium still clearly shows how, from time immemorial, weaving was both feminine and hermetically determined. In the pallium, the Roman male authority figure receives an investiture spun from the attribute of Roman female chastity itself: Agnes and the pope. Nun and Shepherd. Female weaver and St Peter. In this way a long, fragile thread connecting the two genders is maintained, which not only traverses the entire trail of Christian time, but also embodies the triad of weaving, veiling, and dressing in its most primordial form.

Translated by Irene Schaudies

<sup>60</sup> John Norton, for the Catholic News Service in 2001 <<http://www.CatholicHerald.com>> [accessed April 2004].

## Part Three: Dressing





## DRESSING

Barbara Baert

Textiles can be wrapped around the body. In their draping, they model the human body as a second skin. Humans dress themselves because they lack the protective fur or skin that an animal has. They dress themselves because they are ashamed of their nakedness. They dress themselves because, in this way, they can conform or differentiate themselves with regard to their fellow humans.

Without the protection of textiles on the limbs, one would die of exposure. Clothing distinguishes us from the animal world, but also from the first couple, Adam and Eve, who originally realized no shame for their own nakedness. The practical necessity to dress oneself, therefore, simultaneously marks the loss of our innocence. The clothed person wears textiles as reminder of their burden of guilt: where Adam had to toil in the soil, Eve instead had to spin, her actions symbolic of a surrender which was tinged with remorse. The clothed person wears textiles, therefore, partly as a token of being able to survive outside paradise. The clothed person waits. They wait for the moment that their body is pure again, when naked and without shame they will rise from the dead.

Just as textiles comprise a primordial artifact, clothing constitutes a primordial form of culture. While it is true that the clothed person dresses him- or herself first and foremost in the interests of protection, they do not hesitate to consider clothing as a carrier of meaning from their place in time and space, if we are to judge by adornments, rituals, and symbols. Clothing is consequently one of the most important ethical and social actors from cultural history. In the final section of this volume, three authors contribute to the research on the social and devotional function of clothing of the poor, the interaction between clothing and the notion of sin, and the textile of the rite of passage.

Philine Helas has collected a rich corpus of textual and visual sources concerning the hagiography of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italy, in which the gifting of clothing thematizes the godly act of *misericordia*. With her anthropologically oriented approach, she is in search of the identifying characteristics and the social taxonomy between the giver and receiver. As a stipulation for *misericordia*, the handing over of the clothing one is wearing counts the most, especially the undergarments, after which the holy benefactor withdraws in asceticism. Helas contrasts the early medieval prototype of this Work of Mercy in the *Vita* of Martin of Tours with the *vitae* of two female mystics: Catherine of Siena and Margaret of Cortona. From her study, it appears that the episodes about the clothing of the poor in these women's stories are subject to different social and religious conventions from the late medieval norms. Above all, the theme of gender is sensitive and charged with labels connected with chastity and the prejudice resulting from women's alleged vanity. This could possibly clarify the reason that the motive appears less frequently in the feminine context than in the iconography of their masculine counterparts.

Martha Bayless interrogates a particular iconographical element: the exhibitionistic display of the body as a sign of impiety. The body is a locus of shame and, after the Fall, it was corrupted by countless vices. On the other hand, the body is also a reflection of the Creation. Medieval exegetes attempted to reconcile this paradox by parsing the body into quarters: upper front, upper back, lower front, and lower back. Accordingly, the upper and frontal parts were deemed the positive zones, with the forehead pre-eminent. With these contemporary convictions in the back of her mind, Bayless offers an interesting revision of the representation of the body in the context of late medieval Passion scenes. The contrast between good and evil in the Carrying of the Cross, for example, is supported visually and reinforced symbolically through the portrayal of the executioners and their negative corporeal zones. Clothing — above all its slovenliness or even its obscenity surrounding, for example, the back and the buttocks — contributes to the notion of vice and culpability.

If clothing is essentially distinctive between the genders, and if it transmits ethical connotations based on social patterns of expectations, then it also plays an important role in rites of passage. Sophie Oosterwijk begins her essay with the conviction that only two items of clothing crossed all distinctions and norms: the shroud at death and the swaddling clothes at birth. The author presents an original contribution about the representation of swaddled babies on English memorial slabs, so-called 'chrysoms'. She sheds light on the countless misconceptions about the origin of the term and its tradition. 'Chrysom' refers

not to the baptismal robe, but to the white linen cloth in which the newborn baby is swaddled. The article locates the phenomenon of the swaddled baby on tomb monuments within the increasing individualization at the end of the Middle Ages, in which even the smallest deserved their last (and also perhaps their first) portrait. The white chrysom that dates from ancient use was in death the sign of innocence and hope in the everlasting life.

Translated by Kathryn M. Rudy



## THE CLOTHING OF POVERTY AND SANCTITY IN LEGENDS, AND THEIR REPRESENTATIONS IN TRECENTO AND QUATTROCENTO ITALY\*

Philine Helas

In Ferzan Ozpetek's film *Cuore sacro* (2004), a young female manager experiences something like a conversion, which opens her eyes to the poverty in Rome, the city in which she lives. In defiance of her family, she begins to dedicate her possessions and her life to the poor. The series of acts culminates in an episode in which she gives all her clothes away in public, leaving her naked in a subway. This extraordinary and 'crazy' deed has a strong reference to the hagiographic literature of medieval saints.

'Clothing the naked' is one of the six biblical Works of Mercy described in Matthew 25. 34–46, which have reappeared in the canon of seven merciful works in texts and images since the Middle Ages. As in the case of feeding the hungry or visiting the sick, clothing the naked forms one of the most common hagiographical themes in which saints frequently using their own worldly property to benefit others. The legends discussed below demonstrate the significance of donations of clothes by emphasizing the fact that the saint parts with his or her 'second skin' and exposes him- or herself to nature and to the secluding structures of society. In some cases, the reward for the donation

\* This study originated in the context of a research project of the of the SFB 600: 'Fremdheit und Armut. Wandel von Inklusions- und Exklusionsformen von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart', at the University of Trier. I would like to thank the members of the Institut für Kunstgeschichte at the University of Trier, where this text was open for discussion, and I would particularly like to thank Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff and D. W. Doerrbecker. The translation is by Christine Stockebrand and I am indebted to Kathryn Rudy for her intensive revision of the entire text.

appears in the form of a divine sign or intervention. A 'heavenly' or 'divine' garment, for instance, replaces the donated item of clothing.

St Catherine of Siena, for example, one day gave her own woollen robe to a naked pauper, who revealed himself as Christ in a subsequent vision, thanking her for the gift 'to cover the nakedness of my body, and to keep it from cold and shame'.<sup>1</sup> Without clothing, the human being is not only exposed to the inclemency of the weather, but is also excluded from a society in which social affiliations such as class, profession, and religion are expressed by means of clothing.<sup>2</sup> Beyond their immediate use, clothes could also function as a form of investment and mobile property; they were commonly gifted or formed part of an inheritance; an owner could transform them into money or other goods by lending or selling them.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, clothes not only showed social status, but could even simulate it. During the era before the diffusion of personal documents such as passports, clothes were also means of identification and identity, which could sometimes be altered merely by changing the dress.<sup>4</sup> Physical nudity was restricted to the private life (or well-defined places such as the bath chamber). If nudity was publicly visible, it referred to the loss of a social role as well as a loss of privacy.<sup>5</sup> Public nudity implied humiliation. The

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by George Kaftal, *St Catherine in Tuscan Painting* (Oxford: Blackfriars, 1949), p. 55, who cites the text from Caterinus Senensis, *The Life of the Blessed Virgin S. Catharine of Siena*, trans. by John Fen and re-edited by James Dominick Aylward (London: John Philp, 1867), Part I, Chapter VIII, pp. 35–36. For the Latin version of Raimundo da Capua see *Acta sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur*, ed. by the Société des Bollandistes, new edn (Paris: Palmé, 1863–), 30 April, III, p. 886: '[...] Tu mihi tunicam hanc heri cum tanta liberalitate dedisti, meque nudum tam magna cum caritate vestisti, ut frigoris ignominiae poenas a me fugares: [...]']

<sup>2</sup> Generally, see Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, *Guardaroba medievale. Vesti e società dal XIII al XVI secolo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> See Valentin Groebner, *Ökonomie ohne Haus. Zum Wirtschaften armer Leute in Nürnberg am Ende des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte, 108 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1993), pp. 235–43, and Valentin Groebner, 'Mobile Werte, informelle Ökonomie. Zur "Kultur" der Armut in der spätmittelalterlichen Stadt', in *Armut im Mittelalter*, ed. by Otto Gerhard Oexle, Vorträge und Forschungen / Konstanzer Arbeitskreis für Mittelalterliche Geschichte, 58 (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2004), pp. 165–87 (pp. 173–75).

<sup>4</sup> Groebner, 'Mobile Werte', pp. 180–84.

<sup>5</sup> Reference should be made to the discussion as to what extent the increasing problem regarding nakedness existed on the verge of modern times [Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation: soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen. Bd. 1: Wandlungen des*

Christian paradigm for this is Christ's forcible disrobement before his crucifixion, when soldiers stole his vestment then gambled it by casting lots.

The issue of clothing someone by disrobing oneself will be investigated below by means of three case studies: St Martin of Tours, St Margaret of Cortona, and St Catherine of Siena. It should be noted that images of Martin are ubiquitous throughout Europe, unlike those of the two female saints. In this article I interrogate the anthropological implications of these donations, the character of the divinely substituted garments and finally, I investigate to what extent the gift of clothing denotes a gender-specific act in the discourse of humility and mercy.

### *St Martin and his Vestment*

The image of the early Christian St Martin is closely linked to the merciful act of clothing the naked.<sup>6</sup> He performed his famous deed before his baptism, and therefore before his conversion to the Christian faith. This event is depicted far more frequently than any of the other actions or miracles he performed either as a bishop or after his death. As reported by his biographer, Sulpicius Severus, and subsequently anthologized by Jacobus de Voragine in the *Legenda Aurea*, the event occurred on a winter's day, during the time of his military service, outside the city gates of Amiens. There he encountered an impoverished, naked man (*pauperem nudum*) seeking help from passers-by.<sup>7</sup> Martin himself had nothing

*Verhaltens in den weltlichen Oberschichten des Abendlandes* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981)] or, whether nakedness is recorded as a natural constant factor across different cultures and times [Hans Peter Duerr, *Nacktheit und Scham. Der Mythos vom Zivilisationsprozeß* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988)].

<sup>6</sup> Concerning the saint, see *Martin de Tours. Du légionnaire au saint évêque*, direction scientifique Jean-Pierre Delville, Marylène Laffineur-Crépin, Albert Lemeunier [exhibition catalogue] (Liège: Basilique Saint Martin, 1994); Zoltán Lörincz, *Saint Martin dans l'art en Europe* (Tours: CLD Éditeur, 2001). His cult dates very far back, and one of the first miracles performed by an image of a saint was that of his statue in Ravenna, in the sixth century. See Jean-Marie Sansterre, 'La vénération des images à Ravenne dans le haut moyen âge: Notes sur une forme de dévotion peu connue', *Revue Mabillon*, n.s. 7 (1996), 5–21, esp. pp. 5–6.

<sup>7</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Sancti Martini* = 'Die Schriften des Sulpicius Severus über den Heiligen Martinus Bischof von Tours', trans. by Pius Bihlmeyer, in *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter. Eine Auswahl patristischer Werke in deutscher Übersetzung*, ed. by O. Bardenhewer, Bd. 20 (Kempten: Kössel, 1914), pp. 1–147 (Chapter 3, pp. 22–23); Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), II, p. 292, reports: 'Once, in the wintertime, he was passing through



with him but his weapons and his military cloak (*chlamys*). When he realized that no one was willing to help the wretched man (*miser*), he 'grasped the sword he had, split the cloak in two and gave one half to the pauper, wrapping the other half around himself. Meanwhile, some of the bystanders made fun of him since his torn uniform disfigured him significantly'.<sup>8</sup> According to another source, Martin was even sentenced to prison for three days for vandalizing army property.<sup>9</sup>

Martin's action thereby gains its significance not just through his pity-driven act, but also through the fact that his good deed put him into a humiliating situation: by destroying his official uniform he ridicules the institution that clothes him, and he commits a criminal offence. But his action also brings him divine acknowledgement that later leads to his conversion. Christ appears to Martin in a dream dressed in the gifted fragment of his mantle, and says to the angels around him: 'Martin, yet new in the faith, hath covered me with this vesture'. The event ensured that Martin 'knew thereby the bounty of God', and he went on to have himself baptized at the age of eighteen.<sup>10</sup>

The 'deformed' robe somehow persists in Martin's legend, since it indirectly reappears in another event in his life. Quoting Sulpicius Severus, the *Legenda Aurea* reports: '[...] clad in a rough garment and long black cloak, he was riding along a road on his donkey. A troop of cavalry rode toward him and the horses took fright and bolted, throwing their riders to the ground [...]'.<sup>11</sup> The knights

the city gate of Amiens when a poor man, almost naked, confronted him. No one had given him any alms, and Martin understood that this man had been kept for him, so he drew his sword and cut the cloak he was wearing into two halves, giving one half to the beggar and wrapping himself in the other. The following night he had a vision of Christ wearing the part of his cloak with which he had covered the beggar, and heard Christ say to his angels who surrounded him: "Martin, while still a catechumen, gave me this to cover me." The holy man saw this not as a reason for pride, but as evidence of God's kindness, and had himself baptized at the age of eighteen [...].

<sup>8</sup> '[...] Interea de circumstantibus ridere nonnulli, quia deformis esse truncatus habitu videretur [...]': Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Sancti Martini*, Chapter 3.2, in 'Die Schriften des Sulpicius Severus', trans. by Bihlmeyer, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> This is mentioned in Carl Vossen, *Sankt Martin. Sein Leben und Fortwirken in Gesinnung, Brauchtum und Kunst* (Düsseldorf: Rheinisch-Berg Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1975), p. 11 (no source stated).

<sup>10</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, II, p. 292.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., II, p. 294. Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Sancti Martini*, 2nd Dialogue, 3, gives a slightly differing account of a cart with civil servants, whose draught animals take fright of the black

beat him up for this, but when they tried to ride away, their horses would not move until the knights had apologised to the saint. Here, once again, the garment is a symbol of the conflict with state power, or rather the military, which Martin had unwillingly joined at the age of fifteen.

Martin sharing his mantle is the most frequently represented episode from the saint's life in visual imagery, and it became a symbol of charity all over Europe in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The episode congealed into an image in which the beggar assumed the form of the saint's attribute. Martin's own humiliation is not represented; rather, he usually appears as a young knight who slices off a sizeable piece of his coat without losing his dignity, and without an audience of taunting passers-by. Moreover, images that contextualize this episode usually depict the liminality of the event, namely the encounter before the gates of the city, which marks the beggar as a marginal character excluded from the local community and civilization, and who, barely dressed, is exposed to the rigours of the weather. This is how Simone Martini presents him in the frescoes of the St Martin chapel in the lower church of San Francesco in Assisi, completed between 1322 and 1326, which portray the life of the saint in numerous monumental scenes (Figure 67).<sup>12</sup> Here the beggar wears a bulky torn robe whose green and red striped material may remind observers of a bedspread.<sup>13</sup> With regard to Martini's preliminary sketch in sinopia, the fresco displays several alterations to the initial concept: originally, St Martin rode toward a town gate alongside another figure, probably a traveller who had passed by the miserable beggar without stopping, but who then looked back over his shoulder to witness Martin sharing his coat.<sup>14</sup> In the fresco, the portal frames the beggar, who no longer grasps the cloth with both hands, but holds his left arm in front of his chest. This gesture can be interpreted either as a form of greeting or gratitude,

swirling cloak, causing the harnesses to tangle.

<sup>12</sup> Concerning the cycle of frescoes, see Adrian S. Hoch, *Simone Martini's St Martin Chapel in the Lower Basilica of San Francesco Assisi* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1983); *La Basilica di San Francesco ad Assisi*, ed. by Giorgio Bonsanti, *Mirabilia Italiae*, II (Modena: Pannini, 2002); Joachim Poeschke, *Wandmalerei der Giottozeit in Italien 1280–1400* (Munich: Hirmer, 2003), pp. 140–55, as well as Pierluigi Leone de Castris, *Simone Martini* (Milan: Electa, 2003), pp. 74–120.

<sup>13</sup> This kind of material can be interpreted as a sign of poverty. Compare the discussion of the large-chequered robe of Margaret of Cortona below, and the article of Cordelia Warr, 'The Striped Mantle of the Poor Clares: Image and Text in Italy in the Later Middle Ages', *Arte Cristiana*, 86 (1998), 415–30.

<sup>14</sup> See illustrations in Leone de Castris, *Simone Martini*, pp. 104–05.

or as him shivering, or as his attempt to hold his ragged robe together. On the one hand, the alterations in the executed version make the beggar seem less demanding or less humble, on the other hand, the open portal behind him visually binds him to the town, suggesting a possible return to civilization.



Figure 67. Simone Martini. St Martin sharing his cloak with a beggar (wall painting in the lower church), Assisi, S. Francesco. 1322–26.

The image of the beggar is subject to far more artistic variation than that of St Martin, who sometimes appears on foot or on horse, but who is always young and handsome. The partial change to the social acceptance of beggars may explain this. In early paintings, the beggar is usually naked or merely dressed in a loin cloth or a very short garment. Less often, however, he is stigmatized by physiognomy or disposition, as in a codex from the first quarter of the twelfth century, illustrated in Echternach, which recounts a *Vita Sancti Martini*<sup>15</sup> (Figure 68). Following the premise of beauty as an aesthetic–ethical standard, the

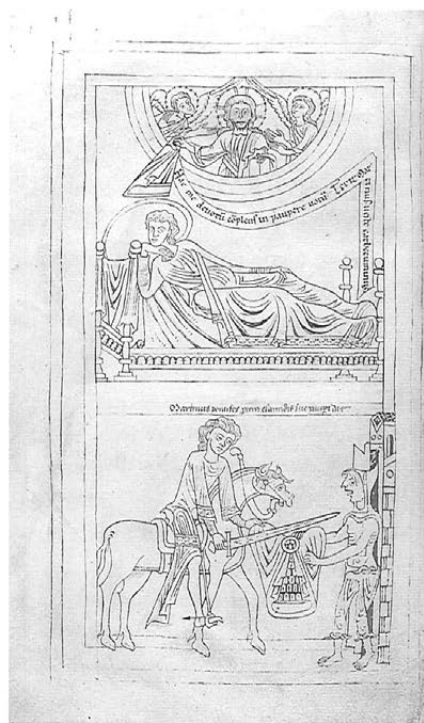


Figure 68. St Martin sharing his cloak with a beggar (The dream of St Martin miniature), *Vita Sancti Willibrordi*, *Liber Florum*, *Vita Sancti Martini*, Trier, Stadtbibliothek, cod.1378/103, fol. 132<sup>v</sup>. 1102–24.

<sup>15</sup> *Vita Sancti Willibrordi*, *Liber Florum*; *Vita Sancti Martini*: Trier, Stadtbibliothek, cod. 1378/103, fol. 132<sup>v</sup>. See *Martin de Tours*, cat. 56. The inscription above the bottom painting describes the scene: 'Martinus Pontifex portem clamidis sue pauperi dat'. The banner of Christ in the representation of the dream on the register above reads: 'Hac me devotu[m] co[m]plens in paupere votu[m] texte Mar/tinus veste cathecuminus'.

ugliness of the beggar suggests his ostracism as the outsider.

After the fourteenth century, images display noticeable regional distinctions of iconographic conventions. In northern European art the beggar nearly always appears as a cripple who hobbles on a prosthetic leg or sits on top of it. Alternatively, the beggar might sit huddled on the bare floor, as in a work by Martin Schongauer.<sup>16</sup> The beggar's handicap conveys the extent of his privation. On the other hand, in Italian paintings the beggar remains physically unscathed, at most marked by age and occasionally shown 'shivering', but whose physicality is in no way depicted as repulsive.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, his representation can become a brilliant artistic feat, a site for the reception of Antiquity as well as for the recapitulation of the idealized classical body. The beggar presents an example of ancient masculinity, for instance, in the miniatures by Liberale da Verona<sup>18</sup>, or in the fresco of the oratorio of the Buonomini di San Martino in Florence (Figure 69),<sup>19</sup> or in a bronze relief by Riccio.<sup>20</sup> Occasionally, the beggar resembles Christ, the real recipient of the good deed, thereby visualizing the words of Matthew: 'Inasmuch as ye have done unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done unto me'. An altar-retable painted around 1490 by Lattanzio da

<sup>16</sup> *The Illustrated Bartsch*, ed. by W. L. Strauss and J. T. Spike (New York: Abaris Books, 1978–), VIII, no. 57; Lörincz, *Saint Martin*, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Lorenzo di Bicci, 'St Martin and the Beggar', in the Accademia, Florence, and illustrated in *Enciclopedia dell'arte medievale*, 12 vols (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1991–2002), VII, p. 893.

<sup>18</sup> The miniature by Liberale da Verona decorates an initial in the Codex 28.12, fol. 101<sup>r</sup> of the Piccolomini Library in Siena. See *La Libreria Piccolomini nel Duomo di Siena / The Piccolomini Library in Siena Cathedral*, ed. by Salvatore Settis and Donatella Toracca, *Mirabilia Italiae*, 7 (Modena: Pannini, 1998), p. 177, ill. 234.

<sup>19</sup> For these frescoes see Leonia Desideri Costa, *La chiesa di S. Martino del Vescovo, l'Oratorio dei Buonomini e gli affreschi sulle opere di misericordia in Firenze presso le case degli Alighieri* (Florence: Tipografia Classica, 1942); Olga Zorzi Pugliese, 'The Good Works of the Florentine Buonomini di San Martino: An Example of Renaissance Pragmatism', in *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, ed. by Konrad Eisenbichler (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1991), pp. 108–20.

<sup>20</sup> See illustration in *Donatello e il suo tempo. Il bronzo a Padova nel Quattrocento e nel Cinquecento*, ed. by Monica De Vincenti (Geneva: Skira, 2001), cat. 19. For the figure of beggar as a matrix for the reception of antiquity, see Philine Helas, 'Die Bettler vor dem Tempel. Zur 'invenzione' und Transformation eines Bildmotivs in der italienischen Malerei der Renaissance (1423–1552)', *Iconographica: Rivista di Iconografia medievale e moderna*, 3 (2004), 63–87 (esp. pp. 80–84).

Rimini, for instance, shows a handsome, unscathed beggar bearing Christ's likeness.<sup>21</sup>

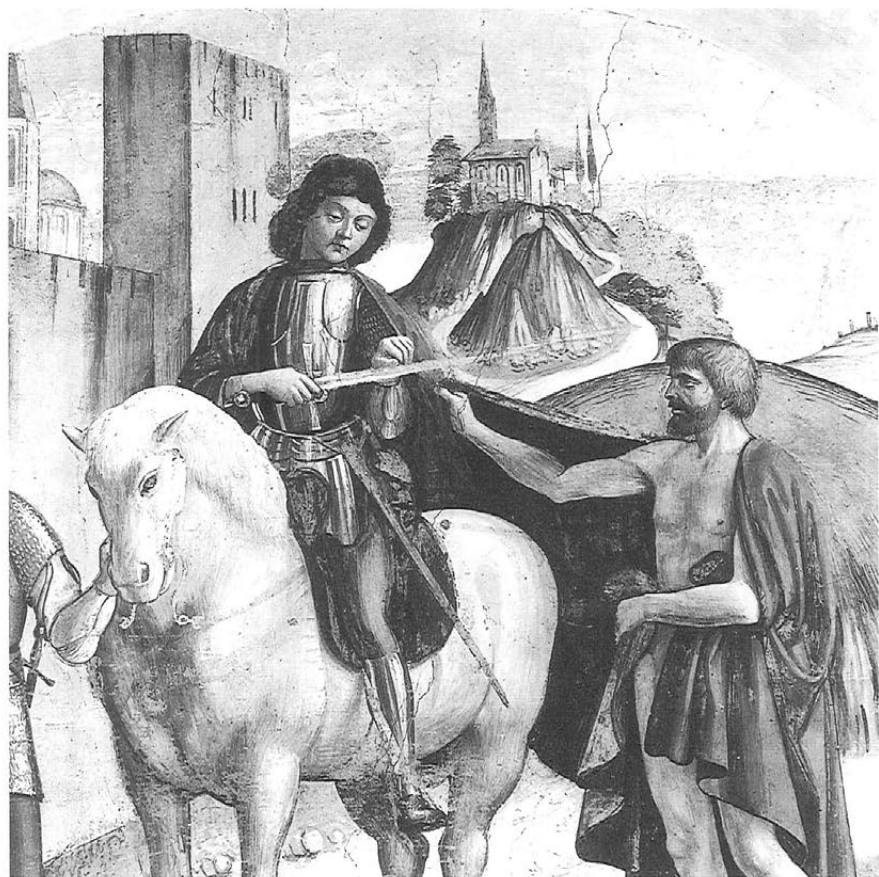


Figure 69. St Martin sharing his cloak with a beggar (wall painting), Florence, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino. c. 1480–85.

Only in Italian art do we find further images in which the beggar is transformed to fit a contemporary context. Sometimes charitable brotherhoods chose Martin as patron saint, as was the case of the 'Scuola di San Martino', which was founded under the protection of Duke Ercole d'Este and his wife

<sup>21</sup> The painting was meant for the parish church in S. Martino a Piazza Brembano (Bergamo). See Peter Humfrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 133, plate 116; p. 350, appendix 51.



Eleonora Gonzaga in Ferrara in 1490, to help the *poveri vergognosi*, the 'ashamed poor'.<sup>22</sup> The illustrated statutes of 1494 depict Martin as a young knight on horseback, as was the convention. However, the needy man in the painting is not naked, but rather dressed in a black cowl with an insignia on the hood, and instead of gratefully accepting the piece of the red cloak that Martin is about to cut, he shows him a box for collecting alms (Plate 7).<sup>23</sup> A member of the brotherhood who collects money in a locked box (as the statutes stipulate) has thereby replaced the beggar. The ashamed poor, to whom the money was then distributed, enjoyed the privilege of avoiding public exposure.<sup>24</sup> In this context, the image of dividing the cloak is merely a symbol of charity, and instead of depicting the impoverished, the image presents the brotherhood intervening as mediator between donor and recipient. The painting visualizes the late medieval cultural tendency to control charity through local organizations such as brotherhoods.

Within the scope of book illustrations or larger cycles, such as the one by Simone Martini in the lower church of Assisi, one scene occasionally reveals the divine reaction to the cloak-dividing scene: namely, Martin's dream of Christ dressed in the very piece of cloth which he had given to the beggar (Figure 70).<sup>25</sup> Christ's identification with the beggar is reiterated when he appears naked, as in the oratorio of the Buonomini di San Martino in Florence (Figure 71). This iconography is not known before the fifteenth century. Until then, Christ either presents the piece of robe, or he wears it over his clothes, as in the fresco by Simone Martini.

In the visual arts, the cloak-dividing episode has still another protagonist, and here I am not referring to the saint's horse (even though it seems to react to the beggar in either a compassionate or a rejecting manner), but rather to the cloak itself. The remains of that robe also had a religious significance. They were

<sup>22</sup> See Werner L. Gundersheimer, *Ferrara: The Style of a Renaissance Despotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 78–79.

<sup>23</sup> *Statuti della confraternita di San Martino*, 1494: Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea di Ferrara, MS Cl I, 346.

<sup>24</sup> The statutes of the Compagnia demanded that its members collect the alms in a locked *cassette*, which would be opened in the presence of everyone, including the Prior. Then, all of the collected money had to be distributed at end of every week: *Statuti*, fols 5–8; cf. Gundersheimer, *Ferrara*, pp. 136–37, n. 28.

<sup>25</sup> Hoch, *Simone Martini's St Martin Chapel*, pp. 131–33; Leone de Castris, *Simone Martini*, p. 117.



Figure 70. Simone Martini. The dream of St Martin (wall painting in the lower church), Assisi, S. Francesco. 1322–26.





Figure 71. The dream of St Martin (wall painting), Florence, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino. c. 1480–85.

identified with the 'capa Martini', the famous relic of the Merovingian kings of the Franks.<sup>26</sup> In visual representations it can be a very different kind of object.<sup>27</sup> The observer rarely sees an elaborate robe, which would have been difficult to halve. Incidentally, the miniature of the codex in the Stadtbibliothek Trier reflects this problem (Figure 68). Here, it is not the robe that is being halved but, to a certain extent, its visual representation. The cloak is signified by a large piece of cloth, the garment's *materia prima*, which becomes an experimental field for artistic creativity in itself. All variants can be found, from a simple monochrome material, to a textile with different colours on each side, or even royal ermine-lined regalia. The material itself emerges as a motivating force because it links the donor and the recipient in multifold ways. The act of cutting, however, is rarely depicted naturalistically. The St Martin by Simone Martini, as well as the saint represented in the relief at the Church of San Martino in Pisa, handle their swords in a manner that could endanger their horses, and the way in which the saint in the fresco by the Buonomini flicks his sword would hardly result in a successful cut. Rather, these actions are fictions of pictorial rhetorics. Moreover, the volume of the material develops a life of its own; it crinkles or folds, flows or hangs down in heavy drapes. It can extend beyond the dimensions of a cape and enclose beggar and Martin simultaneously and, therefore, define the essence of the interaction. In the paintings, the piece of robe given away is staged as a gift or donation that implicitly represents the exchange between the divine and earthly sphere. Just as the alms help the beggar, the sharing person can hope for God's mercy.

Less known and far less often represented than the cloak-dividing scene is an episode that occurred at the time of Martin's episcopacy. As Martin was going to church one winter's day, a poor naked man asked him for a robe. The bishop Martin ordered his archdeacon to get him one and retreated to the sacristy. After a while, the shivering beggar spoke out and complained that he was forgotten. As a result, Martin gave him his own tunic. When the archdeacon reminded Martin that he should say mass, he replied that he could not perform mass until

<sup>26</sup> See Luce Pietri, 'La *capa* Martini: Essai d'identification de la relique martinienne', in *Romanité et cité chrétienne: permanences et mutations, intégration et exclusion du Ier au VIe siècle. Mélanges en l'honneur d'Yvette Duval* (Paris: De Boccard, 2000), pp. 343–57. The Latin word for 'short cloak' (*cappella*) became the appellation for those who were in charge of the cloak of St Martin, i.e. the *cappellani* or 'chaplains'; from here the word 'chapel' was generated.

<sup>27</sup> For early representations see Pierre Bureau, 'La chape de saint Martin dans tous ses états. Sens et fonctions symboliques du vêtement partagé à travers la miniature du X<sup>e</sup> au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', in *Martin de Tours*, pp. 65–79.

the beggar received a robe. The archdeacon saw Martin dressed in his bell-shaped cope (chasuble), which covered his arms, but he did not realize that Martin was naked underneath. Although the archdeacon told Martin that the beggar had left, the saint insisted that the archdeacon buy the man a tunic, which he did unwillingly: for about five pieces of silver he bought 'a cheap, short tunic — the kind called paenula, paene nulla, almost nothing'. Full of anger, the archdeacon threw it at the feet of St Martin. The saint went behind a screen and put the tunic on. The sleeves came only to his elbows, and the lower edge only to the knees. Dressed in this way, he went to say mass.<sup>28</sup> According to Sulpicius Severus, a 'globe of fire appeared over his head' during this mass, making him appear as an apostle at the moment of Pentecost.

Johannes Belet mentions another miracle as an outcome of this deed, which the *Legenda Aurea* recounts:

To the account of this miracle adds Master John Belet that, when the bishop raised his hands to God, as is done in the mass, the sleeves of the tunic slipped back, since his arms were not thick or fleshly, and the tunic reached only his elbows, and so his arms were left bare. Then miraculously, angels brought him golden armlets set with jewels, and the bare arms were decently covered.<sup>29</sup>

Martin's act of giving away his tunic must be seen not as a 'private' gift, but as an act that implicates his clerical function. The liturgical vestments are an essential and indispensable part of the ritual of the mass. Although during the saint's lifetime, the *tunica* or *alba* was probably not a sacred robe as it was in later centuries, it would have been unthinkable for a priest to perform without it, or to reveal his naked arms or shoulders during the celebration.<sup>30</sup> The divine intervention not only saves the eucharistic offering, but it puts the stamp of

<sup>28</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Sancti Martini*, 2nd Dialogue, Chapters 1–2, in 'Die Schriften des Sulpicius Severus', trans. by Bihlmeyer, pp. 103–05; Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, II, p. 297.

<sup>29</sup> 'Rationale Divinorum officiorum / Belet Div. offic. Explicatio, pp. 567–68: caput CLXII, De solemnitate Sancti Martini, "[...] Seuam ante altare, ut moris est in prefatione, sistert, manusque ad Deum sublevarerunt, ita ut brachia eius facile ob amplitudinem & brevitatem manicarum conspiceretur, illico aurei torques ipsa honeste operverunt, & supra caput eius igneus globus visus est. [...]': Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, II, p. 297.

<sup>30</sup> See Joseph Braun, *Die liturgische Gewandung im Occident und Orient nach Ursprung und Entwicklung, Verwendung und Symbolik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), pp. 57, 64–67, where the author reports just this legend for his study of the use of the *alba* in early Christian times.

divine approval on Martin's deed by replacing the missing material, but doing so with the most precious materials possible: gold and gemstones.

This theme, although seldom depicted, does appear in two prominent places in Italy. First, it can be seen in a relief on St Martin's Cathedral in Lucca. In addition to the famous statue representing the patron saint on the church's façade, a series of relief panels flank the main portal and depict scenes from the saint's life along with explanatory inscriptions. The formerly polychromed reliefs were probably made by a generation of artists following Guido Bigarelli, called Guido da Como, after 1250.<sup>31</sup> The *Mass of St Martin*, displayed directly on the right-hand side of the portal, shows the bishop standing behind the altar, flanked by two figures. The heavenly manifestation, mentioned by Sulpicius Severus, appears as a crown of flames directly above the saint's head, along with the words *IGNIS ADEST CAPITI MARTINO SACRA LITANTE*.<sup>32</sup> The artist addresses the possible problem with nudity, as the bishop directly faces the viewer while raising both hands for the blessing, which results in his sleeves slipping down and allowing his forearms to show.<sup>33</sup> The figures next to him assist with the celebration of mass and witness the miraculous appearance of the fireball. The presentation of the episode near the portal may refer to the fact that the *porticus* of the church was often the place where beggars gathered to seek refuge and alms; furthermore, the image connects the historical bishop with the current office holder.

The second representation of the theme appears in the cycle of frescoes by Simone Martini in Assisi, mentioned above (Figure 72).<sup>34</sup> The artist paints the event taking place in a chapel, in which Martin celebrates mass with the assistance of his archdeacon. Martin not only raises his hands to God, as described in the legend, but simultaneously elevates the host. The fireball appears above the building and its rays reach the saint. For the rest, the work follows

<sup>31</sup> See August Schmarsow, *S. Martin von Lucca und die Anfänge der toskanischen Skulptur im Mittelalter* (Breslau: Schottlaender, 1890), pp. 98–104; Clara Baracchini and Antonino Caleca, *Il Duomo di Luca*, Cassa di Risparmio di Lucca (Lucca: Baroni 1973), figs 63–70, horse statue; figs 194–98, relief with the Mass of St Martin. See also Gabriele Kopp, *Die Skulpturen der Fassade von San Martino in Lucca*, Heidelberger kunstgeschichtliche Abhandlungen N.F., 15 (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1981), pp. 35–36; p. 47, ill. 176.

<sup>32</sup> The *Legenda Aurea* was not yet written when the relief was created.

<sup>33</sup> On both hands the fingers are broken off — possibly there were originally angels covering his arms, and when they were broken, the fingers were destroyed too.

<sup>34</sup> See Hoch, *Simone Martini's St Martin Chapel*, pp. 155–57, and Leone de Castris, *Simone Martini*, p. 106. The inscription reads: DUM SACAMENTA OFFERET BTUS MARTIN.

Johannes Belet and Jacobus de Voragine, who report the presence of angels.<sup>35</sup> However, Simone Martini has the angels shield the forearms of the bishop with a shiny golden piece of material instead of ornamental bundles. As with the

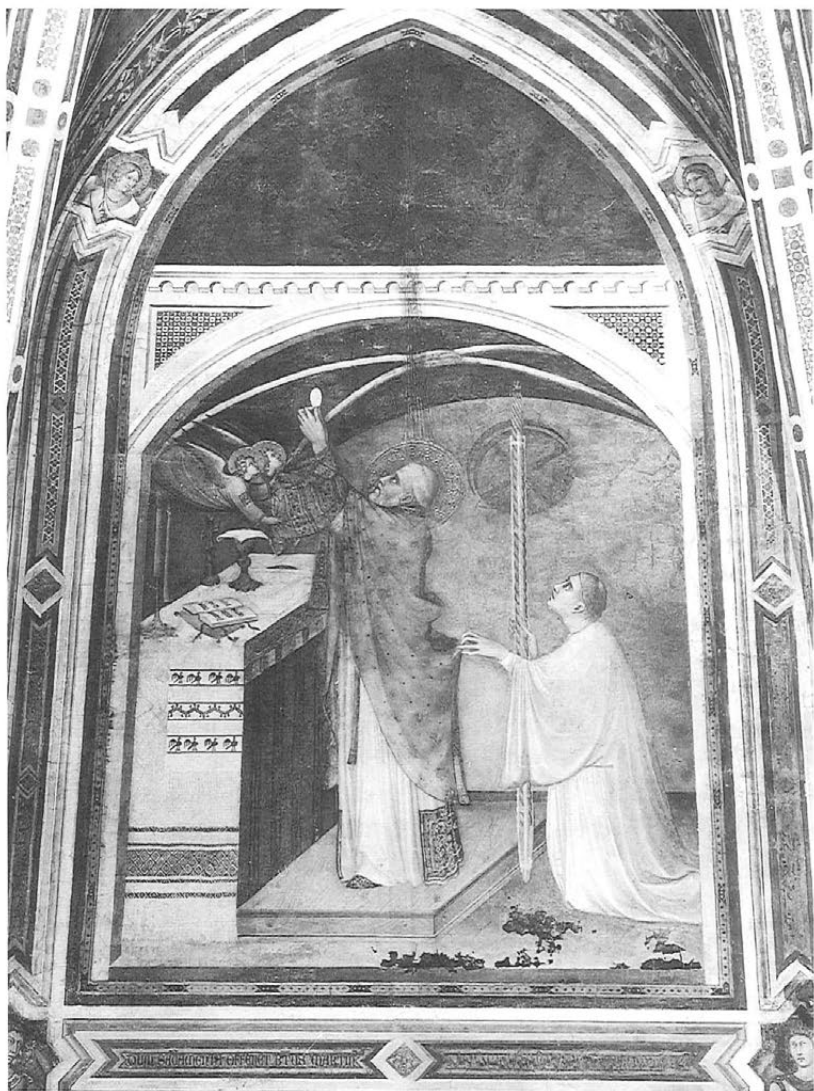


Figure 72. Simone Martini. The Mass of St Martin (wall painting in the lower church), Assisi, S. Francesco. 1322–26.

<sup>35</sup> See n. 27.

façade of the cathedral in Lucca, the image of the mass might bear a meaning beyond the narrative: it is placed in such a way that it is illuminated by the adjacent window and catches the attention of the entering observer. The image therefore constructs an eternal mass for the founder of the chapel. The beggar is ousted from the episode in both Lucca and in the fresco by Simone Martini.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, the legends reported by Johannes Belet and Jacobus de Voragine inspired two late fifteenth-century Hungarian paintings, which present another solution to the problem of 'divine material'. One of these is a retable that presents Martin sharing his mantle and the Mass of St Martin at the upper register. In the latter scene, the bishop appears during mass while elevating the host with his back to the viewer, turning the viewer into a participant at the mass. A red cherub covers both his bare arms and keeps them out of sight of the faithful.<sup>37</sup> In the other Hungarian painting, in this case a fragment from an altarpiece, we witness the Mass of St Martin from the side, at an angle similar to that in Simone Martini's fresco. Here, two floating angels hold white material to cover the saint's bare forearms, but the artist does expose a small hint of naked flesh.<sup>38</sup> Again, the beggar does not appear in these paintings, even though the setting would have offered sufficient space for him.<sup>39</sup>

The role of the garment in this episode differs from that in the cloak-dividing scene: instead of the earthly gift, the divine counter-gift is emphasized. This poses another artistic problem, namely, visualizing a supernatural fibre, which, according to the text, is not a shiny golden material, but rather consists of golden chain, jewellery, and gemstones. The solutions are rather different here. While Simone Martini paints a shiny golden material with a rather mundane ornament similar to that on the bishop's liturgical robe, the Hungarian images present angels as the 'material' covering the arms of the saint.

<sup>36</sup> I could find only one example showing the beggar: a tapestry from the church of St Martin in Montpezat (1519–39), illustrated in *Saint Martin dans l'art et l'imagerie. Exposition Nationale* [exhibition catalogue] (Tours: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1961), pp. 62–63, cat. 83.

<sup>37</sup> Workshop of Master Jánosrét; see Lörincz, *Saint Martin*, pp. 40, 57.

<sup>38</sup> See *Pannonia Regia: művészet a Dunántúlon 1000–1541. A kötetet szerkesztette* [exhibition catalogue], ed. by Árpád Miké and Imre Takács (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 1994), cat. X.22: altar-panel fragments, legends of St Claus and St Martin, Tempera on softwood, (101.5 × 89.5 / 102 × 94), Budapest, Hungarian National Gallery, inv. 183, 1637.

<sup>39</sup> However, he probably is alluded to in this episode, when St Martin is shown in his vestment and a beggar is 'attributed' to him. See, for example, the fifteenth-century painting in the Wallraff-Richartz-Museum, Cologne, illustrated in *Martin de Tours*, p. 36, ill. 96.



Martin proves his charity twice, and twice he risks his attire, the clothing that represents his social status and his profession. In the first case it can be considered a subversive act, since he rejects his military role. The second case addresses the tension between two duties of the Christian Church: to perform the liturgy and to care for the poor. According to the biblical demand, Martin completes a canonical Work of Mercy, but at the same time he violates his clerical duty to carry out the eucharistic rites in the prescribed way. In his youth, the dividing of the cloak was a result of spontaneous pity, but as a bishop, Martin reacts to this experience by somehow adopting the role of the beggar. He does not tell the archdeacon the full narrative but continues to speak of the 'pauper' in need of clothing. The image of Christ as beggar in the first episode changes, and, in an act of Christomimesis, Martin becomes the beggar in the second.

Subsequent to this second episode, the *Legenda Aurea* recapitulates the biblical demand for clothing the naked in form of an allegory: 'The saint once noticed a sheep that had been shorn, and said "That sheep has obeyed the gospel's mandate. She had two tunics and gave one of them to someone who had none". You should do likewise'.<sup>40</sup> Martin, who accomplished this imperative, almost transforms himself into the *Agnus dei*. On a different level, however, the declaration of the sheep's fleece to serve as a 'second robe' transfers the self-exposing act of sharing clothes to a more socially normative and more practical demand for sharing the abundance.

Medieval visual representations underscore the synecdochal role of donating clothes. The personifications of Misericordia or Caritas are often characterized by such donations.<sup>41</sup> In many cases, a poor or needful person serves as the addressee of such an act of mercy. An appealing exception appears in the series of terracotta statues depicting Virtues, which Domenico di Paris created for the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara, in 1467 (Figure 73). Here, Charity presents the coat or cloth to the observer, showing her all-embracing role in the interplay between giving and receiving.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, II, p. 297.

<sup>41</sup> This is more often the case in French than in Italian examples. See Maria von Thadden, 'Die Ikonographie der Caritas in der Kunst des Mittelalters' (doctoral dissertation, University of Bonn, 1951), pp. 67–72, and Marie-Louise Thérél, 'Caritas et paupertas dans l'iconographie médiévale inspirée de la psychomachie', in *Études sur l'histoire de la pauvreté (Moyen Âge – XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, ed. by Michel Mollat, 2 vols (Paris: Université de Paris, 1974), I, pp. 295–317, ill. 13.

<sup>42</sup> von Thadden, 'Die Ikonographie', pp. 134–35.



Figure 73. Domenico di Paris. Caritas (terracotta sculpture), Ferrara, Palazzo Schifanoia, sala dei stucchi. 1467.



*Margaret of Cortona: Donation of Clothing as Penance*

Margaret of Cortona (1247–97), a member of the Tertiary Order of the Franciscans, must be mentioned alongside St Francis and St Clara. Her Franciscan confessor, Fra Giunta Bevegnati, composed a work on her life with the title *Legenda de vita et miraculis Beatae Margaritae de Cortona*.<sup>43</sup> As a mistress of a nobleman, she had enjoyed a carefree and ‘sinful’ life for nine years, which ended with her lover’s sudden death. In 1272, she came to Cortona with her illegitimate son, then joined the Order of Penitents in 1275. She devoted herself to charitable work, developed a special veneration for the Eucharist, and experienced numerous visions until her death in 1297. A *Vita icon* from around 1300 portrays the important stages of her life in eight scenes.<sup>44</sup> In the second or third decade of the fourteenth century, a costly monument, attributed to Gano di Fazio, was built in her honour.<sup>45</sup> The Church of San Basilio where she was buried, later renamed Santa Margherita, was fitted with frescoes by Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti, depicting a cycle of her life, along with scenes of the Old and New Testament.<sup>46</sup> Although these paintings have been lost, they were copied in the context of her canonization process in the seventeenth century, and the canonization commission approved their validity in 1634. Seven of the twenty-one watercoloured pen-and-ink drawings are preserved and provide a glimpse into the perished cycle.<sup>47</sup>

In all visual representations, Margaret of Cortona is clothed in a remarkable robe.<sup>48</sup> Parallel black lines, one wider and two thinner, comprise a large

<sup>43</sup> Fra Giunta Bevegnati, *Leggenda della vita e dei miracoli di Santa Margherita da Cortona*, ed. by Eliodoro Mariani, Collana Bibliotheca Franciscana Sanctorum, II (Vicenza: L.I.E.F., 1978).

<sup>44</sup> This can be found in Cortona, in the Museo Diocesano. See Joanna Cannon and André Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona and the Lorenzetti: Sienese Art and the Cult of a Holy Woman in Medieval Tuscany* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), pp. 159–69, colour plate II.

<sup>45</sup> See Cannon and Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona*, pp. 63–74, colour plate III.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79–154.

<sup>47</sup> Cortona, Biblioteca dell’Accademia Etrusca of di Cortona, MSS 390 and 429; Cortona, Archivio Storico del Comune, MSS H 27, H 28, and H 29; Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Aqu. Doni 318; Rome, Vatican, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Riti 552; cf. Cannon and Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona*, p. 7, n. 23; pp. III–13.

<sup>48</sup> Regarding the robe see Fabio Bisogni, ‘L’abito di Margherita’, in *Margherita da Cortona. Una storia emblematica di devozione narrata per testi e immagini*, ed. by Laura Corti and

chequered pattern on the light-grey material. A white scarf is wrapped around her head, and in the icon, she wears an additional cloak over the robe. In the cycle of frescoes, her companions also wear this rather unusual garment. The chequered material comprises part of the representation of 'poverty' in a particular way. Similar material is implemented, for instance, in the robe of a begging child in the oldest preserved copy of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*,<sup>49</sup> or with the poor who are expelled from Siena in the *Specchio umano* by Domenico Lenzi.<sup>50</sup> This material probably also relates to the striped dress of the Poor Clares, possibly implying a double usage of the material as a cloak and blanket and, therefore, referring to poverty.<sup>51</sup> Chequered materials regularly appear in paintings of that time, particularly in the form of quotidian objects such as bedspreads.<sup>52</sup> In choosing the chequered material, Margaret presumably sought a contrast to her former luxurious style of clothing mentioned in her *Vita*.<sup>53</sup>

One of the episodes that determined Margaret's sainthood was her giving away her clothing. The *Legenda* (II.3) reports how Margaret was so generous in giving away her personal belongings, including her dress and cape, that in the

Riccardo Spinelli (Milan: Electa, 1998), pp. 33–43, as well as Laurence Gérard-Marchant, 'Margherita l'irregolare e il "taccolino"', in *Margherita da Cortona*, pp. 44–46.

<sup>49</sup> The oldest preserved copy is the illustrated version *in volgare* from the third quarter of the fourteenth century (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS ital.115), which was published in English under the title *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*, trans. by Isa Ragusa (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961, repr. 1977), fig. 9.

<sup>50</sup> See Susanna Partsch, *Profane Buchmalerei der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft im spätmittelalterlichen Florenz. Der Specchio Umano des Getreidehändlers Domenico Lenzi* (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1981), colour plate v.

<sup>51</sup> In this context, the material design, not yet accounted for in written sources, is interpreted by Warr, 'The Striped Mantle', pp. 415–30.

<sup>52</sup> The custom of using chequered material as a bedspread appears, for example, in Pietro Lorenzetti, 'Birth of the Virgin', painted in 1335–42 (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena); Simone Martini, 'Scenes from the Life of the St Agostino Novello', painted before 1329 (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena); Ambrogio Lorenzetti, 'Scenes from the Life of St Claus', painted in approximately 1332 (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence), as well as in a scene from the life of Margaret of Cortona, 'The Curing of Simonello di Angeluccio' (reproduced in Cannon and Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona*, colour plates XII, XIII, XIV, XV).

<sup>53</sup> Giunta Bevegnati, *Leggenda*, ed. by Mariani, Chapter II.14, p. 32.

winter she had to remain in her cell, wrapped up naked in her straw mat.<sup>54</sup> The dual function of the same material as both cloak and blanket to cover the body by day and night, a practice probably not exclusive to the Poor Clares, becomes even more extreme here since straw — already considered a poor bedding (and presumably alluding to the first bedding of the Son of God) — now also serves as a dress.

This episode appears on all major representations of Margaret: on the *Vita icon*, on one of the reliefs at her monument (Figure 74), as well as in the cycle of frescoes (Figure 75). The pictorial composition of all three representations remains largely the same: Margaret, wrapped in a straw mat, stands in the entrance of a small house, presumably her cell, and passes her robe to a poor female attendant. Hardly recognizable on the damaged *Vita icon*, they appear on the relief as an old and a young woman, standing barefoot before the saint's dwelling and wearing only rugs. The corresponding fresco bears the mutilated title: *AT/UT NUN PALIURUS SCINDAT ILLAM*, which cannot be explained by means of the *Vita*. Here, two elderly women, of whom one turns away, appear next to the young woman receiving the robe. The act of turning away might allude to a specific scene, from the *Legenda* (IV. 2): when Margaret visited her birthplace Lavinio and performed public penance, a woman there doubted her love of the poor. The saint 'took revenge' by sending that woman her tunica, her scarf, and the food that was prepared for her, and furthermore, Margaret promised to settle all her debts.<sup>55</sup> The woman's turning away might demonstrate

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., Chapter III.3, p. 40: '[...] La verità di questo proposito è documentato se si pensi anche non risparmiava niente di quanto fosse pur necessario al suo sostentamento: non la tunica o il mantello o il saccone, il cuscino o il cingolo e neppure quegli oggetti che le servivano per ricordare il tempo delle preghiere e delle ore canoniche. Dava via tutto subito ai poveri come cosa loro, con tanta generosità, che talvolta rimaneva nuda nella sua cella avvolta appena da una stuoia o rivestita della tonachella o del mantello d'un'altra sorella. Fare questo d'estate poteva anche piacerle, ma essa cercava di farlo anche durante i rigori invernali. Se poi talvolta non aveva tra mano qualcosa da dare ai poveri, si scudiva, mossa da compassione, le maniche dalle veste o si toglieva il velo dal capo o dava loro persino il vasetto dell'acqua benedetta. [...]']

<sup>55</sup> Giunta Bevegnati, *Leggenda*, ed. by Mariani, Chapter IV.2, pp. 47–48: '[...] Ci fu una Donna che non cessò di mormorare contro l'umiltà e la cortesia che Margherita aveva verso i poveri: ma della mormorazione ricevette da lei questa vendetta: Margherita, cioè, pietosamente le fece avere la tunica e il copricapo e le vivande che erano state preparate per lei. Non contenta d'essersi vendicata così, questa figlia del Vangelo, per guadagnare all'amore di carità con umiltà ancora maggiore colei che l'offendeva, procurò fedelmente che venissero pagati per intero i debiti che aveva quella chiacchierona. [...]']



Figure 74. Gano di Fazio. Margaret of Cortona gives her vest to a poor woman (tomb relief), Cortona, Sta Margherita.

1320–30.



Figure 75. Margaret of Cortona gives her vest to a poor woman (drawing after a lost fresco cycle, Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti, dating to 1330–40), Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Aqu. Doni 318, fol. 4'. Copy dates to 1629.

this detached attitude, but, at the same time, her proximity to the donation scene binds her to the circle of recipients.

The portrayals of the robe donation not only demonstrate a representation of the saint as a benefactress to the poor, but also visualize her personal wish to relinquish worldly goods. In the cycle of frescoes, the pictorial field above the donation scene probably showed Margaret entering the Order and having her hair cut.<sup>56</sup> This event should be understood as a parallel to an episode in the Life of St Francis, in which he returns his clothes to his father and presents himself naked to his 'new father', the bishop.<sup>57</sup> Margaret has attained a level where she parts from her feminine ornaments, her hair and her bright and colourful clothes, underlining her departure from the worldly life.<sup>58</sup> Her renunciation of the world continues when she gives away her undergarment. With her own complete exposure, Margaret crosses the line of decency that is intended as a social standard for 'respectable women' and which is respected in comparable situations by other saints such as Catherine of Siena.<sup>59</sup> The boundary Margaret violates may relate to her status as a penitent who atones for the worldliness of her former life.<sup>60</sup> The artist avoids exhibiting her bare body but instead shields

<sup>56</sup> See Cannon and Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona*, colour plate XVII.

<sup>57</sup> Bonaventura, *Legenda maior*, Chapter II.4, in *Fontes franciscani*, ed. by Enrico Menestò and Stefano Brufani (Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1995), p. 790.

<sup>58</sup> The negative connotation of female hair becomes apparent in a sermon by Bernardino da Siena in which he lists the seven sins of Maria Magdalena. He mentions as the third sin: 'La maggiore vanità che comunemente abbi la donna sono e capelli. Adunque è maggior peccato', and as the fifth one: 'vestimenti pomposi, e dilicati, e vanigrosoli, come una meretrice, e l'andatura vague e superba'. San Bernardino da Siena, *Le prediche volgari*, ed. by Ciro Cannarozzi, 5 vols (vols 1-2: Pistoia: Tip. Alberto Pacinotti, 1934; vols 3-5: Florence: Libreria editrice fiorentina, 1940), II, p. 145.

<sup>59</sup> Concerning Catherine, see below. For a male saint such as St Francis, the total public exposure as reported by Bonaventura (as n. 57) was not such a problem, but the medieval and Renaissance artists never did show complete nudity; the boy is always covered by the vestment of the bishop.

<sup>60</sup> Her behaviour toward her son also fits this image. She completely withdraws her motherly love, and even neglects him in order to devote herself to prayer and helping the poor. Yet, the denial of maternal qualities does not appear as abnormal behaviour, but as abdication and virtue. See Giunta Bevegnati, *Leggenda*, ed. by Mariani, particularly Chapter II.3, p. 15, for example: '[...] preferiva l'eterno Amore allo stesso figlio del suo ventre, tanto da non preparargli cibi cotti per non distogliersi dalla preghiera. Rare volte persino parlava con lui e questo solo per dirgli: "Figlio mio, quando torni a casa, se trovi cibo ancora crudo, prendilo così com'è, e in silenzio; perché non vale la pena che io mi occupi di te per così poco, nel tempo riservato



it with a straw mat, which allows the female body to disappear behind an abstract form, thus negating its former beauty and seductive power.<sup>61</sup>

Her *Vita* integrates the donation episode into in a specifically gendered context. At first, Margaret's luxurious clothing indexes a reproach directed toward women, followed by her loss of status when she joins the Franciscan Order, which is then followed by her renunciation of female vanities. She performs her penance, which consists of self-denial, by donating her personal clothing to other women. The one woman who doubts Margaret's penitence is humiliated by being given clothing. Margaret, in contrast to Martin or Catherine, does not experience any divine repayment in the form of a counter-gift. Nevertheless, her penitence does not go unrewarded: with the help of St Francis, Christ can be moved to absolve her from all her sins. Following the reconstruction by Cannon and Vauchez, these two episodes (the donation of clothes and Christ absolving her) would have been in strong visual association, being side by side.<sup>62</sup>

At first, Margaret's robe plays a similar role to that of St Martin's cloak. It is the gift that, given away on earth, will yield a gift from heaven in return, thereby completing the circle. Yet, the images do not depict Margaret's robe as an amorphous piece of material, but precisely as that chequered robe, which reveals her status as a penitent. In giving away her chequered robe, she also passes on its significance: it is not simply a garment but a uniform, which her followers also wear in the frescoes. The images depicting her gifting cloth therefore refer to her role as founder of the order.

### *Catherine of Siena: A Divine Reward for Saintly Giving*

Caterina Benincasa was born on Ascension Day in 1347 as the twenty-fourth child of Jacopo di Benincasa and his wife Mona Lapa, who were a family of dyers living under modest conditions in Siena. From an early age she was attracted by

alle lodi del signore." Però, anche se si comportava così con il suo figliuolo, per i poveri preparava carne, pesce e altro; e quando era occupata in simili servizi non stimava di perdere tempo, perché questo impegno era suggerito dallo spirito non dalla carne. [...].

<sup>61</sup> Margaret actively tried to destroy her beauty, so her confessor had to keep her from self-destructive tendencies: Giunta Bevegnati, *Leggenda*, ed. by Mariani, Chapter II.15, pp. 33–34.

<sup>62</sup> See Cannon and Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona*, fig. 201, and for the scene depicting Christ absolving Margaret on the *Vita icon*, on the tomb, and in the fresco cycle, see figs 160–62.



the Dominicans and, in 1362 or 1363, she joined the Third Order of the Dominicans. She devoted herself to the care of the poor and sick in her hometown and became particularly known for her ardent commitment in political, parochial, theological, and social questions of her time.<sup>63</sup> In 1380, Catherine died in St Peter's in Rome. Her mortal remains are kept in the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, and in 1461, she was canonized by the Sienese Pope Pius II.<sup>64</sup>

Catherine's donation of her robe typifies her compassion for the poor. One day after Catherine has given her coat to a shivering beggar, she is criticized for her indecency in walking the street without one. Thereupon she replies: 'I would rather be found without a coat than without love'.<sup>65</sup> Since respectable women should not walk outside without a coat, Catherine, like Martin and Margaret, ignores social conventions, which she opposes for higher values, namely charitable deeds. At the same time, the connection between 'coat' and 'love' correlates with the motive of a protective cloak or the 'Virgin Mary of the Protective Cloak', where the cloak itself is the symbol of Mary's all-embracing love and welfare for the people.<sup>66</sup>

Another episode from her *Vita*, the *Leggenda maior* composed by Raimundo da Capua, recounts one of her donations far more elaborately. While leaving church after mass one day, Catherine encounters a beggar asking for clothes. The beggar is actually Christ appearing to her '[...] in the likeness of a poor pilgrim, at the age (so it seemed to her) of two- or three-and-thirty years, half naked

<sup>63</sup> 381 of her letters, addressed to different personalities of her time, are preserved. In 1376, she travelled to see Pope Gregory XI in Avignon, where she pleaded for the Florentine people who were at war with the papacy. Her mission failed; however, she was able to persuade the pope to return to Rome. Catherine went back to Siena and devoted herself anew to meditation and charitable work. During the Great Western Schism in 1378, Catherine supported Pope Urban VI and, following his wish, moved to Rome in order to work for the unity of the church.

<sup>64</sup> The oldest portrait of her is passed on in the fresco by Andrea Vanni, in the Basilica S. Domenico in Siena, dating from around 1375.

<sup>65</sup> *Ökumenisches Heiligenlexikon*, s.v. Katharina von Siena: <http://www.heiligenlexikon.de/> [accessed 15 January 2007].

<sup>66</sup> Regarding the Virgin Mary with the Protective Cloak ('Schutzmantelmadonna'), see Christa Belting-Ihm, 'Sub Matris Tutela'. *Untersuchungen zur Vorgeschichte der Schutzmantelmadonna*, Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, 3 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1976).

[...].<sup>67</sup> Catherine hastens back into the chapel of the Penitents, takes off her woollen sleeveless robe and hands it to him. He asks her for a linen undergarment. In return, she invites him to her home where she finds a vest for him in the chest containing her father's and brother's clothing. The beggar then demands sleeves. Catherine searches for some in the house and finds a pair of unworn sleeves from a robe belonging to a maidservant. After receiving all this, the beggar asks Catherine whether she could spare some clothes for his sick companion who is in hospital. She thinks about his request and comes to the conclusion that she cannot take any more of the maidservant's clothing without making her poor, but she also realizes that she cannot contribute any more of her own clothing without being indecently exposed.<sup>68</sup> She replies to the beggar: 'Truly, good man, if I might do it with modesty, I would spoil myself even of this coat that I wear, with all my heart, and bestow it upon thy companion; but because I have no more garments to put on but only this, and, therefore, to give it away to another and to lack [it] myself were not only an indiscreet part, but also against all modesty and womanhood, I must needs pray thee to hold me excused, for in truth there lacketh no good will in me but only ability'.<sup>69</sup> He accepts her explanation, thanks her, and leaves. That night while Catherine prays, Christ appears to her and shows her a robe that is embroidered all over with pearls and gemstones. When asked whether she recognizes it, she answers that it seemed to be her own, although hers lacked such rich adornments.<sup>70</sup> Christ tells her that he wanted to repay her for her compassion toward the beggar:

[...] I give thee a coat that shall be invisible to other men, but to thee alone visible and also sensible, by the virtue whereof thou shalt be defended both in body and soul from hurtful cold; and with this garment thou shalt be clad until the time come that in the presence of all angels and saints I shall put upon thee that most blissful and glorious garment of immortality in My Kingdom.<sup>71</sup>

On the one hand, the metaphor of the garment is extended to the spiritual Works of Mercy as it protects 'body and soul' from the cold. On the other, the metaphor extends to the 'garment of immortality', a covering that no longer

<sup>67</sup> Kaftal, *St Catherine in Tuscan Painting*, p. 53; *Acta sanctorum*, 30 April, III, p. 887.

<sup>68</sup> Kaftal, *St Catherine in Tuscan Painting*, pp. 54–55.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>70</sup> Quoted from *ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55–56.

stands for materialistic values (neither in the sense of textiles nor bodily flesh) but for an 'everlasting matter', that is, eternal life. This eschatological aspect links the act of donating clothes to the words of Matthew; giving away earthly clothing is rewarded with the prospect of the heavenly kingdom.

However, the garment that Catherine receives is not her own, but rather Christ:

[...] took out a cloth of sanguine colour with His own holy hands out of the wound of His side, shining all about and yielding a marvellous beautiful light, in proportion and quantity answerable to the measure of her body: and putting the same upon her with His own hands, said: 'This garment I give thee for all the time that you shalt live here upon the earth, in token and pledge of that immortal garment that you shalt receive at My hands in heaven [...]'.<sup>72</sup>

This robe, made from the blood of Christ and turned into invisible material, adapts to her body like a second skin, keeping her safe in the 'blood of Christ'. Furthermore, the robe also bears a rather earthly and practical function since, for the rest of her life, St Catherine will not be cold or sweat, even though she will be wearing the same clothes in summer and winter.<sup>73</sup>

Raimundo da Capua remarks here that the signs that God gave to Catherine were far clearer than those he had awarded to his other servants; then he explains:

'Martin', said the Lord, 'who had always been a faithful disciple, clothed me with this garment'. But he did not add: 'And I will give him a cloth of honour in heaven', even though it had already appeared. There were also no perceivable signs given to him to indicate that the cloth of honour would follow, which is what happened to our holy virgin, as you have seen.<sup>74</sup>

A representation of this episode appears in a fresco in San Sisto Vecchio in Rome, a church that was given to the Dominicans in 1219 and that has since been used by the female section of the order (Figure 76). The wall that once formed the apse concha bears, among other things, a slightly damaged fresco dedicated to St Eustachius, probably the patron saint of the donor, and to

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 56. For the Latin text see *Acta sanctorum*, April, III, pp. 887–88.

<sup>73</sup> Quoted from Kaftal, *St Catherine in Tuscan Painting*, p. 56.

<sup>74</sup> *Die Legenda Maior (Vita Catharinae Senensis) des Raimund von Capua*, ed. by Jörg Jungmayr, Edition nach der Nürnberger Handschrift Cent. IV, 75, Übersetzung und Kommentar (Berlin: Weidler Buchverlag, 2004), Chapter 3.138, p. 199.

Catherine of Siena, as an important figure for the Dominican Order.<sup>75</sup> The part dedicated to St Catherine shows the two events from her *Vita* taking place simultaneously in a church interior, visually separated by a column in the painting. At the far left, St Catherine hands over her robe to a beggar, recognizable as such due to his short ragged garment. The giving and receiving hands that meet on the textile epitomize the intimate character of the gift. At the right side of the painting (a continuous extension of the interior), a large figure of Christ meets a somewhat diminutive Catherine. The artist depicts the



Figure 76. St Catherine gives her vest to a beggar, and Christ presents a vest from his side wound to St Catherine (wall painting), Rome, S. Sisto Vecchio. Early fifteenth century.

<sup>75</sup> See Serena Romano, *Eclissi di Roma. Pittura murale a Roma e nel Lazio da Bonifacio VIII a Martino V (1295–1431)* (Rome: Argos Edizioni, 1992), pp. 411–12; Gilberto Ronci, 'Gli affreschi trecenteschi', in *La chiesa e il monastero di San Sisto all'Appia: Raccolta di studi storici*, ed. by Raimondo Spiazzi (Bologna: Edizioni studio domenicano, 1992), pp. 683–98, with colour illustration [reprint of Gilberto Ronci, 'Antichi affreschi in S. Sisto Vecchio a Roma', *Bollettino d'arte*, 36 (1951), 15–26].

moment when Christ pulls the robe from the wound in his side and hands it to the saint. Again, the hands meet on the textile, but Catherine is clearly more passive. She receives more than she actually takes, especially in comparison to the beggar who drags the garment to himself. A nun of even smaller dimensions, possibly the painting's donor, kneels at the feet of Christ. Her identity has not yet been successfully established.<sup>76</sup> In any case, the frescoes postdate 1380, the year St Catherine died in Rome, but were painted before her canonization in the fifteenth century, since she is called 'Beata' in the inscription. Her canonization process was taken up in 1411, which might have been the moment when the nuns decided to represent her in the apse of their church.<sup>77</sup> The choice of this scene from her *Vita* refers particularly to her charitable work without obscuring the mystic aspect of her divine experience.

The anonymous fresco painter makes less of an effort to differentiate the materials than to clarify the gift and counter-gift as such. With its sleeves and neckline, the saint's robe can clearly be identified as an 'earthly' garment, whereas the blood-red robe that Christ gives Catherine seems to pour from his wound and transform into material. In both cases, the characters' hands are the protagonists that meet, first on the 'earthly', then on the 'heavenly' material. More emphasis is laid on the act of giving than on the gift itself.

Giovanni di Paolo created a somewhat different representation of this episode on a predella panel that forms part of the first cycle of scenes dedicated to the life of St Catherine. Perhaps these panels were a part of the *Pala dei Pizzicaiuoli*, but it is improbable that they were finished with this altar retable in 1449; rather, they depict Catherine as a saint and were probably supplied after her canonization 1461 (Figure 77)<sup>78</sup>. The depiction of the donation scene is significant, since the altar was commissioned for the church of the Sienese

<sup>76</sup> The only indication of her identity is the crest of the family named St Eustachius on the far right of the painting, next to St Eustachius and his two sons. Two convent nuns are reported to be from this family; one of them joined the convent in 1280, the other one is noted, without further detail, to be among the nuns of the early fifteenth century and could therefore be considered a possible sponsor. See Ronci, 'Gli affreschi trecenteschi', pp. 694–96, as well as *Cronache e fioretti del monastero di San Sisto all'Appia*, ed. by Raimondo Spiazzi (Bologna: Edizioni studio domenicano, 1993), p. 110, no. 5; p. 177, no. 185.

<sup>77</sup> Ronci, 'Gli affreschi trecenteschi', pp. 693–94.

<sup>78</sup> The Cleveland Museum of Art, tempera and gold on wood, 28.7 × 28.9 cm. For the discussion of the original setting, see *Painting in Renaissance Siena (1420–1500)* [exhibition catalogue], ed. by Keith Christiansen, Laurence B. Kanter, and Carl Brandon Strehlke (New York: Amilcare Pizzi, 1988), pp. 218–42; for this panel, pp. 227–28.

Hospital Santa Maria della Scala, and thereby directly connects the act of clothing the naked to the activities of this institution. This hospital in particular maintained a tense discourse regarding clothes: it had possessed textile relics of the Virgin Mary and Christ since 1360, and the frescoes in the Sala del Pellegrinaio explicitly illustrate 'act of vesting' in his double sense. The investiture of the rector as an Augustinian Tertiary appears on one wall, while on the opposite wall the brothers are dressing a naked pauper. Thus, the charitable aspect is linked with the certainty of salvation, which is inherent in the alms, in



Figure 77. Giovanni di Paolo. St Catherine gives her vest to a beggar, and Christ returns it to her full with precious stones, Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, gift of the John Huntington Art and Polytechnic Trust 1966.3. After 1461.



the taking of the habit, and in the display of the relics.<sup>79</sup>

On the predella, the two episodes are shown within a single room, perhaps intended as the vestibule of a church or cloister. The chronological sequence runs contrary to the usual direction of reading. At the right side of the painting, a man stands in an open passageway that frames a view into the church. His neediness is conveyed by his skinniness, his short and torn brown robe, his somewhat shaggy hair, his bare feet, and a long staff branding him as a wandering pilgrim or pauper. St Catherine is about to give him a robe. At the left side of the painting, Christ, encircled by clouds and angels, appears to the kneeling saint. He presents Catherine with a robe of the same colour as the one she gives to the beggar in the adjacent scene, but, now, this robe seems to be set with the jewels described in the legend. Therefore, the imagery emphasizes the miraculous transformation of the personal robe of the saint, not the counter-gift, that is, the robe from the wound.

In this episode, Christ specifically tests Catherine for her 'endurance'. The beggar's insistent manner and his insatiable behaviour would evoke rage in almost anyone and would hardly result in success.<sup>80</sup> Above all, Catherine cannot come up with her own contribution, but reaches for her father's and brother's possessions and, finally, those of her maidservant, and she therefore takes command over other people's property. Incidentally, this custom was later condemned by Dominici in his *Regola del governo di cura familiare*: 'Non piace a Dio sacrificio di rapina; ne che tu rubi i domestici per dare a gli strani' ('Robbed sacrifice does not please God, nor does it please God when you deprive your servants to give to foreigners')<sup>81</sup>. What prevents Catherine from giving away any

<sup>79</sup> Compare Cordelia Warr, 'Clothing, Charity, Salvation and Visionary Experience in Fifteenth Century Siena', *Art History*, 27 (2004), 186–211. Similar symbolic connections between charity and garment can be found in the Arena Chapel, see Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona, "'Ave charitate plena": Variations on the Theme of Charity in the Arena Chapel', *Speculum*, 76 (2001), 599–637.

<sup>80</sup> In a different context, Bernardino da Feltre points out that there was hardly more to be expected from a donor: '[...] Dicit ille pauper: – Vellem, domini subveniretis mihi de pane, vino et vestitu etc – Dicit ille: O tu dimandi troppo, non possum facere tot. Ego subveniam de pane, trova alios qui tibi subveniant de alijs. Si das vinum non das panem, si panem non vestitum, si etc., non das denarios ad solvendum debita, medicinas etc. [...]'. Bernardino da Feltre, *Sermoni del beato Bernardino Tomitano da Feltre nella redazione di fra Bernardino da Brescia*, ed. by Carlo Varischi, 3 vols (Milan: Renon, 1964), II, Sermon 57, p. 206.

<sup>81</sup> Giovanni Dominici, *Regola del governo di cura familiare*, ed. by Donato Salvi (Florence: Angiolo Garinei, 1860), Introduction, p. viii; on the sermon in Siena after 1380, p. 123.



more of her clothing is her refusal to be indecently exposed. Even though her public appearance without wearing a coat was indecent but acceptable, her visible nakedness would never have been socially tolerable. Having obviously acted according to God's wish, Catherine is rewarded with a vision. She will, in return, receive a robe from Christ, which protects her henceforth from all climatic rigours.

Compared to Martin, who shared his garment with men, or Margaret, who donated her clothes to other women, Catherine's gift overcomes the gender boundary. A gendered discourse is implicit to the situation insofar as Catherine appears as a bride of Christ who dresses her groom. However, the urging plea of the male beggar, trying to disrobe the female saint, bears a distinct sexual dimension, which at least one picture seems to visualize.

Around 1480, Pietro di Francesco Orioli depicted this event from the life of Catherine on a predella (Figure 78).<sup>82</sup> In this case the scene has another importance because it is not one episode in a cycle of the life of St Catherine, but the one that was chosen to represent her among other saints, who are depicted

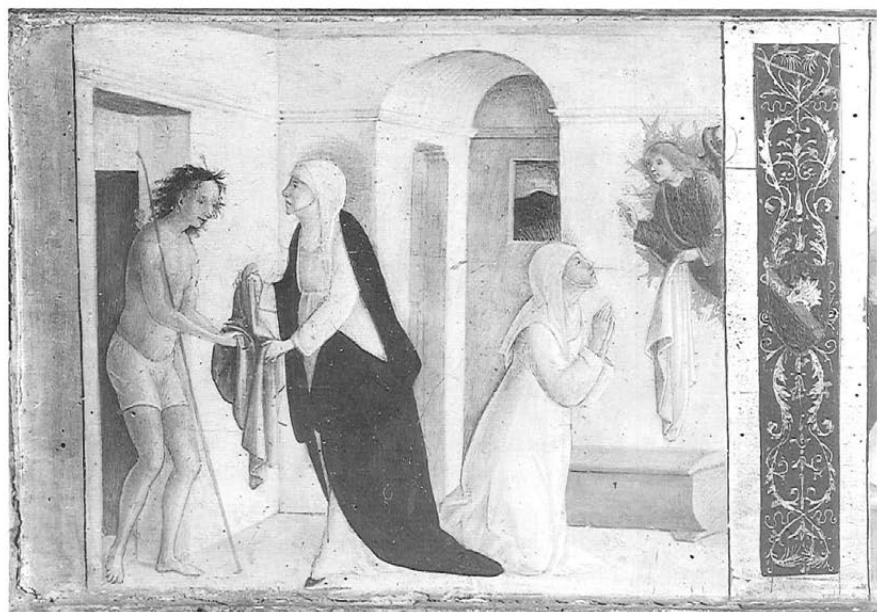


Figure 78. Pietro di Francesco Orioli. St Catherine gives her vest to a beggar, Christ returns it to her, Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale. 1480.

<sup>82</sup> Tempera on panel, dimensions of the whole predella 35.5 × 218 cm. See Pietro Torriti, *La pinacoteca nazionale di Siena. I dipinti* (Genova: Sagep Editrice, 1990), pp. 346–48.

on the other panels of the predella. Giovanni di Paolo's altar served as a model for the composition, but in reverse. Again, two events occur simultaneously inside one room, which Orioli has now transformed into a residential house, as identified by the architecture and by a prominently placed chest that probably refers to the clothes chest filled with her father's and brother's shirts, as described in the *Vita*. Orioli transforms the scene from a public place to a private one, which instils into the scene a different kind of intimacy. The beggar, without any resemblance to Christ, is naked to his underpants, his body shows no sign of sickness, and one cannot help but perceive him as an attractive young man. St Catherine does not seem to find the beggar tempting in any way, although perhaps her temptation lies behind her hasty contribution of clothes. The right side of the panel reveals the kneeling St Catherine experiencing another vision of Christ who is surrounded by cherubim. However, he does not display the usual Christ-like facial features, but looks more angelic. He presents her with a white robe that neither resembles the greyish material that Catherine gave the beggar, nor does it resemble the robe taken from Christ's wound described in the legend.

This representation explicitly ignores the fact that, according to the text, St Catherine had already given her garment to the beggar in the church. Therefore, the beggar could have already worn it when he was at her front door. The topical portrayal of the beggar demands a meagre garment or no garment at all. By exhibiting the beggar in tight underpants, Pietro di Francesco Orioli alludes to the sexual attraction that can coincide with the appearance of a naked young man. Comparing the composition in the painting of San Sisto Vecchio in Rome with Orioli's, Christ's counter-gift does not have such an important role in the composition of the image, and, as in the panel by Giovanni di Paolo, here the artist does not represent the cloth emerging from Christ's side wound. The Sienese paintings of the Quattrocento merely present the divine character of the appearance itself, but do not emphasize the miraculous character of the robe.

This episode has a counterpart, especially in its pictorial representation by Giovanni di Paolo. At the beginning of her religious career, Catherine was in doubt about which order to join. She had a vision in which many different founders appeared, including Dominic, whom she recognized from his lily; he handed her the habit of the Order.<sup>83</sup> Giovanni di Paolo depicts the saint kneeling

<sup>83</sup> '[...] About this time, the desire which this holy virgin had had of a long time to put on the habit of St Dominick, began to increase in her heart, daily more and more, for the accomplishment whereof she ceased not by day and by night to offer up her humble prayers

before an altar, above which St Francis, St Augustine, and St Dominic appear in a cloud formation, the latter handing down the habit.<sup>84</sup> The story around the robe consists of two phases comparable to the legend of St Margaret, not in the sense of an increase of penitence, but rather of consistent development of a saintly life. First, the saint receives the habit of the order and so, having passed the test of donating clothes, receives the gift of a miraculous robe from Christ.

The specific feminine discourse of clothing, which is connected to the representation of sinfulness and already appears as a theme in the context of Margaret of Cortona, is also taken up in the *Vita* of St Catherine. The relevant episode, which takes place in the saint's youth, constitutes a development of the gift of clothing from the side wound. Raimundo da Capua reports:

One time she [Catherine] was praying before an image of the Crucifixion, when the evil fiend suddenly came between them. He held a silk robe in his hands, which he wanted to slip over her. Of course she gave him the cold shoulder and only laughed at him.

Nevertheless, Catherine remained subject to a great temptation for beautiful clothes, and she implored Christ to stand by her in this temptation. Thereupon the Mother of God appeared to her, and:

and supplications to Almighty God, who liked well of her request, and granted the same: therefore, for her better assurance and comfort, sent her this strange and evident vision. Being, on a time, asleep, it seemed that she saw divers and sundry of the fathers and founders of the rules of religion; and among them she saw St Dominick, whom she knew well enough by a white lily that he held in his hand, which lily seemed to her to be all in a bright fire, as the bush was that Moses saw, which burned and consumed not. Those fathers willed her to choose some of their rules, in the which she might lead her life and serve God with the greater merit. She cast her eyes upon S. Dominick, and turned herself wholly to him, who, likewise, came towards her, bringing in his hand the habit of the sisters commonly called the sisters of penance of St Dominick, and said to her: "Daughter", said he, "be of good comfort, and dread no peril; for it is certain thou shalt receive this apparel and wear it". The which words were so comfortable unto her, that she wept for joy, and gave most humble thanks to the Almighty God, and to the patriarch St Dominick. And so, with the force of tears gushing out of her eyes, she awakened and came to herself again'. Kaftal, *St Catherine in Tuscan Painting*, p. 36.

<sup>84</sup> For the painting of Giovanni di Paolo, see *Painting in Renaissance Siena*, ed. by Christiansen and others, pp. 224–25. Furthermore, Neroccio di Landi (1447–1500) and Beccafumi (1514–1515) illustrated the theme. See illustrations in Kaftal, *St Catherine in Tuscan Painting*, pp. 36–41. For the problem of the religious habit see also Cordelia Warr, 'Religious Habits and Visual Propaganda: The Vision of the Blessed Reginald of Orléans', *Journal of Medieval History*, 28 (2002), 43–72.

she seemed to pull from the side of her crucified son a most beautiful garment that she had decorated with shimmering and sparkling precious stones with her own hands, and then she draped Catherine with it, saying, 'My Daughter, you should know that these robes, which emanated from the side of my son, surpass all other clothing in their beauty and ornament'. At that point, all of her temptations disappeared, and the virgin remained greatly consoled and strengthened.<sup>85</sup>

This story concerns a miraculous image of a special sort: not Christ, but rather a crucifix becomes the source of the divine garment. With the precious stones set in place by Mary herself, this fabric must surpass the beauty of silk in order to divert the young Catherine from her worldly temptation. The event becomes, in fact, a contest of fabrics, perhaps corresponding to the young girl's imaginative world captured by earthly materials — precious stones and silk, but not the blood of Christ.

### Conclusion

The donation of clothing as a godly act of *Misericordia* is a central aspect in the lives of all three saints presented here. However, when compared, the genesis and the inner dynamics of these legends must be taken into consideration. In contrast to St Martin, an early Christian male saint whose biography was composed by Sulpicius Severus as early as the fourth century, the two female saints belong to a different era, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, respectively. Innovative religious movements characterize these latter eras. Varied forms of mystical divine experiences, such as the episodes recounted here, took place during this time, particularly in the context of female religiosity. Moreover, due to their gender, the female saints were subject to other social conventions.

The images themselves pose different problems. In fifteenth-century imagery, St Martin's donation must be considered an emblematic iconography with a long, European-wide tradition, whereas the representations of the gifts of the female saints appear to be rather isolated cases. It is probably no coincidence that these scenes are hardly accounted for, or are even avoided in the artistic representations of their *vitae*.<sup>86</sup> The cloak-dividing St Martin, however, has been

<sup>85</sup> *Die Legenda Maior (Vita Catharinae Senensis)*, ed. by Jungmayr, III, Chapter 6, p. 402; see also pp. 556–57.

<sup>86</sup> This can be assumed on the basis of secondary literature, including the material on St Catherine collected by Lidia Bianchi and Diega Giunta in *Iconografia di S. Caterina da Siena*, 2 vols (Rome: Città nuova, 1988–2002); which tellingly does not include this episode at all. In

the subject of a remarkably extensive production of visual representations in all media, which even continues today, and additionally, he has been repeatedly chosen as a model for male protagonists. The most famous example is St Francis who, according to the legend, gave his robe to an impoverished knight. Here, too, the episode takes place before a personal religious conversion: having recovered from a long illness, the merchant's son had just received freshly tailored and elegant clothing when he met the noble but poor knight. Moved by pity, Francis gave him his new clothes. 'Therefore', according to Bonaventura, 'he committed two Works of Mercy, first, by covering the noble knight's nakedness and, second, by helping a poor man in his misery'.<sup>87</sup> But even a lesser-known personality such as the bishop Giovanni Tavelli da Tossignano, who died in 1446 and was later beatified, was described by his biographer as a 'vere novus Martinus'.<sup>88</sup> Regarding the saintly lives of Catherine and the penitent Margaret, their activities appear to be border cases that do not achieve a model character for further artistic representations. Furthermore, an episode from the *Vita* of St

*Catherine de Sienne* [exhibition. catalogue] (Avignon: Grande Chapelle du Palais des Papes, 1992), pp. 264–65, there are listed two examples from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In St Margaret's case the cult remained regionally confined and did not result in such a vast production of paintings.

<sup>87</sup> Bonaventura, *Legenda major*, Chapter I.2, in *Fontes franciscani*, p. 782: 'Et quia spirituali auditui dat intellectum inflicta vexatio, facta est super eum manus Domini et immutatio dexteræ Excelsi, diutinis languoribus ipsius corpus affligens, ut coaptaret animam ad sancti Spiritus unctionem. 3. Cumque, resumptis corporis viribus, sibi vestimenta decentia more solito praeprasset, obvium habuit militem quemdam generosum quidem, sed pauperem et male vestitum, 4. cuius pauperiem pio miseratus affectu, illum protinus, se exuto, vestivit, ut simul in uno geminum impleret pietatis officium, quo et nobilis militis verecundiam tegeter et pauperis hominis penuriam relevaret. III, 1. Nocte vero sequenti, cum se sopori dedisset, palatium speciosum et magnum cum militaribus armis crucis Christi signaculo insignitis clementia sibi divina monstravit, ut misericordiam pro summi Regis amore pauperi exhibitam militi praeostenderet incomparabili compensandam eats mercede. [...]'. Both scenes were illustrated by Giotto among others in San Francesco in Assisi.

<sup>88</sup> Guerrino Ferrarese, *Il Beato Giovanni Tavelli da Tossignano e la riforma di Ferrara nel Quattrocento*, 4 vols (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1969), IV, pp. 76–86, biografia 1446: '[...] cum secum loquentur, in camera sua supervenit leprosus ulceribus plenus, nuditate et mendicitate compassionabilis, et statim episcopus, arreptis post januam camerae de pissanella vestimentis suis, mendicam induit et dimisit, credens quod iret postea in pace. Conceptum sermonem cum terminare vellet, ipsis videntibus disparuit pauper, relictis vestimentis in terra. Omnes crediderunt quod Dominis noster Jesus Christus in forma leprosi ab eo vestitus sit'. The *Vita* of 1502 (p. 112), reports: '[...] unde clamide se exuens, qua erat indutus, illam pauperi sacerdoti pro Dei amore donavit [...]'].

Elisabeth provides a comparable case in northern Europe: she is rewarded for giving away her mantle by receiving a heavenly counter-gift; again, this episode appears seldom within a tradition of visual representation.<sup>89</sup>

Although the gifts and counter-gifts introduced through the three saints differ in terms of age and gender, I nevertheless want to close by pursuing a comprehensive approach that considers social conventions regarding clothes, as well as the network of anthropological and theological moments in the act of sharing clothes. In all three cases introduced here, clothing the naked, as a work of mercy, consists of donating one's own personal garment instead of any other plain item of clothing. This indicates that 'plain' clothing did not appear to be gender-specifically marked or perceived as such. Underwear was apparently the same for both sexes, since St Catherine hands her own undergarment, as well as a shirt-sleeve from her maidservant, to a male beggar. Giving away the coat damages the donor's outer appearance far more than relinquishing their underwear does. However, the handing away of underwear raises the problem of undressing, because the robes were usually pulled over the head. Corresponding scenes appear in the paintings depicting Christ entering Jerusalem, in which several of the welcoming folk greet Christ by laying their clothes before him,<sup>90</sup> or in a portrayal of domestic scenes, as in a painting by Gentile de Fabriano depicting St Nicolas' gift to three poor girls, where one of the maidens is undressing for bed.<sup>91</sup> Because the gift-giver is indecently exposed, the corresponding episodes in the life of the saints emphasize the retreat to a secluded area: Catherine enters the church and climbs the gallery,<sup>92</sup> and the

<sup>89</sup> Ivan Gerát: "Dei saturitas": St Elizabeth's Works of Mercy in the Medieval Pictorial Narrative', in *Insights and Interpretations: Studies in Celebration of the Eighty-fifth Anniversary of the Index of Christian Art*, ed. by Colum Hourihane, Occasional Papers, Index of Christian Art, 5 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 168–81. For one of the examples, an altar from Altenberg, painted in 1334, which shows this episode, see *Kunst um 1400 am Mittelrhein. Ein Teil der Wirklichkeit* [exhibition catalogue], ed. by Herbert Beck, Wolfgang Bech, and Horst Bredekamp (Frankfurt am Main: Liebieghaus Museum alter Plastik, 1975), pp. 136–38.

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, the corresponding fresco by Lippo Memmi in the Collegiata of San Gimignano, illustrated in Poeschke, *Wandmalerei*, p. 315, ill. 186.

<sup>91</sup> Predella panel of the Polyptych Quaratesi, Rome, Pinacoteca Vaticana.

<sup>92</sup> '[...] Retrogressaque ad capellam unde descenderat, tunicam quam sine manicis sub exteriori tunica propter frigus interius deferebat, per pedes socia iuvante deposuit, caute pariter & honeste [...]'. The printed version of 1477 in *volgare* describes, (in Chapter 3) the moving out of the 'gonella senza maniche' as follows: '[...] si line per i piedi aiutandola la sua compagna

bishop St Martin retires to a corner of the vestiary to disrobe himself for the beggar.

The act of sharing a garment might have been less unusual then it is today, because the continued and shared use of clothing was customary — and not only among the poorer classes — at least until the seventeenth century. A second-hand item of clothing would have been worn or used as material for new or altered garments, or even be used for different purposes.<sup>93</sup> However, only with the disavowal of one's own needs does the donation of clothing turn into a saintly act.

The fact that the gift moves away from the body gains special significance in the *vitae* of the saints. However, this might be due to the diverse anthropological constellations of meanings of the 'robe'. On the one hand, its functions as a matrix for the visualization of the social position, which is lost with the donation of the robe, as in the case with Martin, or which is transferred to the receiving character, as assumed in the case of the chequered robe of St Margaret. On the other hand, the idea of a close connection between clothing and its owner can be taken for granted, especially in a religious context. Healing powers are able to pass from its wearer onto the garment or the material, or, as in the case of Christ's healing of the woman with an issue of blood, the healing powers flow straight through the person.<sup>94</sup> Garments of the deceased saints or other venerated figures, sometimes impiously acquired, were preserved as relics. These relics were able to perform miracles. Metaphors also reflect the 'identification' of human being with robe, such as that which Job uses to describe himself as a righteous man: 'I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the

cautamente non dimeno honestamente [...]'.

<sup>93</sup> An example for a further usage of clothes, though in a prosperous middle-class setting, is presented in the will of Palla di Nofri Strozzi dating from 1447, who gives orders that all his clothes were to be sold, and with his '[...] lucco di vellutato in cremisi foderato d'ermellini, del quale mi contento che del vellutato si faccia una pianeta, che penso n'uscira. E la fodera si venda e del pregio si faccia il fregio e quello che si richiede alla detta pianeta, mediocre e non di molta spesa [...] E, facta che sarà decta pianeta, sia mandata alla chiesa di Sancta Trinità alla capella nostra nuova che Nofri mio padre lasciò si facesse'. Quoted by Roger Jones, 'Palla Strozzi e la sagrestia di Santa Trinità', *Rivista d'Arte: Studi documentari per la storia delle Arti in Toscana*, 27 (1984), 9–106 (doc. 139b, pp. 93–94).

<sup>94</sup> Concerning the woman with the issue of blood, see Gerhard Wolf, *Schleier und Spiegel. Traditionen des Christusbildes und die Bildkonzepte der Renaissance* (Munich: Fink, 2002), pp. 49–52, 81–82.



poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out' (Job 29. 14–16). The prayer that the priest uttered as he put on his liturgical vestments before celebrating mass probably refers to this passage.<sup>95</sup>

The act of donation becomes more significant in light of the metaphor of the robe, which has already been introduced in several theological contexts: the Latin word *investitura* ('clothing') was synonymous with joining an order; the image depicting the Virgin Mary with the 'protective cloak' ('Schutzmantelmadonna'), popularized by the Penitent Order and beginning in the thirteenth century, embodied the hope for advice and protection.<sup>96</sup> And the *Tunica Christi*, the holy seamless robe, which, according to the historical records, also enjoyed the admiration of Sultan Mehmed II, could be a symbol for the unity of the church.<sup>97</sup> Finally, yet as important, the Vera icon continued to occupy a prime

<sup>95</sup> See Braun, *Die liturgische Gewandung*, p. 716: 'Bekleide mich oh Herr, mit dem Gewand des Heils und umgib mich mit dem Kleid der Gerechtigkeit'. This kind of prayer ('Ankleidegebet') is documented from the tenth century until the end of the Middle Ages.

<sup>96</sup> There already existed forerunners in the Roman Votive iconography. See Belting-Ihm, 'Sub Marris Tutela', pp. 14–37.

<sup>97</sup> Compare Franz Babinger, 'Sultan Mehmed II. und ein heiliger Rock', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 108, n.s. 33 (1958), 266–78. According to the tradition of Fra Francesco da Soriano, the Turkish sultan worshipped the Virgin Mary, which, among other things, consisted of him wearing the seamless robe under his armour during the Bosnian crusade in 1463. The attempt to make a headdress of the sleeve strangely failed several times, whereupon he had the relic put in his chamber with a picture of the Virgin Mary, with a golden lamp burning in front of it at all times. Moreover, according to a document of 1457, the Venetian government wanted to take possession of the seamless robe after it had been smuggled from the fallen town of Constantinople by a Greek. Negotiations took place again ten years later, when he was thought to be on the Aegean island of Mytilini (Lesbos). However, this island had already been conquered in 1462 by Mehmed II, which meant that the *Tunica Christi* must have fallen into his hands. According to a later report, the sultan wanted to auction the seamless robe at the bazaar in Stambul in 1494, where a Venetian merchant offered 18,000 Zechinen. A courtier advised the Sultan against the sale, because the Venetians could obtain enough money from the public exhibition to drive the Ottomans out of Europe. Another document exists, reporting that the *Tunica Christi* was sent to Alexander VI in the context of the Djem affair, but that the messengers were plundered near Senigallia by Giovanni della Rovere. The seamless robe would have possibly reached Mantua this way, where parts of it are, in fact, worshipped. Different independent sources dating from before 1453 report that the *Tunica Christi* was kept in Constantinople as a relic. However, this is not the only holy robe. See Johannes Gildemeister and Heinrich von Sybel, *Der Heilige Rock in Trier und die zwanzig anderen heiligen ungenähten Röcke. Eine historische Untersuchung* (Düsseldorf: Buddens, 1844), as well as *Der heilige Rock zu Trier: Studien zur Geschichte und Verehrung der Tunika Christi*,

location in the Christian imagination. The Vera icon preserves the printed trace of Christ's face on the robe of a woman named Veronica, who was identified with the biblical Hämorrhöissa, a woman with an issue of blood, who was cured by touching the robe of Jesus.<sup>98</sup>

By using their bodies to enact merciful deeds, as Christ had, the saints could hope for the mercy of the 'eternal robe'. The counter-gift of a divine garment was inconsistent, and it could take different forms. The 'nakedness' of St Martin at mass, which was not yet a central theme with Sulpicius Severus but first recorded by Johannes Beleth in the twelfth century, is concealed merely for the exercise of his duties by divine intervention, avoiding in particular any kind of unworthy liturgical action. Although the divine counter-gift for St Catherine is permanent, it is tangible and visible only to her. Real materiality as proof of divine activity was rather suspicious, as another episode from St Martin's *Vita* demonstrates. Among the monks who followed him was Anatolius, who pretended to be a prophet and who finally dared to claim: 'Tonight, God will hand me a white robe from heaven, and I will be among you with this robe. This robe that I receive from the hand of God shall be a sign to you that I am a force of God'. That night, a loud noise came from his cell and, at last, Anatolius appeared with a robe that the brothers examined closely: 'It was exquisitely soft, brilliantly white and crimson; but material and weaving were difficult to determine'. Since the suspicion of devilish work arose, they decided to bring Anatolius and the matter before Martin: 'The unfortunate resisted with loud shouting; he claimed that he was not allowed to appear before Martin. He was forced, against his will, to leave. There, the robe vanished under the hands of the brothers who dragged him away. Surely, this miraculous force needs to be attributed to Martin since the devil could no longer conceal his illusion as soon as Martin laid eyes upon it'.<sup>99</sup>

The biographies of St Martin treat the problem of the gift and counter-gift rather briefly and focus on the act of charity, whereas the episode in the life of St Catherine develops a theological subject that goes beyond the physical act of being clothed and views the counter-gift as a promise of eternal life. The mystical experience of the saint is worth more than the 'donation of clothing', and the

ed. by Erich Aretz (Trier: Paulinus-Verl., 1995).

<sup>98</sup> For the identification of St Veronica with the Haemorrhöissa, see Wolf, *Schleier und Spiegel*, pp. 49–51, 81–82, 170–77.

<sup>99</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Sancti Martini*, 2nd Dialogue, 3, in 'Die Schriften des Sulpicius Severus', trans. by Bihlmeyer, pp. 47–48.

divine robe emerges as a metaphor for the salvation of the soul. The very eschatological orientation, which implicitly refers to the words of Matthew, maintains a connection to the social and economic context: the 'economy' of salvation and social ethics cannot be separated. It is the gift that upholds the cyclical exchange between 'rich' and 'poor' and, therefore also, between the human being and God.<sup>100</sup>

In the images analysed here, I have focused on the different artistic solutions for the visualization of the gift and the counter-gift, and of the mundane and divine material. Consequently, it remains to be said that the cloak-dividing episode of St Martin's *Vita*, in particular, features a wide range of variation regarding the representation of the robe. Artistic skills could ultimately be put to the test with this simple iconography, not least because the gift itself emerges as the plot and the material as the protagonist.

<sup>100</sup> Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. by W. D. Halls (New York: Norton, 1990), pp. 15–16: 'Alms are the result on the one hand of a moral idea about gifts and wealth and on the other of an idea about sacrifice. Generosity is necessary because otherwise Nemesis will take vengeance upon the excessive wealth and happiness of the rich by giving to the poor and the gods. It is the old gift morality raised to the position of a principle of justice; the gods and spirits consent that the portion reserved for them and destroyed in useless sacrifice should go to the poor and the children. Originally the Arabic *sadaka* meant, like the Hebrew *zedaga*, exclusively justice, and it later came to mean alms. We can say that the Mishnic era, the time of the victory of the Paupers at Jerusalem, begot the doctrine of charity and alms which later went round the world with Christianity and Islam. It was at this time that the word *zedaga* changed its meaning, since it does not mean alms in The Bible'.



## CLOTHING, EXPOSURE, AND THE DEPICTION OF SIN IN PASSION ICONOGRAPHY

Martha Bayless

In the medieval world, and particularly in the symbolic realms of art and literature, clothing was rarely trivial or meaningless, but instead was invested with significance. It often served, of course, as an indicator of social status or advertised the wearer's moral status; the unbelieving fool, for instance, could be identified in images by his particoloured clothing.<sup>1</sup> At times, however, the primary significance of clothing was more basic and even more meaningful; rather than revealing something about the wearer, it was important because of what it concealed: it veiled the body. Concealing the body — especially the private or 'shameful' parts — was important for cultural reasons, but even more so for theological reasons. To unveil the shameful body is to expose human sin and corruption: it is humiliating and hence laughable at best, and sinful and impious at worst.

The impious exposure of the shameful body is found in a range of media, from sermons to comic tales, from misericords to depictions of the Passion. One such story is told by the British satirist Walter Map in his *De Nugis Curialium*, a work of the 1180s. According to Map, King Henry II of England was riding out with a distinguished monk, one Dom Reric, when they spotted another monk walking along the road. The monk on the road tripped over a stone:

<sup>1</sup> On the clothing of fools see Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), and V. A. Kolve, 'God-denying Fools and the Medieval "Religion of Love"', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 19 (1997), 3–59.

[...] nec portabatur ab angelis tunc, et coram pedibus equi regii corruit; uentus autem uestes eius in collum propulit, ut domini regis et Rerici oculis inuitis manifesta fieret misera ueritas pudendorum. Rex, ut omnis faccie thesaurus, dissimulans uultum auertit, et tacuit. Rericus autem intulit secreto 'Maledicta religio que deuelat anum!'<sup>2</sup>

[...] nor was he borne up by angels [Psalm 90. 11–12], but fell before the feet of the king's horse. The wind forced his clothing up around his neck, so that the abject reality of his shameful parts was accidentally revealed to the lord king and Reric. The king, that treasurehouse of all courtesy, pretending not to notice, turned his face away and said nothing. Reric, however, said under his breath, 'Accursed the religion that unveils the backside!'

At first glance Reric's remark may seem like a throwaway quip to mask his embarrassment, but in fact the story bears considerable cultural weight: it forms an epitome of medieval thought about clothing, impiety, and the body. When the body is clothed and its shameful parts concealed, its owner is an upright man of religion; but when he is not in the company of angels he falls, and his bodily shame may be exposed and his religion undone. Map concludes the story by noting, 'Monachus tamen qui cecidit honestius surrexisset, si corporaliter clausus fuisset' ('Still, the monk who fell might have risen more honourably if his body had been concealed'). This is literally true, but true also in an allegorical sense, as Map surely intended: when humans, who have fallen through sin rise again, they do so best by abjuring, as much as possible, the shame of the body. Thus, as this story demonstrates, honour consists of keeping the body veiled; those who expose their shameful parts accidentally are dishonoured, and it goes without saying that those who might expose themselves willingly reveal themselves as entirely shameful.

Clothing as the veil of the shameful body is grounded in the authority of Scripture. When Adam and Eve eat of the forbidden fruit in Genesis 3, their sin makes them alert to and ashamed of their nakedness, and they devise clothing of fig leaves; later God creates clothes for them in Genesis 3. 20. Thus, from the earliest days nakedness was understood as shameful, and clothing as a response to that sin and shame. The very fact that nakedness was reprehensible implies that the body was a source of shame, and distrust of and contempt for the flesh also had scriptural support. 'It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing', says Jesus in John 6. 63. The theme was iterated at length in Romans 8. 5–13:

<sup>2</sup> Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles*, ed. and trans. by M. R. James, rev. by C. N. L. Brooke and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 102 (my translation).

For they that are according to the flesh, mind the things that are of the flesh; but they that are according to the spirit, mind the things that are of the spirit. For the wisdom of the flesh is death [...] And they who are in the flesh, cannot please God [...] For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die.

Augustine expressed a common medieval understanding of such passages when he wrote in his *De civitate Dei*:

[...] demonstrarem non corpus esse animae, sed corruptibile corpus onerosum. Unde illud est quod de scripturis nostris in superiore libro commemoravimus: *Corpus enim corruptibile adgravat animam*. Addendo utique *corruptibile* non qualicumque corpore, sed quale factum est ex peccato consequente vindicta, animam perhibuit adgravari (Book XIII, Chapter 16).

[...] it is not the body as such but a corruptible body that is burdensome to the soul. That is what lies behind the following statement that we quoted in the preceding book from our Scriptures: 'For the corruptible body is heavy upon the soul' [Wisdom 9. 15]. Surely, by adding 'corruptible' the sage meant that the soul was weighed down, not just by any sort of body, but by the body such as it became as the result of sin and consequent punishment.

The earthly body, then, corruptible and sinful, was the visible sign of Original Sin carried by every human. The sins of the flesh could be sexual, and the ungovernable lust which resulted from Original Sin is the focus of Augustine's exegesis of Genesis 3 in his *De civitate Dei* (Book XIV, Chapter 17). But non-sexual sin was also rooted in the flesh, as is made clear in Galatians 5. 16–25:

Dico autem spiritu ambulate et desiderium carnis non perficietis. Caro enim concupiscit adversus spiritum, spiritus autem adversus carnem. Haec enim invicem adversantur ut non quaecumque vultis illa faciatis [...] Manifesta autem sunt opera carnis quae sunt fornicatio, immunditia, luxuria, idolorum servitus, veneficia, inimicitiae, contentiones, aemulationes, irae, rixae, dissensiones, sectae, invidiae, homicidia, ebrietates, comestiones et his similia [...] Qui autem sunt Christi carnem crucifixerunt cum vitiis et concupiscentiis.

I say then, walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit; and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to another: so that you do not the things that you would [...] Now the works of the flesh are manifold, which are fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury, idolatry, witchcraft, enmities, contentions, emulations, wraths, quarrels, dissensions, sects, envies, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like [...] And they that are Christ's, have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences.

Corruption is hence the fundamental, defining quality of the earthly postlapsarian body; the flesh is weak and to be abjured. *Contemptus mundi* literature dwelt on the repugnant corruptibility and filth of the body to warn people away



from the carnal and towards things of the spirit.<sup>3</sup> Thus, for example, in the fifteenth-century dialogue *Der Ackermann aus Böhmen*, Death characterizes the body as:

an abomination, a veritable spawn, an offal tun, a wormwood, a stench house, a filthy swill tub, a putrid carcass, a mildewed canister, a sack without bottom, a poke full of holes, a flatulent bellows, a voracious gullet, a stinking glue-pot, an evil-smelling puncheon, a deceitful strawpuppet, an earthen still-room, a bottomless firebucket, and an alluringly painted tenement of clay.

Then, Death goes on to declare:

'May it be heard by whomsoever: Every roundly made man hath nine orifices in his body from which exudeth such loathesome and filthy dirt, the like of which can scarce be found elsewhere. Thou never layest eyes upon a man ever so handsome, that thou wouldst not shudder if thou hadst the eyes of a lynx and couldst see through his insides'.<sup>4</sup>

The repulsive decay of the flesh after death was also evoked repeatedly in literature, inviting the reader to regard the corruptibility as the essential feature of flesh, and the living body as a mere precursor to the dead one. In an example of the genre of the 'pilgrimage of the soul separated from the body', the Cistercian monk Guillaume de Digulleville described a scene in which the soul views its cast-off flesh:

Among several bodies there  
I saw my own  
Those bones that I once knew so well [...]  
Are you, said I, that evil body  
That very vile body, so filthy and so malodorous  
Meat for worms and vile putrefication,  
That horrible and ugly creature?<sup>5</sup>

Similar sentiments can be found throughout the medieval period. Echoing a staple of *contemptus mundi* literature, the *Ancrene Wisse* admonished readers:

<sup>3</sup> For many examples see Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture 13th–18th Centuries*, trans. by Eric Nicholson (New York: St Martin's Press, 1990), pp. 9–85.

<sup>4</sup> *Der Ackermann aus Böhmen*, ed. by Konrad Burdach, 2 vols (Berlin: Weidmann, 1926), II, p. 55; translation taken from Ernest N. Kirmann, *Death and the Plowman* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1958), p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Delumeau, *Sin and Fear*, p. 67, taken from T. Batiouchkoff, 'Le Débat de l'âme et du corps', *Romania*, 20 (1891), 1–55 and 513–78 (pp. 575–76).

Your flesh — what fruit does it bear in all its orifices? Amid the nobility of your face, which is the fairest part, between the taste of your mouth and the smell of your nose, do you not carry as it were two privy-holes? Are you not come from foul slime? Are you not a vessel of filth? Are you not worm's food? *Philosophus: Sperma es fluidum, vas stercorum, esca vermium.*<sup>6</sup>

The fifteenth century, in particular, saw a profusion of meditations on the carnal, exemplified by poetic debates such as the English *Disputacione betwyxt the Body and Wormes*.

The understanding of the body as the corrupt seat of sin was not merely theoretical, but served as the basis for punishments of crimes understood to have arisen from the body. Sin, it was assumed, arose not from the spirit, but from specific organs in the body. Treachery, for instance, was assigned an origin in the heart, lungs, and entrails. Beginning in the thirteenth century, English decrees stipulated that traitors should be disembowelled and have these organs cast out as both a symbolic and literal way of acknowledging those origins.<sup>7</sup> One prominent example of this is the execution of the Scots leader William Wallace, who was sentenced in 1305 to a series of punishments: drawing, hanging, beheading, and disembowelling: 'cor, hepar et pulmo et omnia interiora ipsius Willelmi, a quibus tam perversae cogitationes processerunt, in ignem mittantur et comburentur' ('may the heart, liver, lungs and all the innards of this man William, from which his evil thoughts arose, be thrown in the fire and burnt up').<sup>8</sup> Similar sentences, which specifically identified the heart and entrails as the wellsprings of sin, were passed on a number of others, among them the Welsh prince Dafydd ap Gruffydd in 1282, a knight, Gilbert of Middleton, in 1318, and Andrew de Harclay, the earl of Carlisle, in 1323.<sup>9</sup>

Scriptural history underlay and supported these literal manifestations of the understanding of the body. When Judas hanged himself, as recounted in Acts 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*, trans. and intro. by Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), pp. 149 and 384, n. 110.

<sup>7</sup> J. G. Bellamy, *The Law of Treason in England in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. by William Stubbs, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1882; repr. Wiesbaden: Kraus, 1965), I, p. 142.

<sup>9</sup> On Dafydd ap Gruffydd, see *Annales Monastici*, ed. by Henry Richards Luard, 5 vols (London: Longman, 1864–69), III, p. 294; on Gilbert of Middleton, see *Select Cases in the Court of the King's Bench*, ed. by George Osborne Sayles, 6 vols (London: Quaritch, 1936–71), IV, p. 78; on Andrew de Harclay, see *Abbreviatio Placitorum*, ed. by W. Illingworth (London: Eyre and Strahan, 1811), p. 351.

18, his bowels burst out, and medieval exegetes interpreted this as vitally connected to his treachery. The *Legenda Aurea* reflected these widespread views when it stated: 'It also was fitting that the bowels which had conceived the betrayal should burst and spill it out'.<sup>10</sup> The influential *Glossa ordinaria* concurred in identifying the entrails as the seat of deception and sin.<sup>11</sup> Dante used the same image in depicting Mohammed, understood as a traitorous unbeliever, in hell with his innards gaping perpetually open, shamefully exposing his entrails.<sup>12</sup> Further instances of this sort are extensive.

Although sin was inherent in the post-lapsarian body, as the above examples demonstrate, not all parts of the body were equally reprehensible. The body came to be regarded as a microcosm, sharing the polarities of the larger universe. In this conception, a hierarchy of virtue and sin was mapped onto the cosmos. God was at the height, the devil at the depths. As explained by the thirteenth-century *Imago mundi* of Gossoin of Metz:

Et li biens couvient aler contremont devant Dieu, qui est cler et purs et nez. Et li maus, qui est obscur et laiz et tenebreus seur toute rine, laist le bien et descent aval. Car ce couvient il par nature, ausi comme l'en voit de l'ordure du vin qui est mis el vaissel, que li laiz se depar du bel, si que li bons demeure en haut et la lie demeure au fonz.<sup>13</sup>

And good things must go upward before God, who is clear and clean and pure. And sin, which is obscure and foul and dark more than anything else, drops off from the good and descends. For so it works by nature, as we also see the ordure of the wine in the vessel, when the foul drops out from the pure, so that the good is at the top and the dregs settle at the base.

The medieval view of moral orientation is reflected in the Latin-derived English terms *superior* and *inferior*, which equate location with quality. The differing morality of the upper and lower halves of the body is nicely reflected in a widely

<sup>10</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 1, p. 169 (no. 45).

<sup>11</sup> *Patrologia cursus completus. Series Latina*, ed. by J.-P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Garnier, 1844–55), CXIV, cols 9–752 (col. 429).

<sup>12</sup> Noted by Tom Hill, 'The Evisceration of Bródir in *Brennu-Njáls Saga*', *Traditio*, 31 (1981), 437–44.

<sup>13</sup> *L'Imago du monde de Maître Gossoin* ed. by O. H. Prior (Lausanne: Payot, 1913), p. 61. Gossoin's *Imago mundi* is a redaction of a version of the twelfth-century *Imago mundi* of Honorius Augustodunensis.

circulating folktale of the later Middle Ages, in which Good and Evil share the same wife: Good has her top half, and Evil her lower half.<sup>14</sup>

This polarity between up and down had a counterpart in front/back, where the front is regarded as good and the rear as evil. (For these purposes, the medieval body was considered to be the head and the torso, with the limbs less important for positional symbolism.) With up opposed to down, and front opposed to rear, the body was effectively divided into four quadrants: up/front, up/back, down/front, and down/back. The head is the part of the body closest to heaven and thus the holiest, and it is the front of the head, the face, that is the most estimable part. Even the *Ancrene Wisse*, in its desire to show the body as repellant, acknowledged 'the nobility of your face, which is the fairest part'.

The lower rear is correspondingly regarded as the crudest, most debased, and animalistic part — literally and figuratively the lowest part of the body. As it happens, this is also where the contents of the sinful entrails make their exit, and so the association between the rear and sin is almost overdetermined. The rear was indubitably the realm of the devil. In Sulpicius Severus's *Life* of St Martin, the saint, exorcising a man possessed by the devil, refuses to let the devil come out of the man's mouth and instead compels it to come out his rear.<sup>15</sup>

Similar stories appear in every kind of literature. Another is offered by the Cornish *Ordinalia*, in which the power of Lucifer and his devils is depicted via their defecation, and they attempt to counter Jesus with their entrails and rears. Lucifer exhorts the devils:

'Push, O riffraff, blast your tripes! Or else you will get it hot and heavy since the plain truth is, [Jesus] robs us of our power each passing instant and will leave us, I am convinced, without the strength even to break wind'.<sup>16</sup>

If God was proper to the upper body and the devil to the lower, the Christian struggle was the struggle to keep the head paramount. To sin was to give way to the devilish lower body: sinners confound their moral polarities and are ruled by their inferior parts.

<sup>14</sup> Albert Wesselski, *Märchen des Mittelalters* (Berlin: Stubenrauch, 1925), pp. 171–72, no. 63; Frederic C. Tubach, *Index Exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales*, FF Communications, 86, no. 204 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1969), no. 1921.

<sup>15</sup> Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, ed. by Jacques Fontaine, Sources chrétiennes, 133–35, 3 vols (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1967–69), I, p. 290 (Chapter 17.5).

<sup>16</sup> *The Cornish Ordinalia*, trans. by Markham Harris (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1969), p. 171.

This formulation of sin is clearly useful as a shorthand for understanding the role of the body in sin, but it was also envisioned in a literal sense in both narrative and art. The fourteenth-century *Polychronicon* of Ranulph Higden, for instance, recounted the story of a servant of Julian the Apostate, who urinated into a communion cup while swearing an oath against Christ. In this blasphemous act the holy vessel, which should have been brought to the holiest part of a man (the head), was converted to a chamber pot, appropriate to the lower, sinful part of the body. For this confounding of polarities, 'repente os ejus versum est in anum ejus, et egestionis organum effectus est' ('his mouth was turned into his anus, and made into the organ of excretion').<sup>17</sup> The metaphorical reversal of hierarchies was literalized onto the flesh. The English *Alphabet of Tales* repeats the story, and made the reversal even more explicit: '& efter euer whils he liffid, all the filthe and the degestion of his bodie come out at his mouthe, & noght at his nache'.<sup>18</sup>

The interchange of mouth and anus also comes into play in the conventional insult in which the offensive person is asked to kiss the other's rear. This was often, no doubt, used merely as a cliché, but the symbolic value of such an interchange always lay behind such a formulation, and sanctions its appearance in contexts which modern sensibilities might find surprising. The motif appears, for instance, in a story about St Francis from the *I Fioretti di San Francesco*. Brother Ruffino of Assisi is troubled by an appearance of the Devil in the form of Jesus, who pronounced that both Brother Ruffino and St Francis were predestined to hell. St Francis advised the brother:

ma, quando il demonio ti dice piú: — To se' dannato —, e tu gli rispondi: — Apri la bocca, e mo vi ti caco, —<sup>19</sup>

but when the devil says to you again, 'You are damned', you answer him, 'Open your mouth and I will [empty my bowels] in it!'

The devil does reappear, and the brother does insult him with this formulation, sending the devil away in fury and consternation. The idea implies that the

<sup>17</sup> *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis*, ed. by Joseph Rawson Lumby, 9 vols (London: Longman, 1985–86), v, p. 170.

<sup>18</sup> *An Alphabet of Tales: An English 15th Century Translation of the Alphabetum Narrationum of Etienne de Besançon*, ed. by Mary MacLeod Banks, Early English Text Society, 126–27 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1904–05), p. 467, no. 696; Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, no. 2882.

<sup>19</sup> *I Fioretti di San Francesco*, ed. by Mario Ruffini (Turin: Paravia, 1953), p. 103 (Chap. 29).

devil's mouth is at the same moral level as the anus of a righteous person; the devil has, in effect, had the structure of his body inverted: his front is equivalent to his back, his upper half equivalent to his lower. This iconographical arrangement was reflected in a variety of representations. In Michael Pacher's fifteenth-century depiction of St Wolfgang with the Devil, for instance, the Devil has a fully formed face in his rear, with his tail as its nose and his anus as his mouth.<sup>20</sup> The hundreds of images showing the devil with a face on the lower parts of his anatomy are surely in the same tradition. Another pictorial analogue of the *Polychronicon* of Ranulph Higden, for example, combines the diabolical lower anatomy with the anatomical inversion of the sinner. Dürer's *Ritter vom Turn*, on the other hand, depicts the devil showing his rear to the vain maiden, his anatomy graphically exposed and his hand on his buttocks in the conventional gesture of mooning. The maiden combs her hair in the mirror but, as a token of her vanity, the mirror shows not her face but the devil's rear, as if her beautiful yet sinful face has been inverted and lowered, through her sin, to the devil's behind.

Showing one's buttocks, then, was not merely the crude gesture it is today, but a crude gesture that could bear a specifically anti-religious sentiment. This religious meaning is demonstrated in a number of medieval anecdotes about sinners who declared their contempt for holiness by exposing their buttocks. The motif appears as early as the late sixth century: the *Vita* of St Paternus of Avranches recounts the story of a sinful woman who showed her bottom to the saint.<sup>21</sup> The *Vita* of St Emmeram of Regensburg has a similar incident, in which a woman, 'raising her clothing, displayed her posterior to the saint, behaviour which God on no account allows to go unpunished'. The thirteenth-century chronicler Salimbene de Adam described the rash actions of a chronic sinner, Alberigo da Romano, who was so angry at the loss of his falcon that 'he pulled down his pants and showed his bottom to God as a sign of reproach, insult, and mockery, thinking to take vengeance on God in this way'.<sup>22</sup>

In each instance, simply pointing the rear at God would be unmistakable as an insult, but in every case the sinner also removes his clothes and unveils his bottom. It is the fleshliness, the disgusting material corruptibility exemplified by

<sup>20</sup> Now in the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlung; it is reproduced in, for example, Robert Hughes, *Heaven and Hell in Western Art* (New York: Stein and Day, 1968), p. 256.

<sup>21</sup> *Acta sanctorum*, April, II, p. 424, cols 1–2.

<sup>22</sup> Salimbene de Adam, *Cronica*, ed. by Giuseppe Scalia, 2 vols (Bari: Laterza, 1966), anno 1250 (my translation).

the rear, as well as the rear itself, that confronts God: the most impure of impure flesh against God's pure spirit. Although revealing the rear is the most egregious insult to God, the unveiling of other lower or more carnal parts of the body has a similar effect; they are offensive in their very carnality. Erasmus's conduct manual for boys spelled this out:

A well-bred person should always avoid exposing without necessity the parts to which nature has attached modesty. If necessity compels this, it should be done with decency and reserve, even if no witness is present. For angels are always present, and nothing is more welcome to them than modesty, the companion and guardian of decency.<sup>23</sup>

The pervasive understanding of the lower body as the seat of sin, and as the emblem of the triumph of carnality over reason, found pictorial expression in a number of religious images of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In these paintings Christ or another religious figure is tormented by sinners and fools (the two being essentially equivalent), and the purity of the holy figure is contrasted with the base and carnal sin of the tormentors. The sinners believe, of course, that their reason has not been corrupted, but the painting exposes and displays their unwitting carnality for all to observe. Through comparison of the numerous paintings using this iconography, we can see that such images were not invented by individual artists from more abstract conceptions of bodily corruption, but were understood and circulated widely as a specific motif of sinful carnality. Such images also drew on the common habit of depicting labourers with their trousers sagging to reveal their bottoms, but situates these labourers in a meaningful religious context

The motif is most common in depictions of the Passion, a type of image stocked with conventional elements. Among these is the depiction of Christ's persecutors as physically repellent, with unattractive colouring, irregular physiognomy, and faces distorted by anger and cruelty. Ruth Mellinkoff has drawn attention to the significance of these depictions, which mark the subjects out as sinners.<sup>24</sup> A similar task is performed by the clothing, which unveils the body and the fleshliness of evil-doers, and signifies their moral corruption and the carnal foundations of sin. Like the characteristics analysed by Mellinkoff, these features appear widely in late medieval and Renaissance religious art, both in paintings of the Passion and in representations of other Biblical persecutions, such as the beheading of John the Baptist. In each case, a prominent figure or

<sup>23</sup> From Erasmus, *De civilitate morum puerilium*, cited by Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), pp. 130 and 277.

<sup>24</sup> See Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*.



number of figures, often in the foreground, wear clothes which gape open in an unseemly manner, exposing the basest parts of the anatomy, often the rear. A variant of this depiction keeps the sinner fully clothed, but emphasizes the rear in other ways, typically with a swathe of white cloth draped over the body, or with a trick of the light that makes the nether regions appear shiny and effectively naked.

An excellent early example of the motif is a depiction of the Carrying of the Cross, dating from *c.* 1400 to *c.* 1430 (Figure 79). Although Christ is ostensibly



Figure 79. Master of the Worcester Panel. Carrying of the Cross (tempera on panel), Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago. Bavaria, *c.* 1400–30.

the centrepiece of the image, there is a second focal point: a soldier, who is partially blocking the observer's view of Christ. The soldier has his back to the viewer and his trousers are sagging down from the rear like a small child's pajama bottoms. The insides of the trousers are white, so that the details stand out in the picture, and in addition the soldier is wearing an item which can only be white underwear, just hinted at in the sagging of the trousers. A glimpse of the cheeks of the soldier's buttocks is also in view. Both flesh and undergarments are therefore exposed, revealing what should be hidden, and indeed, are foregrounded in the picture, becoming an essential part of the soldier's torment of Christ as he pulls him through the streets. Christ's own body is largely obscured by the darkness of the drapery covering him. Although Christ's ordeal is the nominal subject of the picture, the sinfulness of those tormenting him is emphasized above the personal experience of Christ. The foregrounded soldier has wound around himself the rope with which he is pulling Christ, but he appears oblivious to the fact that his pants are exposing his rear. His clothing makes clear the notion that he, like all sinners, is so preoccupied with his business that he cannot perceive that his carnality has been exposed. But, although he is oblivious to his base appearance, to the onlooker it is the most obvious thing about him.

A further example of the motif appears in a *Flagellation of Christ*, painted by a northern German artist, the Master of the View of St Gudule, in the second half of the fifteenth century (Figure 80). Here the tormentor to Christ's left has trousers that are again gaping open in the back, revealing a swathe of white shirt and the white lining of the trousers themselves — an unlikely lining for trousers, and hence a deliberate choice by the artist in order to emphasize the fact that the trousers have come open. In addition, the trousers have a hole at the left knee, exposing the knee itself, and the man's shoe has worn out and exposes his toes. (The fact that he is not merely wearing sandals is suggested by the condition of the other shoe, which appears to be intact.) Of the four tormentors in the picture, it is this man whose appearance most vividly represents his sinful nature; whereas the others have fairly conventional facial features, the features of this man are also rough and ugly, with a nose resembling that of a pig, as well as being framed by dirty and untidy fabric tied around his head. The clothes on the lower half of his body expose the flesh beneath in all its bony ugliness: toes, a knee, and a glimpse of the man's buttocks, highlighted by the whiteness of the cloth that exposes it. The tattered and gaping qualities of the clothes underline the fact that they fail to cover what they are meant to; instead, the man's flesh is visible through the rents and gaps, and is thus illegitimately exposed. The most

prominent gap is that at the man's bottom: his carnal, degraded nature is quite clearly on display.

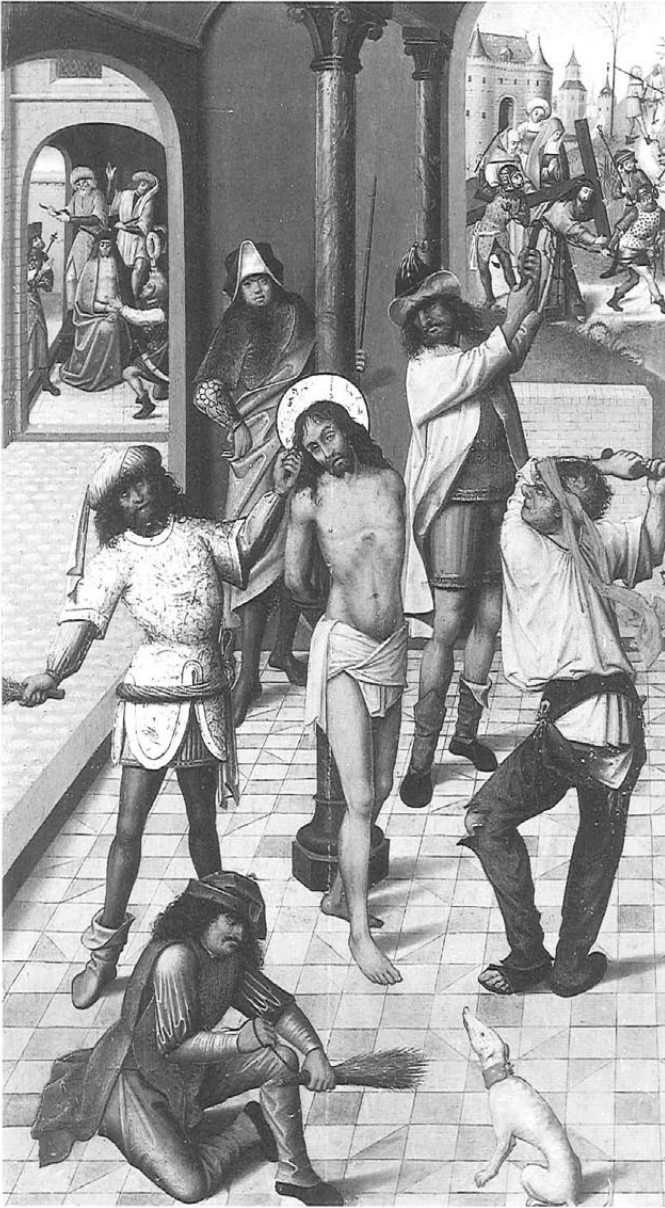


Figure 80. Master of the View of St Gudule. Flagellation of Christ (oil on panel), Winnipeg, Winnipeg Art Gallery. Northern Germany, c. 1480–1500.

A similar iconographic scheme is apparent in a depiction of the Crowning with Thorns, a panel of the altarpiece at Melk Monastery, painted by Jörg Breu the Elder around 1502 (Figure 81). In this depiction, Christ is surrounded by five tormentors. Two in the back are wearing clothing with ornamental slashes: unexceptional garb, except that the white underlayer of clothing shows most distinctly at the armpits of each soldier, a bodily area that emphasizes the odorous and corrupt aspects of fleshliness. The two soldiers in the foreground



Figure 81. Jörg Breu the Elder. Crowning with Thorns (from altarpiece), Melk Monastery. *c.* 1502.

evinced even greater evidence of their bodily nature. The soldier to the viewer's right has a white swathe of cloth draped over his rear, contrasting starkly with the darkness of his remaining attire, and highlighting his bottom. Where he is lean, the soldier to the left is stout and fleshy, his body spilling from his clothes. He is wearing a tunic which seems to have burst its buttons, and it gapes open over his stomach, revealing a navel so prominent that it seems to rivet the viewer's gaze. The navel is a stark reminder of corrupt birth and the death of the material body; it may serve as a contrast to the nipple of Christ's breast, also prominent, which partakes of the tradition of the nurturing Christ, the giver of life.<sup>25</sup> The soldier's tunic only reaches halfway down his fat thighs, and his sleeves are rolled up to reveal his substantial arms, both again in contrast with the lean legs and arms of Christ. The man's sinful nature is also exposed in his face, which he himself distorts by pulling his mouth into a taunting grimace, as final evidence that his sin is deliberate. The clothing of these four tormentors, then, exposes their sinful, bodily, and irrational nature in a variety of ways, showing that their corrupt corporeality has become paramount in their lives.

The Crowning with Thorns is also the subject of a miniature from the Homeot Hours, painted in Cologne in the late fifteenth century. A fool kneels in front of Jesus with his hand in the unmistakable mooning position, gathering a great wad of fabric to his backside, which he overemphasizes in the manner of a Victorian lady wearing a bustle. Although his backside is pointed toward Christ, his top half has turned around in an anatomically-impossible way so that he can jeer and strike Jesus with a stick, in a stunningly literal instance of the bodily reversal exhibited by sinners.

Other scriptural subjects use the same motifs. Rogier van der Weyden's *Beheading of John the Baptist* (the right wing of the St John the Baptist altarpiece, c. 1454, Figure 82) foregrounds a sinful bottom with its scarlet covering swinging open exuberantly, on much the same level as the Baptist's plattered head. Here the dramatic unveiling of the lower body, so prominent in the picture, expresses the sinful blasphemy behind the decapitation, exposed to both the viewer and to John the Baptist himself. In the *Beheading of St John the Baptist* by the Master of Freising Neustift (c. 1480–90), the severed head has rolled to the right while the executioner stands central to the picture, his tightly-clad bottom bulging at his leggings and displayed toward the viewer.<sup>26</sup> The leggings are the only pale

<sup>25</sup> On Christ as maternal figure see Caroline M. Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

<sup>26</sup> The picture is printed in Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, no. VIII.14.

area of the picture, bringing the viewer's attention to the form of his behind, which is further emphasized by the conventional hand at his buttock.

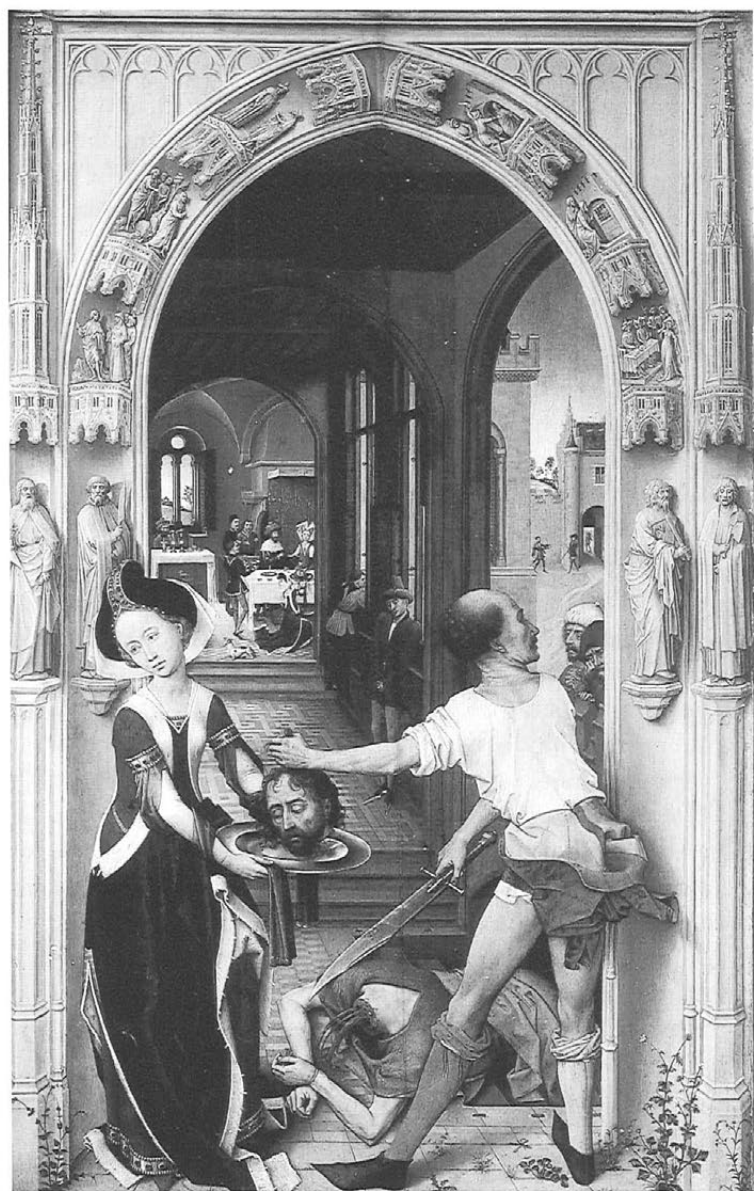


Figure 82. Rogier van der Weyden. Beheading of John the Baptist (right wing of the St John Altarpiece, oil on panel), Berlin, Staatliche Museen. *c.* 1454.



A similar schema appears in the Crucifixion of the Hamburg Master (c. 1500), in which the Roman soldier at the foot of the cross, again with distorted face and this time wearing a jester's collar, has his hand to his rear in the now easily recognisable sign of 'reproach, insult, and mockery'.<sup>27</sup> In the *Ecce homo* of Jörg Ratgeb (1514), the soldier central to the picture, looking up at Christ, is wearing threadbare short leggings, highlighted to a high gloss, with the perfectly round globule of one buttock and the separation of the two buttocks so emphasized that the soldier's bottom appears effectively naked.<sup>28</sup> An even more pronounced version of this same effect appears in the Crucifixion by Maarten Van Heemskerck (1543) (Figure 83).<sup>29</sup> A sinful figure at the foot of the cross, separated in space from the pious figures to the other side, is semi-recumbent, holding on to the base of the thief's cross; his top half is in shadow, as befits a sinner who has abandoned reason, virtue, and the relative purity of the upper half of the body. By contrast, his lower half is brightly lit, with the buttocks so graphically defined that it again seems as if the figure is naked, an exemplar of the base carnality that spurns redemption even in the presence of the saviour. A similarly striking fifteenth-century manuscript illumination shows Roman soldiers surrounding Jesus; two of them are unmistakably wearing no trousers, and one, his leg raised to kick Christ, displays his white underwear — surely an instance of the symbolic taking precedence over the historical.<sup>30</sup>

The prevalence of the theme demonstrates that artists of the Middle Ages and Renaissance understood the motif of the 'naked' lower body as a conventional device to mark out sinners and show, as publicly and graphically as the disembowelling of traitors, the carnal origins of the sinners' malevolent deeds. The baser parts of the anatomy are thus central to these images, both literally and figuratively. Far from adding a crude element to a sacred subject, they depict the realities of sin, rooted in the body, at the most important moment in scriptural history, when sinners exposed the full corruption of their bodies, and hence of their actions, to the purity of Christ.

<sup>27</sup> Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, no. III.44.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, no. VII.39.

<sup>29</sup> Stedelijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent.

<sup>30</sup> The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 135 E 19, fol. 62<sup>v</sup>.



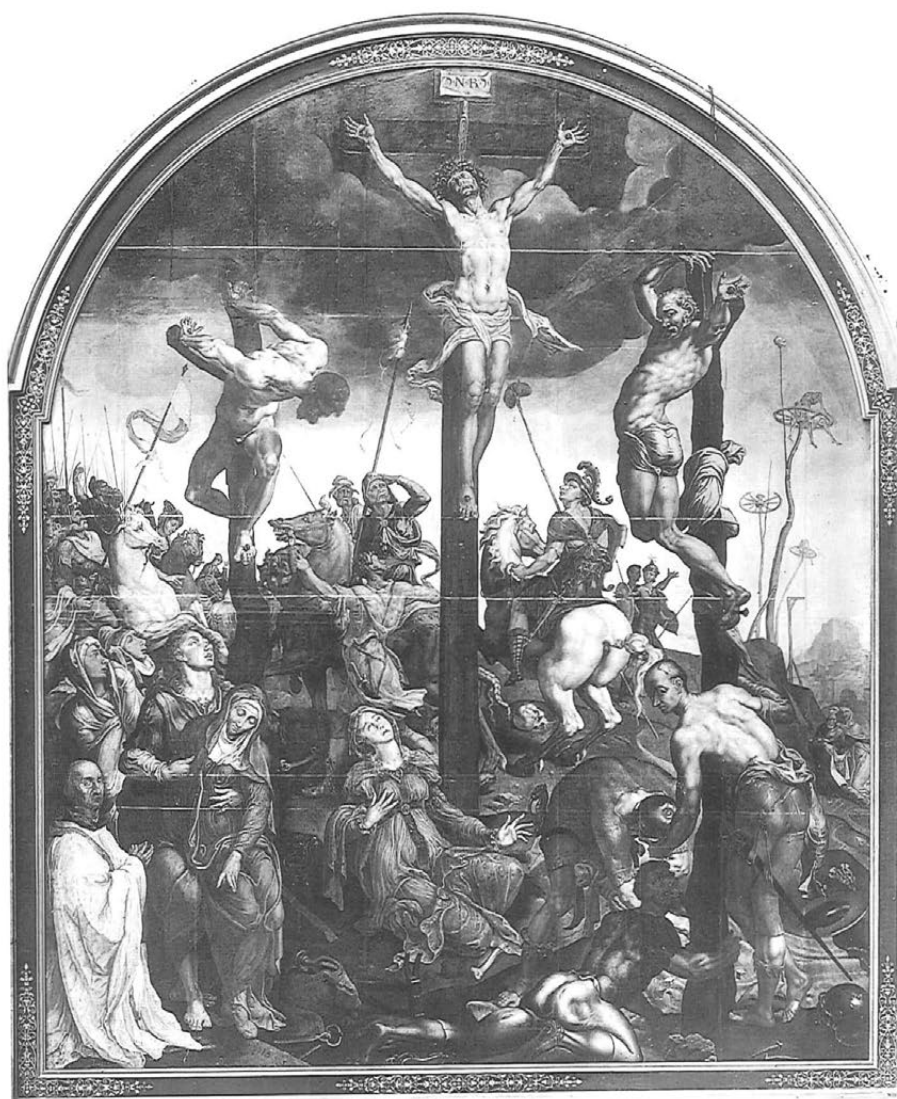


Figure 83. Maarten van Heemskerck. Crucifixion, Ghent, Stedelijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten. 1543.

## SWADDLED OR SHROUDED? THE INTERPRETATION OF 'CHRY SOM' EFFIGIES ON LATE MEDIEVAL TOMB MONUMENTS\*

Sophie Oosterwijk

Clothes are normally indicators not only of gender and status but also of age, yet there were two periods when most medieval people shared the same textile covering, regardless of gender: swaddling after birth, and a shroud after death. Whereas winding sheets constituted the body's final cover, swaddling clothes were what medieval infants would wear after their successful delivery and first bath: rich and poor babies alike were swaddled for the first few weeks or even months of life. For artists in the later Middle Ages, swaddled cocoons with only the face left bare were *the* way to denote children in the earliest stage of infancy, and this came to apply particularly to the commemoration of dead infants on tomb monuments.

There are many misconceptions about the exact meaning of the term 'chry som', which is generally used in English to describe the figure of a swaddled infant, in particular on brasses and other tomb monuments. Since the ancient custom of bandaging babies in strips of cloth rapidly disappeared in most of Western Europe in the wake of the Enlightenment, the image of a tightly swaddled infant has come to have an alienating effect on modern viewers.<sup>1</sup> In order to understand what a chry som effigy actually signifies, it is vital to

\* This essay is a revised version of an earlier article entitled 'Chrysoms, Shrouds and Infants on English Tomb Monuments: A Question of Terminology?', published in *Church Monuments*, 15 (2000), 44–64.

<sup>1</sup> Julian Franklyn, *Brasses* (London: Arco, 1964), p. 32, refers to brasses 'commemorating infants and chrysoms which, to the uninitiated, appear like Egyptian mummies.'

understand the nature and function of swaddling. This essay will therefore focus on two aspects relevant to the medieval 'icon' of the chrysom: the custom of swaddling and the sacrament of baptism, with additional attention paid to purification, confirmation, and burial. However, it will first be necessary to take an initial look at a few chrysom figures on tomb monuments and at the way they are usually described.

### *The Traditional Interpretation of Chrysom Effigies*

The brass of Elyn Bray at Stoke D'Abernon in Surrey has often been used in studies of monumental brasses as an illustration of a typical chrysom effigy of the late medieval period (Figure 84). It shows the baby girl tightly swaddled with



Figure 84. 'Chrysom' brass of Elyn Bray (d. 1516) with a cross on her head, Stoke D'Abernon, Surrey.

narrow bands around the cloth that covers her from top to toe, leaving only her face exposed; her eyes are open and the cloth on the crown of her head features a cross. The English epitaph below her wrapped feet contains a conventional request to pray for the soul of this daughter of Sir Edward Bray and his wife Jane. The mention of the girl's name indicates that she must have been baptized, but otherwise the epitaph only gives us the date of her death: 16 May 1516. Images of such swaddled cocoons with their characteristic criss-cross bands appear to have developed into a form of artistic shorthand for medieval artists and viewers alike: easy to depict, and just as easy to understand.<sup>2</sup> The Christ child is also often found thus in earlier medieval art, lying swaddled in his manger in Nativity scenes, often disproportionately large or even elongated, and frequently covered in criss-cross bands, as we can see in the Nativity panel from the thirteenth-century jubé at Chartres Cathedral (Figures 85 and 86). Chrysombrasses and effigies became more common from the late fifteenth

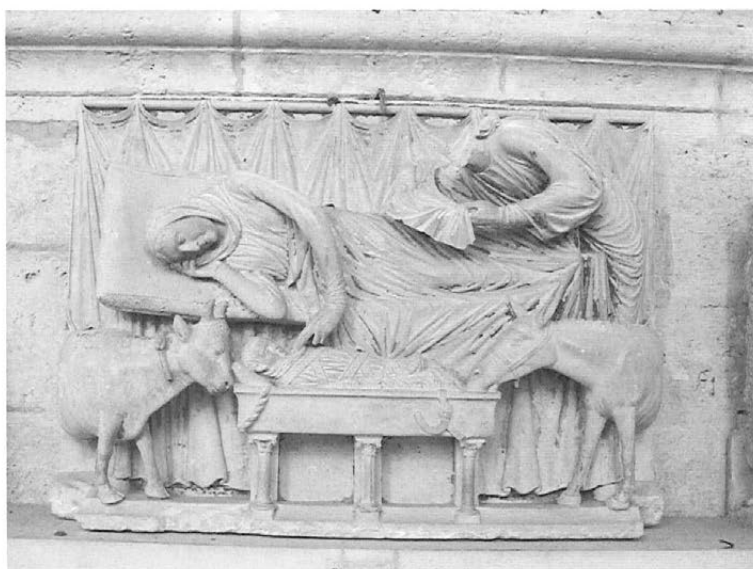


Figure 85. Nativity panel with the swaddled Christ child in the manger (from the dismantled jubé), Chartres, Chartres Cathedral, currently stored in the St Piat chapel. Thirteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> In earlier medieval art, however, shrouded corpses were also often depicted with similar criss-cross bands: compare the raising of Lazarus or the awakening of the dead in the Last Judgement miniature in the Winchester Psalter, illuminated around 1150–60 (London, British Library, Cotton MS Nero C IV, fols 19 and 31).



Figure 86. Detail of the swaddled Christ child (from the dismantled jubé), Chartres, Chartres Cathedral, currently stored in the St Piat chapel. Thirteenth century.

century on, although earlier examples exist: the worn tomb slab of an unknown lady and her swaddled infant at Welby in Lincolnshire probably dates from the early fourteenth century and is likely to commemorate a mother and child who both fell victim to the perils of childbirth (Figures 87 and 88).

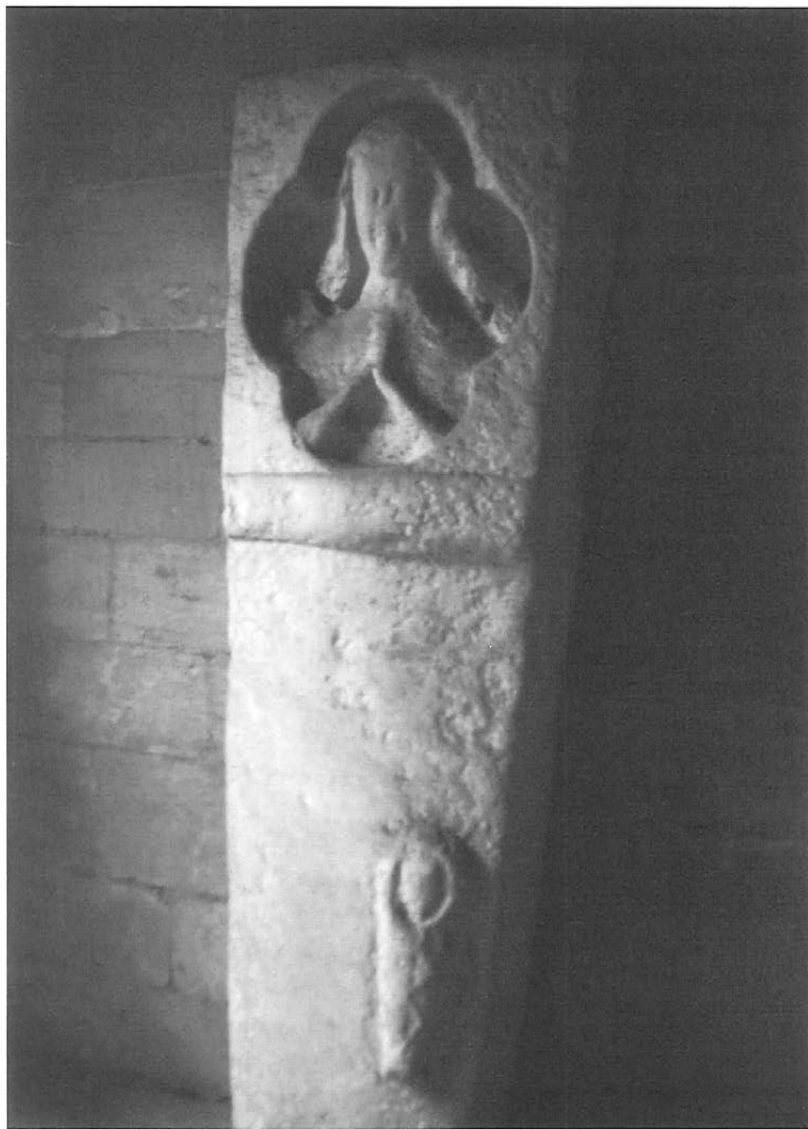


Figure 87. Tomb slab of an unknown lady and her swaddled infant, Welby, Lincolnshire. Early fourteenth century.



Figure 88. Detail of 'chrysom' infant, with criss-cross bands still visible, Welby, Lincolnshire. Early fourteenth century.

One feature that is not found on every chrysom effigy is the cross on Elyn Bray's head, although there are a few others showing crosses: the swaddled figure of John Eyre (d. 1523) on his incised slab at Knipton, Leicestershire (Figure 89), features a cross on the chest, for example, as does the now headless chrysom figure on the brass of Margaret Cryppys (d. 1533) at Birchington.<sup>3</sup> W. D. Belcher, who included the latter in his 1888 study of brasses in Kent, added the following explanation to his entry for this mother and her 'chrysom child': 'The chrysom or "chrismale" was the white cloth which infants wore for a month after baptism'.<sup>4</sup> By this time, of course, swaddling had long been out of favour in

<sup>3</sup> Oosterwijk, 'Chrysoms, Shrouds and Infants', fig. 1; with thanks to Dr Miriam Gill.

<sup>4</sup> W. D. Belcher, *Kentish Brasses*, 2 vols (London: Sprague, 1888; repr. 1905), 1, p. 13.





Figure 89. Incised 'chrysom' slab of John Eyre (d. 1523), with a cross on his chest, Knipton, Leicestershire.

Britain, so that authors often felt obliged to explain this curious custom. Already in a paper published in 1849, Thomas George Norris laboriously described the brass of Elyn Bray as:

a body, of somewhat antiquated feature, bound up in folds of what may fairly be considered a representation of folds of linen ornamented with vandyked edges, bound down with fasciae of vandyked linen, in such order that the intersection on the upper and lower fourth of the body's length shall present the form of a cross; the head is as it were hooded, and a cross graven on the forehead.<sup>5</sup>

Norris also added an illustration of a shroud brass in order to clarify the difference between these two types of textile covering.

In 1861 another English author similarly saw the need to explain the by now alien custom of swaddling. Herbert Haines, one of the pioneers in the study of monumental brasses, added a footnote to his discussion of chrysom brasses to the effect that 'the same practice of swathing infants is retained in Holland, Germany, Prussia, and other parts of Europe, as well as among the North American Indians'.<sup>6</sup> (Actually, swaddling is still practised in parts of the world today, including some Balkan countries.) Discussing the various types of monumental brasses, Haines believed that 'infants in swathbondes, or swaddling clothes' simply commemorated children who had died in their infancy.<sup>7</sup> Yet, at the same time he made separate mention of so-called 'chrysom' children in connection with the brass of Anne Astley (d. 1512) and her twins at Blickling in Norfolk (Figure 90), quoting the rubric in the Office of Public Baptism in the first prayer book of Edward VI of 1549, with regard to the custom of dressing babies in a white vestment or chrysom (or 'chrismale') for their baptism and donating this same vestment to the priest at the mother's purification.<sup>8</sup> The

<sup>5</sup> Thomas George Norris, 'Remarks on the Brass Memorials of Chrisom Children', *Transactions of the Exeter and Diocesan Architectural Society*, 3 (1849), 35–36. Norris mistakenly added the comment 'There is no inscription' to his description of the brass. I am grateful to Phillip Lindley and Paul Cockerham for drawing my attention to this paper since the publication of my earlier article.

<sup>6</sup> Herbert Haines, *A Manual of Monumental Brasses, Comprising an Introduction to the Study of these Memorials and a List of those Remaining in the British Isles* (Oxford: Parker, 1861; repr. Bath: Adams and Dart, 1970), p. ccxix, note n. Norris and Haines were actually in correspondence about chrysom effigies, as clarified by Norris, 'Remarks', p. 35, note a.

<sup>7</sup> Haines, *A Manual of Monumental Brasses*, p. ccxix.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. ccxx–ccxxi, and note o. The reference to 'chrisoms' was expunged from the prayer book from its second edition in 1552 onwards, thus leaving the nature of the 'accustomed offerings' unspecified. The brass figure of Anne Astley is usually illustrated on its

lacing visible across Anne Astley's stomach is typical of maternity wear in this period and confirms that she died shortly after childbirth, but there does not appear anything special about her twins to suggest they are wearing baptismal vestments rather than ordinary swaddling clothes; they do not even display a cross on their heads or chests. So how can one be certain that such chrysom figures are wearing their baptismal cloth rather than ordinary swaddling clothes?



Figure 90. Brass of Anne Astley, née à Wode (d. 1512), and her twins, Blickling, Norfolk.

own, but the epitaph underneath explains that the twins were a boy and a girl; see also John Page-Phillips, *Children on Brasses* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970), fig. 31. The fact that the children are not named may indicate that they were either stillborn or died shortly after birth, before they could be baptized.

Prior to Haines, Norris had argued in 1849 that 'the vulgar error of applying the term *chrisoms* to unbaptized children dying *prematurely before baptism*, has arisen from its application to the *premature death of a baptized child before the purification of its mother*'.<sup>9</sup> Explaining the baptismal rites before and after the Reformation at some length, he described how the 'chrismale' or white baptismal vestment was originally placed upon the infant as a token of innocence, after which the head and breast would be anointed with chrism or holy oil. This baptismal cloth was to be returned to the church at the time of the mother's ceremonial purification or churching after childbirth, except if the child had died before this ceremony took place; in that case, the baby would carry its baptismal cloth into its grave. Norris firmly believed that this is what Elyn Bray's brass shows: a dead infant wrapped in her 'chrismale' after having died before her mother's purification. A host of other authors followed his lead, so that it became almost inevitable that Nicholas Orme, in his 2001 book on medieval children, should perpetuate this myth by describing Elyn Bray on her brass at Stoke D'Abernon as wearing 'her chrisom cloth to show that she died baptized but before her mother's churching'.<sup>10</sup> Yet Elyn Bray's epitaph mentions no date of birth, and it is only the appearance of the swaddled effigy with the added cross on the crown of the head that is offered as the reason for this interpretation.

Before we can investigate further whether these 'chrysom' effigies are indeed shown wearing their baptismal cloths, it is vital to take a look at the history of swaddling and the reasons behind this age-old custom.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Norris, 'Remarks', p. 40.

<sup>10</sup> Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 102, and fig. 36. Malcolm Norris, in his standard work on monumental brasses, *Monumental Brasses: The Memorials*, 2 vols (London: Phillips and Page, 1977), I, p. 209, was slightly more circumspect in not specifying a period of one month, stating only that: 'Children who died after baptism but before their mother's service of churching were buried in their chrysom or baptismal robe.' See also the discussion of the post-Reformation use of the term in Will Coster, 'Tokens of Innocence: Infant Baptism, Death and Burial in Early Modern England', in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 266–87, esp. p. 273 and nn. 40–41.

<sup>11</sup> Medieval swaddling is discussed in more detail in Sophie Oosterwijk, *'Litel enfant that were but late borne': The Image of the Infant in Medieval Culture in North-Western Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming), Chapter 3.

*The Custom of Swaddling*

There is no doubt that swaddling babies was common practice in Antiquity and there are many surviving examples of such figures in ancient art to prove it, such as a Hellenistic statue of an enthroned goddess with two swaddled infants, now in Berlin (Figure 91),<sup>12</sup> as well as documentary evidence. An important textual



Figure 91. Statue of a mother goddess with two swaddled infants, Berlin, Antikensammlung Sk 165. Originally found at Curti, in the vicinity of Santa Maria di Capua. First century BC.

<sup>12</sup> This statue is one of seven typologically very similar Hellenistic examples of nurturing mother-goddess figures with swaddled children from Curti in the vicinity of Santa Maria di Capua, described in Alexander Conze, *Königliche Museen zu Berlin. Beschreibung der antiken Skulpturen mit Ausschluss der pergamenischen Fundstücke* (Berlin: Spemann, 1891), pp. 71–73, nos 161–67. I am grateful to Dr Andreas Scholl, Curator of the Sculpture Collection in Berlin, for this information.

source is Soranus, a Greek physician practising medicine in Rome in the early second century AD. Amongst nearly twenty works attributed to him is his treatise *Gynaecology*, which contains a long section on the care of the newborn, including a discussion of swaddling.<sup>13</sup> Two chapters specifically address the methods of swaddling, including when and how to unswaddle an infant.<sup>14</sup> Soranus dismissed what he termed the 'Thessalian' method of strapping the swaddled infant to a log and instead favoured a method with narrow bands wound around the limbs and body, which clearly differ from the image of the medieval swaddled infant with criss-cross bands that one usually finds in Northern Europe.<sup>15</sup> He emphasized the importance of clean and soft woollen bandages, without hems or selvages that might cut or compress unevenly; wool was recommended as preferable to linen, which might shrink from the baby's sweat. The main reason for swaddling newborn babies given by Soranus is that it allows the moulding of the body to its natural shape, especially if something has been twisted during childbirth, although it would also prevent children from impairing their vision by putting their fingers to their eyes.<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately, medieval sources tend to remain largely silent on the methods of swaddling, perhaps because it was such a common practice that it did not need explaining; the fact that it was a mundane job confined to women, whereas most medieval authors were male, may also help to explain this silence. A diagram tentatively showing the medieval method of swaddling with criss-cross bands is presented in Figure 92. Despite what has sometimes been claimed by modern authors, it is likely that swaddling babies by this method was a

<sup>13</sup> *Soranus' Gynecology*, trans. and intro. by Owsei Temkin (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956; repr. 1991), esp. Book II, Chapters 6–28; pp. 79–127. As explained in the Introduction to this translation (pp. xlv–xlv), Soranus's *Gynecology* was a major influence on medical thinking in the West, especially through the paraphrased version by Muscio (around 500 AD) which was very popular throughout the Middle Ages.

<sup>14</sup> *Soranus' Gynecology*, Book II, Chapters 9 and 19; pp. 84–87, 114–15.

<sup>15</sup> The variations in swaddling methods in different parts of Europe, from the criss-cross bands used in northern Europe to the use of bands all around the body (comparable to mummy wrappings) favoured in Italy, is pointed out by Danièle Alexandre-Bidon, 'Du drapeau à la cotte: vêtir l'enfant au Moyen Age (XIIIe–XVe s.)', in *Le vêtement: histoire, archéologie et symbolique vestimentaires au Moyen Age*, ed. by Michel Pastoureau (Paris: L'Épaul d'Or, 1989), pp. 125–31, although the author relies very much on a literal interpretation of depictions of swaddled infants in medieval art.

<sup>16</sup> *Soranus' Gynecology*, Book II, Chapter 9; pp. 84–87. There is also the suggestion that one can improve the form of female babies by binding the breast more tightly than the loins.

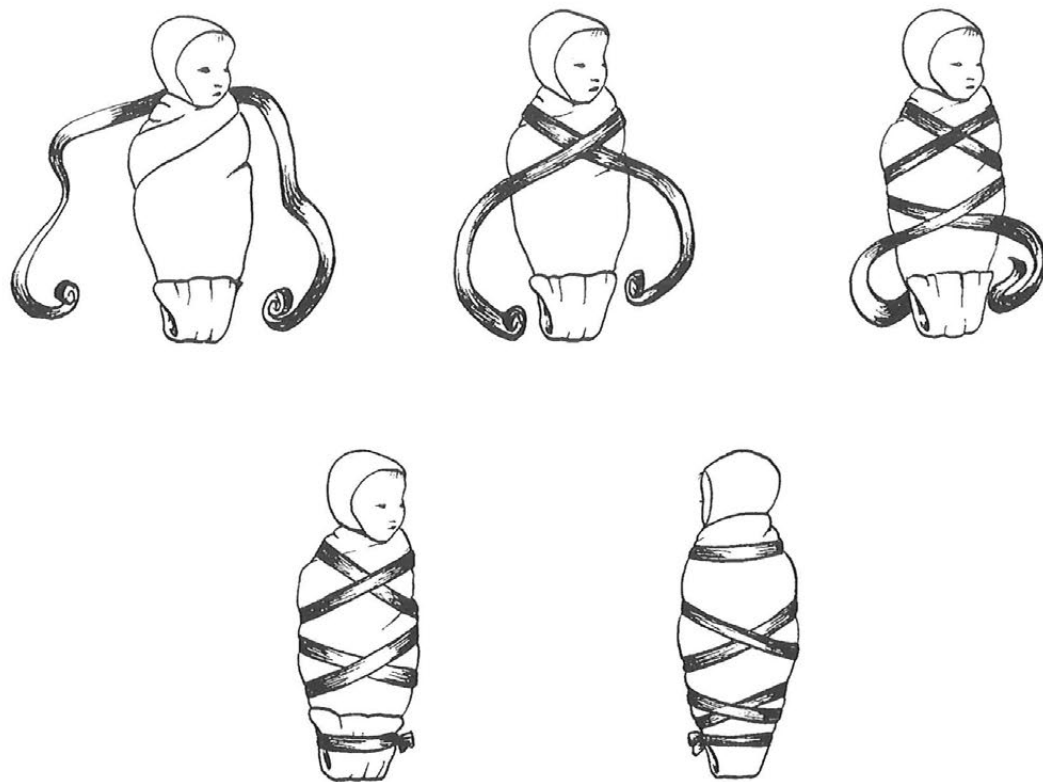


Figure 92. Tentative reconstruction diagram of the medieval swaddling method with criss-cross bands, modified from a drawing by R. Kitabgi in Danièle Alexandre-Bidon and Monique Closson, *L'Enfant à l'ombre des cathédrales* (Lyon: Editions du CNRS, 1985), p. 96.



relatively simple job for those used to doing it on a regular basis, although we do not know how often medieval babies were cleaned and swaddled each day.<sup>17</sup> Originally the English word 'swathe' meant simply to wrap up; the related word 'swaddle' came to refer specifically to the covering of babies, as used in the early fourteenth-century Middle English poem *Cursor Mundi*, which describes how 'a new born barn lay in the croppe, / Bondon wit suethelband' ('a newborn baby lay in the crib / bound with swaddling-bands').<sup>18</sup> In thirteenth-century England, the influential encyclopaedic text *De proprietatibus rerum*, by the monk Bartholomaeus Anglicus, recommended that nurses should swaddle babies or, as John Trevisa translated the Latin text into Middle English, 'swathe' them in 'clothis and cloutis' or in 'schetis and cloutis'.<sup>19</sup> What exactly these textiles should consist of is not explained, but a distinction appears to be made between wider cloths or sheets and 'cloutis'; the latter may well refer to those typical bands holding the cloth cover together that one can observe on the brass of Elyn Bray. In this respect, the medieval method in England at this time appears different from the 'mummification' method with broad and narrow bandages advocated by Soranus some eleven centuries earlier, although Bartholomaeus did agree with the Greek author that nurses should stretch and straighten babies' limbs so that they may not grow crooked. Other medical writers of the period, such as Aldobrandinus of Siena, likewise urged midwives and nurses to form the pliable bodies of newborn babies, and the general belief amongst medieval physicians

<sup>17</sup> On the one hand, it was proposed by Pierre Riché and Danièle Alexandre-Bidon, *L'enfance au Moyen-Age* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1994), p. 66, that 'défaire la bande ou la remettre ne prenait que quelques secondes', which may be a slight exaggeration; on the other, there is the claim by the American psychohistorian Lloyd deMause, 'The Evolution of Childhood', in *The History of Childhood: The Evolution of Parent-Child Relationships as a Factor in History*, ed. by Lloyd deMause (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1974; repr. London: Souvenir Press, 1980), p. 37, that 'swaddling was often so complicated it took up to two hours to dress an infant', although he based this comment on a text published in 1830.

<sup>18</sup> *Cursor Mundi: A Northumbrian Poem of the XIVth Century*, ed. by Richard Morris, 7 vols, Early English Text Society, o.s. 57 (London: Oxford University Press, 1874), 1, lines 1342–44. Note that in all Middle English quotations used in this article the spelling has been adapted to the modern use of *th*.

<sup>19</sup> *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus 'De proprietatibus rerum'*, ed. by M. C. Seymour and others, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975–88), 1, Book 6.10, lines 304–05.

appears to have been that swaddling also kept infants warm and prevented desiccation.<sup>20</sup>

Swaddling was clearly the norm: so much so that when the sheep-thief Mak and his equally devious wife try to hide a stolen sheep in the rather farcical Towneley Second Shepherds' Play, they swaddle it and place it in a cradle as their own newborn child. Their plan nearly succeeds until one of the duped shepherds notices the animal's long snout when he tries to kiss the 'baby'. The swaddled Christ child is also found not just in medieval art, but in literature as well. He is described in the Middle English dialogue *Vices and Virtues* of c. 1200 as 'mid swathelbonde ibunden', which echoes the words in Luke II. 7 and II. 14. Particularly touching is a Middle English lullaby of c. 1375 in London, British Library, Harley MS 7322, in which Mary apologizes to her son for her lack of swaddling clothes:

Iesu, swete beo noth wroth,  
 Thou ich nabbe clout ne cloth  
 The on to folde ne to wrappe,  
 For ich nabbe clout ne lappe [...] <sup>21</sup>  
  
 Jesus, dear, don't be angry  
 though I have neither band[?] nor cloth  
 to fold and wrap you in  
 for I have neither band[?] nor piece of cloth [...]

It is symptomatic of the medieval belief in Christ's humble birth that he not only has a mere manger for a cradle, but also has to bear the December cold without the comfort of swaddling clothes.

Yet swaddling clothes could obviously be very uncomfortable for a baby. Medical texts warn against swaddling infants too tightly as this might harm them, although loose swaddling was also deemed to be detrimental to a baby's physical development. Margery Kempe (c. 1373–c. 1440), a King's Lynn townswoman and would-be mystic, recognized this when she promised the

<sup>20</sup> For Aldobrandinus of Siena, see *Le Régime du Corps de Maître Aldebrandin de Sienne (Texte français du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, ed. by Louis Landouzy and Roger Pépin (Paris: Champion, 1911), 'Comment on doit garder l'enfant quant il est nés', p. 75. See also Luke Demaitre, 'The Idea of Childhood and Child Care in Medical Writings of the Middle Ages', *Journal of Psychohistory*, 4 (1977), 461–90, esp. pp. 471–72.

<sup>21</sup> *The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse*, ed. by Cecilia Sisam and Kenneth Sisam (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), no. 87, lines 7–10. The word 'clout' here suggests a smaller piece of textile, perhaps a band to wrap around the outer swaddling clothes.

Christ child as his wetnurse in one of her meditations: 'Lord, I shal fare fayr with yow; I schal not byndyn yow soor. I pray yow beth not dysplesyd wyth me' ('Lord, I shall deal kindly with you; I shall not bind you sorely. I pray you not to be displeased with me').<sup>22</sup> Soranus already knew centuries earlier that babies will cry not just because they are hungry, but also if their bodies feel uncomfortably constricted or because of irritation from soiled swaddling clothes.<sup>23</sup> The modern idea that medieval infants were simply left to soak in their increasingly soiled wrappings is not borne out by medical texts, either, whatever the reality may have been amongst poorer families. Margery Kempe envisioned herself as the Virgin Mary's servant, begging on her behalf for 'fayr whyte clothys & kerchys for to swathyn in' the Christ child, and although this may merely illustrate the popular belief in the humble circumstances surrounding Christ's birth, the emphasis on the desired whiteness of these clothes is an interesting detail.<sup>24</sup> Medieval people knew that sores could develop if swaddling clothes were not regularly changed, and bathing was acknowledged as an important element of childcare. Although Soranus felt that too much bathing could weaken an infant, he recommended that babies should be bathed once during the day with an overall massage afterwards, and anointed before being swaddled again.<sup>25</sup> The bathing of the Christ child and other infants is frequently found in medieval art as well as literature, and Aldobrandinus of Siena even issued advice on the best temperature for a baby's bath in winter and in summer.<sup>26</sup> However, the mention of seven baths a day for the hero's newborn son in Marie de France's lai *Milun*, seems a fanciful literary exaggeration.<sup>27</sup> What Soranus did stress is that if a baby's body should be chafed through friction of the bandages or develop sores,

<sup>22</sup> *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, Early English Text Society, o.s. 212 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), Chapter 6, p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> *Soranus' Gynecology*, Book II, Chapter 17; p. III.

<sup>24</sup> *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 19. The Middle English word 'kerchys' can still be recognized in the modern 'handkerchief'.

<sup>25</sup> *Soranus' Gynecology*, Book II, Chapter 16; pp. 103–08.

<sup>26</sup> *Le Régime du Corps*, pp. 75–76. In contrast, Bartholomaeus Anglicus simply states that a baby's nurse should clean and wash her charge if it has soiled itself; see *On the Properties of Things*, I, Book 6.9, line 304.

<sup>27</sup> *Les Lais de Marie de France*, ed. by Jean Rychner, Les Classiques Français du Moyen Age (Paris: Champion, 1966), lines 109–12.

swaddling clothes should be abandoned and replaced by a simple little shirt, allowing the wounds to heal.<sup>28</sup>

The vital question, but one that is difficult to answer, is the length of time during which babies normally remained swaddled. Again, medieval authors remain largely silent on this point, and it is very likely that the duration of swaddling differed according to class, region, period, and season. Soranus admitted that, while most of his contemporaries ended the period of swaddling some sixty days after birth, others chose to do so after only forty days, and some preferred a much longer period.<sup>29</sup> Most important was, in his opinion, the gradual and partial unswaddling of babies, as a sudden total change was likely to prove injurious. Therefore, one should start with leaving first the right hand unswaddled, then a few days later the other, and finally the feet. Although the seasons may have played a role in this, the claim made in one modern study that medieval babies' arms and upper bodies were left unswaddled in warm weather for greater comfort seems to go against the very logic of swaddling, which was first of all intended to advance the correct physical development of newborn infants.<sup>30</sup> An over-reliance on the 'realism' of medieval art can easily lead to false impressions. The medieval illuminator who depicted a partly swaddled Christ child in a miniature of the Adoration of the Magi in a French book of hours illuminated around 1445–50 for the newly married Isabel Stuart, Duchess of Brittany (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam MS 62, fol. 76), clearly chose to ignore the January setting and the age of the Christ child in the story in favour of a more lively portrayal of a baby eagerly stretching out his arms to receive the gifts of the Magi.

On the other hand, tomb monuments may provide some evidence of partial swaddling as a guide towards a child's age. For example, one drawing in the antiquarian records of lost French tombs by Roger de Gaignières, in the Bibliothèque nationale, depicts the tomb slab at the church of St Martin in

<sup>28</sup> Soranus' *Gynecology*, Book II, Chapter 19; p. 115.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., Book II, Chapter 19; p. 114.

<sup>30</sup> Danièle Alexandre-Bidon and Monique Closson, *L'enfant à l'ombre des cathédrales* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1985), p. 98. Another rather ambiguous statement about swaddling can be found in Françoise Piponnier and Perrine Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Caroline Beamish (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997; repr. 2000), pp. 103–04: 'Once the child had reached a few months, in summer (or weather permitting), its shoulders and arms were released, or clothed in a fitted vest. The swaddling clothes continued to be worn below the arm-pits'.

Nangis of Jean-Saladin d'Anglure of Givry, who died in 1530 aged three months, while two other drawings show the effigies at Saint-Pierre d'Amillis of Marie de Bauffremont and of her sister Jehanne, who was four months old at the time of her death in 1584.<sup>31</sup> However, in all three cases the children's costume is a rather fanciful combination of swaddling below the arms and formal costume above, complete with a plumed bonnet for Jean-Saladin and stiff lace collars for the baby girls. One particularly interesting example is the lost sixteenth-century tomb with effigies of three children of the de La Marck de Clermont and de



Figure 93. Roger de Gaignières. Drawing of tomb effigies of three children of the de La Marck de Clermont and de Luxembourg families, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Manuscrits pièces originales, 1841, fol. 128<sup>r</sup>. Formerly at the church at Nogent-le-Roi. Sixteenth century.

<sup>31</sup> All three Gaignières drawings are illustrated in F. A. Greenhill, *Incised Effigial Slabs: A Study of Engraved Stone Memorials in Latin Christendom, c. 1100 to c. 1700*, 2 vols (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), I, p. 289, and II, plates 147a–b. Compare also the 1581 painted portrait of the partly swaddled Cornelia Burch by an anonymous artist discussed by Saskia Kuus in 'Children's Costume in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in *Pride and Joy: Children's Portraits in the Netherlands 1500–1700*, ed. by Jan Baptist Bedaux and Rudi Ekkart (Ghent: Ludion, 2000), pp. 73–83 (p. 76, fig. 38).

Luxembourg families, formerly at the church at Nogent-le-Roi, as recorded by Roger de Gaignières (Figure 93).<sup>32</sup> This drawing shows one older child in female dress flanked by a fully swaddled infant on the right and on the left a slightly larger, partially swaddled infant with its hands in prayer: in other words, three distinct stages in early childhood. A post-medieval English example is the partially swaddled infant held by Lady Savage on the family monument at Elmley Castle church in Worcestershire, dating from around 1632.<sup>33</sup>

It must be emphasized, however, that the method of swaddling clearly differed according to area, and also changed over time, as suggested also by the 'chrysom' brass of Peter Best (d. 1585) at Merstham in Surrey, which shows broad bands encircling the lower half of the body and pins keeping the head cover in place (Figure 94). Swaddling could apparently even be a fashion



Figure 94. Copy of the lost brass of Peter Best  
(d. 1585), Merstham, Surrey.

<sup>32</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MSS pièces originales 1841, fol. 128, as illustrated in Jean Adhémar, 'Les tombeaux de la collection Gaignières: Dessins d'archéologie du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle (Part 2)', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 88 (1976), 1–128 (p. 117, fig. 1768).

<sup>33</sup> Judith W. Hurtig, 'Death in Childbirth: Seventeenth-century English Tombs and their Place in Contemporary Thought', *Art Bulletin*, 65 (1983), 603–15 (p. 605 and p. 606, figs 4–5).

statement in later periods: the formal portrait of the Cholmondeley ladies of c. 1600–10 by an anonymous British painter, now in the Tate Britain collection in London, shows two infants tightly encased in brocade matching their mother's bodices, with bright red outer covers.<sup>34</sup>

### *The Origins and Meanings of the Word 'Chrysom'*

Swaddling, whatever its method, was thus the archetypal garment for infants during the first few weeks or months after birth, but what exactly was meant by the word 'chrysom' that is now commonly used to describe tomb effigies of swaddled infants? In the Middle English morality play *The Castle of Perseverance*, which may have been composed between 1400 and 1425, the character of Humanus Genus or Mankind makes his first appearance as a naked newborn child: 'This nyth I was of my modir born [...] I am nakyd of lym and lende' ('This night my mother gave birth to me [...] my limbs and loins are naked').<sup>35</sup> Yet it seems he is not completely naked:

Bare and pore is my clothynge.  
A sely crysme myn hed hath cawth  
That I tok at myn crystenynge.  
Certys I haue no more.<sup>36</sup>

Bare and poor is my clothing  
A simple chrisom covers my head  
That I received at my christening  
Indeed, I have nothing else.

The fact that Mankind is naked but for his head cover must have been an important clue, for it is repeated in line 324: 'A crysme I haue and no moo'. The 'chrysom' here is thus apparently a head-cover of some sort rather than a robe, and nothing like the outfit of the typical 'chrysom' effigy.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), a 'chrisom', as it should be properly spelled, is a variant of 'chrism': the ritual of anointing or the unction

<sup>34</sup> The painting commemorates the birth of babies to two ladies of the Cholmondeley family on the same day, according to the inscription.

<sup>35</sup> *The Castle of Perseverance*, lines 276 and 279, in *The Macro Plays: The Castle of Perseverance, Wisdom, Mankind*, ed. by Mark Eccles, Early English Text Society, o.s. 262 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

<sup>36</sup> *The Castle of Perseverance*, lines 293–96.



itself used in that ritual — the sacrament of baptism in this case. As the second meaning of the word, the OED offers: 'a white robe, put on a child at baptism as a token of innocence: originally, perhaps merely a head-cloth, with which the chrism was covered up to prevent its being rubbed off. In the event of the child's death within a month from baptism, it was used as a shroud: otherwise it, or its estimated value, was given as an offering at the mother's purification'. This reading is confirmed by the Middle English Dictionary (MED),<sup>37</sup> which explains 'crisme' as 'a cloth wrapped about the head of a newly baptized person'; the second meaning of '?also a christening robe' is clearly offered with some caution. It is obvious that in *The Castle of Perseverance* the word 'crysme' refers to this original head-cloth placed on the baby's head after baptism, which could hardly have served as a shroud. In the OED's example of c. 1200 from the *Trinity College Homilies*, however, the word 'chrisom' seems to indicate a larger cloth in which the child is to be wrapped at baptism: 'Iothlesnesse understondeth the man at his folcninge. and that bitocneth the crisme cloth. the the priest biwindeth that child mide. and thus seith. Underfo shrud wit and clene'.<sup>38</sup> The white colour of the cloth is said to signify innocence, and a white winding sheet was also considered important for dead adults, symbolizing that the deceased was clean shriven; it should be noted, however, that the Old English word 'scrud' and the Middle English 'shroud' just meant 'garment' or 'article of clothing', without the modern connotations of shroud.<sup>39</sup> A century later we find in *Cursor Mundi*: 'Thof vr life last bot a quile, vr chrisum clath ful son we file' ('Though our life lasts but a while, we soon defile our chrisom cloth').<sup>40</sup> In both these

<sup>37</sup> *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Hans Kurath and Sherman M. Kuhn (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959).

<sup>38</sup> *Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century, from the Unique Ms. B. 14. 2. in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge*, ed. by Richard Morris, Early English Text Society, second ser. 53 (London: Trübner, 1873), p. 95. The translation provided by Morris on p. 94 reads: 'The man receiveth innocency at his baptism, that is denoted by the chrism cloth with which the priest envelopes the child, and thus saith — Receive white and clean shroud (clothing)'.

<sup>39</sup> See *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. by Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882), pp. 842–43, and *MED*, pp. 787–90. Thus in the C-version of William Langland's fourteenth-century poem *Piers Plowman*, the second line of the Prologue describes how the poet 'shope me into shroudes' as if he were a shepherd, with 'shroudes' denoting (woollen) outer garments; see *Piers Plowman by William Langland: An Edition of the C-text*, ed. by Derek Pearsall, York Medieval Texts, second ser. (London: Edward Arnold, 1978).

<sup>40</sup> *Cursor Mundi*, IV, line 25725.

instances we learn more about the symbolic significance of the chrisom cloth as part of the sacrament of baptism than about its actual appearance. The MED quotes a fifteenth-century example from the moralistic poem *The Quatrefoil of Love* describing the Last Judgement:

Than es all our pryde gane,  
Our robis and our riche pane,  
Alle bot a chrysme [al]lane,  
That we were crystened In.<sup>41</sup>

Then is all our pride gone,  
Our robes and all our rich fur,  
All but a chrisom alone,  
That we were christened In

In other words, clothes as signifiers of wealth and status will all be gone at the Last Judgement, when only the chrisom cloth will count as a token of one's Christian faith.

Another reference to a 'crysum' at baptism is found in a poem of c. 1426 by the English monk John Audelay: 'Ther we were croysid in a crysum with a carful krye' ('There we were crossed [i.e., anointed with a cross] in a chrisom with a sorrowful cry').<sup>42</sup> Perhaps the most tantalizing reference, however, can be found in Osbern Bokenham's rather earlier *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*. This contains the following description of St Elizabeth of Hungary, who not only devoted herself to tending the sick and making burial shrouds for the poor, but

She made also crysmys ful dylygently  
For pore chyldryn whan thai shul crystyn be,  
And wolde be godmodyr that she therby  
To helpe hem myht haue the more lyberte.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *The Quatrefoil of Love, Edited from Brit. Mus. MS. Add. 31042 with Collations from Bodl. MS. Add. A 106*, ed. by Israel Gollancz and Magdalene M. Weale, Early English Text Society, o.s. 195 (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), stanza XXXI, lines 400–03. The glossary to the poem gives the word 'crysme' as 'chrisom-cloth or robe'.

<sup>42</sup> *The Poems of John Audelay*, ed. by Ella Keats Whitting, Early English Text Society, o.s. 66 (London: Oxford University Press, 1877), line 25725.

<sup>43</sup> *Legendys of Hooly Wummen, by Osbern Bokenham, Edited from MS. Arundel 327*, ed. by Mary S. Serjeantson, Early English Text Society, o.s. 206 (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), lines 9965–68. The Middle-English word 'lyberte' has an additional meaning of 'liberality, generosity' although the translation 'liberty' seems to make more sense here. The burial shrouds provided by St Elizabeth for the dead are described in line 10053 as 'sum maner cloth of hyr owyn makeyng'.

She very diligently also made chrisoms  
 For poor children for when they should be christened,  
 And wanted to be godmother so that she would thus  
 Be more at liberty to help them.

What these 'crysmys' consisted of is unfortunately not explained by the author, so we do not know whether St Elizabeth is said to have simply cut and hemmed pieces of white (linen?) cloth, which the poor could not even afford to buy, or whether she engaged in more sophisticated weaving and sewing. However, they are clearly meant to be distinct from ordinary swaddling clothes, which every mother would have needed for her baby. Norris, who also referred to such acts of charity by St Elizabeth and others in his 1849 article, claimed that parents who were too poor to have a 'chrismale' of their own might borrow one instead from someone more fortunate, or even use one that was specially kept for the poor.<sup>44</sup>

To return to the OED, there is yet another meaning of the word 'chrisom', which has a bearing on the so-called 'chrysom' effigies: originally 'a child in its chrisom-cloth; a child in its first month; an innocent babe', also called a 'chrisomer'. In other words, the meaning shifted from just the cloth to include the child itself. The OED adds that the term was 'in obituaries and the like, applied to a child that died during the first month or shortly after baptism, and was shrouded in its chrisom-cloth', and finally came to mean 'infant, babe, innocent' in general. The MED instead confines the meaning of 'crisme child' to 'an infant newly baptized', but that may be too narrow a definition in view of the fact that John Audelay used the expression 'crisum-childer' in a poem for Holy Innocents' Day to describe the male children of Bethlehem under the age of two who were slaughtered at Herod's command.<sup>45</sup> Audelay obviously chose the term to emphasize the children's state of innocence, but the age range in this context is much wider than the traditional one month from birth.

It would seem, then, that the word 'chrysom' in its various spellings could have a very specific or a more general meaning. However, the original meaning and the link with the word 'chrism' means that the medieval rite of baptism needs to be looked at further.

<sup>44</sup> Norris, 'Remarks', p. 43.

<sup>45</sup> *The Poems of John Audelay*, Poem 36: 'In die sanctorum Innocencium', line 15. Nevertheless, Whiting's glossary defines this single use of the word 'crisum-childer' as 'infants that died within a month of baptism'. According to medieval theological belief, the Innocents were symbolically christened in their own blood.

### *Baptism and Purification*

In Shakespeare's *Henry V*, Act II, Scene iii, one finds a slight variation of the term 'chrisom child' used by the Hostess when describing the demise of Falstaff: 'A' made a finer end, and went away as it had been any chrisom child'. The implication here is clear: Falstaff is said to have died a good death, much like an innocent child cleansed of Original Sin by baptism, and he therefore must have gone straight to Heaven. It is important to remember that St Augustine had pronounced unbaptized infants to be tainted with Original Sin; therefore, those who died without baptism were considered damned and officially could not be buried in hallowed ground, let alone inside a church with a monument to commemorate them.<sup>46</sup>

Because of the high risk of infant mortality in the Middle Ages, baptism increasingly took place as soon as possible after birth in order to safeguard the soul of the vulnerable newborn child. The sign of the cross on the child's head, breast, and hands symbolized its liberation from Original Sin and thereby from the power of the devil. Baptism was thus a vital ceremony, and there were many superstitions surrounding it both before and after the Reformation. Not only was the unbaptized infant believed to be at risk from the devil, but it was not deemed safe even from fairies, who might snatch a healthy baby and replace it with a sick or retarded changeling.<sup>47</sup> While baptism by aspersion became more common on the Continent from the twelfth century on, in medieval England immersion of babies in the font remained the norm except in an emergency situation when

<sup>46</sup> George G. Coulton, *Infant Perdition in the Middle Ages*, Medieval Studies, 16 (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1922); on the *limbus puerorum* for unbaptized infants, see Jacques le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (London: Scholar Press, 1984), pp. 220–21. See also Coster, 'Tokens of Innocence', pp. 268–69. It is not clear from the first part of his essay whether Coster was sufficiently aware of the wider meaning of the term 'chrisom child'. In order to prevent the inevitable perdition of an unbaptized infant's soul, midwives were actually instructed by the church to baptize children still in the womb in cases of emergency; for example, see Franklyn, *Brasses*, p. 100, and Christopher Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066–1550* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 128.

<sup>47</sup> See Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1971; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p. 73: 'The early weeks of infancy were particularly crucial here, for the fairies were thought most likely to act before the child had been baptized or the mother church'd'.

aspersion was considered an acceptable alternative.<sup>48</sup> This means that it would have been practical to wrap the infant in a simple white cloth to facilitate undressing before and dressing after baptism.

The Seven Sacraments were a favourite theme in medieval art and can be observed on many English carved baptismal fonts.<sup>49</sup> A medieval christening ceremony is also illustrated in one of seven stained-glass roundels of the Sacraments from Wygston's House in Leicester, dating from c. 1500–20 (Figure 95). The priest is lowering the naked infant face-down into the font while the godmother is standing by with what appears to be a cloth hanging across her left arm, and one is tempted to think that this may be the chrisom cloth. It is interesting to compare this roundel with a baptismal scene in a German illuminated manuscript of c. 1400 of Hugo von Trimberg's didactic poem *Der Renner* (Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Voss. G.G.F. 4, fol. 247<sup>v</sup>), in which a new father inadvertently asks Death to act as godfather to his newborn child: Death is holding out a white cloth as he watches the priest lowering the baby into the font.<sup>50</sup> It must be remembered in this context that St Elizabeth of Hungary was alleged not only to have provided the poor with chrisom cloths, but also to have acted as godmother to their newborn babies.

The blessed water in the font was regarded not just as holy but also imbued with great power, which is why it was locked away safely to prevent inappropriate use.<sup>51</sup> The same was clearly true of the holy chrism oil and also the cloth that it had been in contact with, which may explain the medieval custom that mothers should return their babies' chrisom cloth to the church at their purification. Norris quoted medieval sources stipulating that such chrisom cloths should be made into ornaments or otherwise converted for church use. There evidently was real fear of misuse of these sacred cloths.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Ann Eljenholm Nichols, *Seeable Signs: The Iconography of the Seven Sacraments 1350–1544* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1994), p. 200 and n. 28.

<sup>49</sup> See the examples and discussion in Nichols, *Seeable Signs*.

<sup>50</sup> The miniature is illustrated in Oosterwijk, 'Chrysoms, Shrouds and Infants', fig. 7.

<sup>51</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400–c. 1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 280.

<sup>52</sup> Norris, 'Remarks', p. 40. The Customs in the diocese of Salisbury, which were probably composed between 1228 and 1256, state: 'Mulieres desponsate et mulieres post partum nutrices debent accedere ad ecclesiam cum candelis accensis et ille mulieres sequentes debent offerre crismalia infantum, nec crismalia debent alienari, ne in aliquos usus mitti debent nisi in usus ecclesie'. See *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church: Volume*



Figure 95. Baptism, stained-glass roundel from a set of the Seven Sacraments, originally from Wygston's House, 18 Highcross St, Leicester. c. 1500–20.

*II, Part I, 1205–1265*, ed. by Sir Maurice Powicke and Christopher Cheney (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 512. See also 'chrismalis' in *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, ed. by R. E. Latham and D. R. Howlet, currently 10 vols (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1975–), I.

According to Leviticus XII, purification should take place forty days after the birth of a son and eighty days after the birth of a daughter. In medieval culture, the purification of the Virgin was an important feast and a scene frequently depicted in art and drama.<sup>53</sup> The rite of purification could also be an excuse for lavish displays of wealth and power, including new clothes for the mother, as in the case of Philippa of Hainault, wife of Edward III.<sup>54</sup> However, records of churchings suggest that the time span of forty or eighty days was not usually adhered to: some mothers had a longer confinement period before their purification while others were churched much sooner, even within a month of childbirth, irrespective of the gender of the child.<sup>55</sup> Whilst this resolves the apparent absence of gender differentiation for 'chrysons', it also casts doubt on any hard and fast rule that children who died within a month of baptism were buried in their chrisom cloth; the tradition was probably based on one month having been simply the average period for purification.

Nonetheless, as we saw earlier, records exist that medieval women were supposed to return the chrisom cloth to the church at their purification. This custom is still recorded in the post-Reformation period, as one author found: 'At Wickenby, Lincolnshire, "the chrisom and a gracepenny is always to be given at the woman's churching. The chrisom must be half a yard of fine linen long and

<sup>53</sup> Gail McMurray Gibson, 'Blessing from Sun and Moon: Churching as Women's Theater', in *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace, Medieval Cultures, 9 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 139–54.

<sup>54</sup> Caroline Shenton, 'Philippa of Hainault's Churchings: The Politics of Motherhood at the Court of Edward III', in *Family and Dynasty in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Richard Eales and Shaun Tyas, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, 9 (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2003), pp. 105–21.

<sup>55</sup> According to John Carmi Parsons, 'The Year of Eleanor of Castile's Birth and her Children by Edward I', *Mediaeval Studies*, 46 (1984), 256–57 and notes, Henry III's wife, Eleanor of Provence, invariably had a lying-in period of forty days, whereas her daughter-in-law, Eleanor of Castile, preferred to be churched thirty days after the births of her many children. See also William Coster, 'Purity, Profanity, and Puritanism: The Churching of Women, 1500–1700', in *Women in the Church*, ed. by William J. Sheils and Diana Wood, Studies in Church History, 27 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1990), pp. 377–87. According to David Cressy, 'Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women in Post-Reformation England', *Past and Present*, 141 (1993), 106–46 (p. 117), 'in practice, the woman's "month" may have been notional and prescriptive, more an ideal than an actual period of sequestration'.



a full yard in width”'.<sup>56</sup> Another authority on brasses, Ernest R. Suffling, noted in 1910 that the custom of women presenting a white handkerchief to the vicar at their churching was still alive at Horndon in Essex around the turn of the century.<sup>57</sup> Like Norris before him, most subsequent writers on brasses have simply identified all swaddled ‘chrysom’ effigies as children who died within a month of their baptism. Although Mill Stephenson remarked in a more general manner of Peter Best’s brass (Figure 94) that ‘this costume indicates that the child died during its infancy’, he then immediately added: ‘Sometimes a child was swathed in its chrisom, and was itself termed a chrisom until it was a month old; if it died before it reached that age, its chrisom served as its shroud’.<sup>58</sup>

In a curious twist, the OED carries an additional note about the term ‘chrisom child’, stating that ‘some think that it was applied to children that died unbaptized; but indisputable evidence of this has not been found, although modern editors have so understood [some examples]’. To illustrate this, the OED entry for ‘chrisomer’ includes a late example from 1886: ‘A portion of the Churchyard which he designated Chrisomers’ Hill, where said he [sexton, c. 1840] “the unbaptized children be always buried”’.

### *Cloth, Robes, and Confirmation*

As we have seen, in the play *The Castle of Perseverance* the naked newborn Humanus Genus merely has a ‘sely crysme’ on his head, but is this what we see on any chrysom effigies? Although the original chrisom may have been just a head-cloth, obviously there must have been a larger cloth to cover the wet child with after immersion in the font, and it seems that in time the term ‘chrisom’ came to refer to the larger cloth as well, as the record from Wickenby illustrates. In 1616 John Bullokar gave as the definition of ‘chrisme’: ‘sometime it is taken

<sup>56</sup> Cressy, ‘Purification’, p. 126.

<sup>57</sup> Ernest R. Suffling, *English Church Brasses from the 13th to the 17th Century* (London: Gill, 1910; repr. Bath: Kingsmede Reprints, 1970), pp. 258–59.

<sup>58</sup> Mill Stephenson, *A List of Monumental Brasses in Surrey* (London: Headley Bros., 1926), pp. 365–66 [reprinted from *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, vols 25–33 and 40 (1912–21)]. Interestingly, Stephenson notes on p. 367 that, according to the parish register, Peter Best was baptized on 3 July and buried on 12 August, thus probably just over one month old; his brother Richard, who is represented on his brass wearing the full-length robe of a little boy, was apparently baptized on 6 August 1586 and died, according to the epitaph, on 22 June 1587, barely eleven months old.

for a white linnen cloth wrapped about an infant after it is newlie christened'.<sup>59</sup> It may have been this type of larger cloth that St Elizabeth was said to have produced so diligently for the poor as one of her acts of charity. Another writer on brasses, Herbert W. Macklin, went one step further when he interpreted the chrisom in the Tudor period quite firmly as a robe that was to be worn during the first weeks of a baby's life:

A feature of the time, or rather one that begins at this time, is the portrayal of infant children, either separately or with their parents, and wrapped in chrysoms. Babies were brought to the font when only a few days' old. As soon as the baptismal formula had been pronounced and the children baptized, the priest was instructed to place upon them a white robe, and this was called the chrysom, because immediately afterwards they were anointed with oil, the holy chrism, according to the forms prescribed. The robe was worn until the mother came to the church for her purification, and then was returned to the priest, together with her accustomed offerings.<sup>60</sup>

Obviously, there may have been changes over time. Norris pointed out the possible distinction between a white garment used after baptism and the 'chrismale' after unction, but that distinction may not always have been adhered to.<sup>61</sup> Norris discussed at some length the various Latin sources that indicated that there was some sort of linen (or silk) coif or hood involved, but that it probably came to form one garment with the cloth in which the child was wrapped after baptism.<sup>62</sup> Also important to note is his reference to Durandus on chrism, who stipulated: 'Let All Christians be anointed twice before baptism; with consecrated oil first, on the breast; secondly, between the shoulders: and twice after baptism with holy chrism; first, on the crown of the head, and secondly, by the Bishop on the forehead'.<sup>63</sup> The latter refers to the later sacrament of confirmation.

It needs to be emphasized that the rite of confirmation was conducted differently in England than it was on the Continent, where it became custom for children to be of the age of reason to receive confirmation; a practice subsequently adopted by the Council of Trent.<sup>64</sup> The left wing of Rogier van der

<sup>59</sup> John Bullokar, *An English Expositor* (London: Iohn Legatt, 1616; facsimile edition Menston: Scolar Press, 1967).

<sup>60</sup> Herbert W. Macklin, *The Brasses of England* (London: Methuen and Co., 1907; repr. 1913), pp. 227–28.

<sup>61</sup> Norris, 'Remarks', p. 42.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42–44.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42, note b.

<sup>64</sup> Nichols, *Seeable Signs*, p. 216 and n. 26.

Weyden's *Altarpiece of the Seven Sacraments* of c. 1440–45, in the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten in Antwerp, illustrates such a scene, in which we see one child who is having his brow bound after having been anointed by the bishop, while three other children walk away with 'chrisom' bands across their foreheads (Plate 8).<sup>65</sup> In contrast, English children were supposed to be confirmed before the age of three or five, which is why one always finds very young children in confirmation scenes; according to the Sarum *Manuale*, a child could even be anointed immediately after baptism if a bishop should be present.<sup>66</sup> Another stained-glass roundel from Wygston's House in Leicester thus shows three adults presenting their children to a bishop, of which the oldest child in the background is only a toddler in his father's arms, the second is still being suckled, and the third is a swaddled infant with the typical criss-cross bands that we see on so many chrysom effigies (Figure 96).

The idea of a cross on the crown of the head could suggest that Elyn Bray's chrysom brass does indeed present her as a baptized baby, although there is still nothing else apart from the cross that distinguishes her outfit from ordinary swaddling clothes. In contrast, the small figure of John Manfeld on the 1455 brass that he shares with his older siblings Richard and Isabelle, in Taplow, Surrey, is naked except for a loose garment with crosses on the hood (Figure 97), and it is this garment that could well be a true 'chrisom' or 'chrismale'. If this interpretation is correct, it is the only example of an actual 'chrisom child' that we can be fairly sure of, but the brass figure of John Manfeld is never listed as a chrysom, unlike all those others that feature proper swaddling bands.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 165–66 and plate 27. Nichols only refers to chrism bands as used in confirmation, not in baptism.

<sup>66</sup> 'Si episcopus adest, statim eum confirmari oportet', as stated in the rite for the paschal vigil: see Nichols, *Seeable Signs*, pp. 210–11; p. 212, n. 16, and pp. 216–17. As pointed out by Nichols, the precise age for confirmation in England varied from synod to synod, whilst fifteenth-century pastoral texts also contradicted each other on this point. The ceremony might be a very simple one conducted by suffragan bishops riding circuit, or even a two-sentence service whenever children were presented to travelling bishops by parents along the road.

<sup>67</sup> William Lack, H. Martin Stuchfield, and Philip Whittemore, *The Monumental Brasses of Buckinghamshire* (London: Monumental Brass Society, 1994), pp. 202, 204–05. Coster, 'Tokens of Innocence', p. 276, actually lists this brass as an example of an infant depicted in a shroud, although he does not explain why only the youngest child is shown wearing one when his two siblings are fully dressed. The epitaph gives Richard Manfeld's age as nineteen; his sister Isabelle is just described as 'younge and feyre' and their half-brother John as simply 'young'.



Figure 96. Confirmation, stained-glass roundel from a set of the Seven Sacraments, originally from Wygston's House, 18 Highcross St, Leicester.

c. 1500–20.



Figure 97. Brass of Richard and Isabelle Manfeld and their young half-brother John, Taplow, Buckinghamshire. 1455.

*Shrouds and Burial*

As we have seen so far, medieval infants were swaddled in cloth and bound with swaddling bands for at least the first few weeks, if not months, of their lives, while on the other hand they were given a special white cloth or 'chrisom' to wear at their baptism. Franklyn believed that the chrisom was a white kerchief that 'was worn, as a kind of shawl to enwrap the child, in actual fact for the first month of its life, and in the event of death within that span it was used as a shroud, being secured about the diminutive frame by means of a linen sere-cloth'.<sup>68</sup> It would seem proper to bury infants in their chrisoms as a token of their baptized state; the special power attributed to the sanctified cloth might even have been believed to protect the children and guarantee their entry into Heaven. Whether surviving babies wore their chrisom consistently until their mother's purification seems, however, questionable, especially if the cloth was thereafter to be converted for church use.

There is virtually no archaeological evidence for any clothes worn by infants at burial in the medieval or early modern period. Archaeologists often have difficulty finding the remains of neonates at all, for infants were often buried in a separate area of the churchyard. Moreover, neonatal bones are particularly subject to decay; nothing usually remains of the textiles in which they were wrapped for burial.<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, perhaps on the 'evidence' of chrysom effigies, some authors have suggested that medieval infants were actually buried in swaddling clothes.<sup>70</sup> When the small joint tomb of Humphrey and Mary de Bohun (children of Elisabeth, Countess of Hereford and daughter of Edward I) was opened during its removal from the north wall of the chapel of St John the Baptist at Westminster Abbey in 1936, it was found to contain the 'wrapped' remains of these two infants; photographs were taken, but it was decided not to

<sup>68</sup> Franklyn, *Brasses*, p. 101.

<sup>69</sup> Personal communication from Dr Jenny Wakely, Pre-Clinical Sciences, University of Leicester, who has long been working on the human remains from excavated burial sites. See also Daniell, *Death and Burial*, pp. 124–28.

<sup>70</sup> For example, Julian Litten, *The English Way of Death: The Common Funeral Since 1450* (London: Hale, 1991; repr. 1992), p. 61: 'some scholars have maintained that it was not unusual to save a remnant of one's swaddling clothes — particularly the chrysom cloth — for this purpose'. Curiously, Litten also explained a 'chrysom' as 'a narrow linen band' that could be added as a head-covering to the 'funeral swaddling', although his book covers a much longer time span. Nonetheless, this idea was reiterated in Daniell, *Death and Burial*, p. 43.

disturb or investigate the bodies any further.<sup>71</sup> Although it is dangerous to draw any firm conclusions from the photographs alone, both Bohun children look equally mummy-like in their burial wrappings, albeit different in size; it is also important to note that the faces of both children were completely covered, as one would expect from shrouded corpses, in contrast to the live faces shown on chrysom effigies. Tests carried out at the time indicated that the Bohun children's 'wrappings' were probably made of hemp, a material more likely for winding sheets than for chrisoms or swaddling clothes, especially in the case of aristocratic children.<sup>72</sup> Neither child, in any case, would have matched the criteria for the traditional 'chrisomer', as Mary was about one and a half years old when she died in February 1305, and Humphrey some five weeks old at his death only a few days after his mother's purification in October 1304.<sup>73</sup>

Relatively few 'chrysom' effigies provide dates of birth and death or the age of the child, so that it is rarely obvious whether one is dealing with a proper 'chrisom child'. The epitaph on the chrysom brass of the merchant's son Thomas Greville at Stanford Rivers, Essex, merely mentions that he 'discessyd in his tendyr Age, the viii day of Marche, the yere of oure Lord God A 1492', and the only remarkable aspect of his appearance is the decorative chevron pattern on his swaddling bands.<sup>74</sup> Even if the age is given, the chrysom figure itself may show no further distinguishing features. The brass at Lavenham, Suffolk, of Clopton, son and heir of Sir Simonds D'Ewes and his wife Ann Clopton, tells us that the boy died in 1631 when only ten days old, but there is nothing distinctly different about his swaddling clothes. On the other hand, the epitaph beneath a brass of c. 1505 at Chesham Bois, Buckinghamshire, reads: 'Of Roger Lee gentelman here lyeth the sonne, Benedict Lee crysomer' (Figure 98).<sup>75</sup> Like Thomas Greville,

<sup>71</sup> Charles Peers and L. E. Tanner, 'On Some Recent Discoveries in Westminster Abbey', *Archaeologia*, 93 (1949), 151–55 and plate XXXIIc; see also Joan Tanner, 'Tombs of Royal Babies in Westminster Abbey', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 16 (1953), 32–33.

<sup>72</sup> Peers and Tanner, 'On Some Recent Discoveries', p. 154.

<sup>73</sup> See the surviving account of daily household expenses of Humphrey de Bohun in London, The National Archive, PRO E.101. 365/17.

<sup>74</sup> Miller Christy and W. W. Porteous, 'On Some Interesting Essex Brasses', *The Essex Review*, 7.25 (January 1898), 46–47; William Lack, H. Martin Stuchfield, and Philip Whittemore, *The Monumental Brasses of Essex* (London: Monumental Brass Society, 2003), pp. 649–50.

<sup>75</sup> Lack, Stuchfield, and Whittemore, *The Monumental Brasses of Buckinghamshire*, pp. 37–38. It is worth noting that the OED defines 'chrisomer' as: 'A newly-baptized child, still wearing the chrisom or christening robe; an innocent babe; an infant that died within a month



little Benedict is also shown wearing decorated swaddling bands, but it is unclear whether these signal anything special; his age is not given and his face is that of a living child. Similarly, at Monkleigh in Devon, the incised memorial slab of Jane Prust, who died in childbirth in 1646 aged twenty-seven, shows the mother reclining with a swaddled infant in her arms while the epitaph underneath describes the child as her 'chrisome sonne'; the child's name is not given, however, and the wider meaning of the word 'chrisome' does not even guarantee that he was actually baptized before dying.<sup>76</sup>



Figure 98. Brass of Benedict, 'chrysome' son of Roger Lee, Chesham Bois, Buckinghamshire. c. 1505.

of baptism', with the first quoted example dating from 1574–75.

<sup>76</sup> Greenhill, *Incised Effigial Slabs*, II, plate 153c.

So were children swaddled for burial at all? Many authors appear to have unquestionably accepted chrysom effigies as evidence for how deceased babies were dressed for burial.<sup>77</sup> Yet it seems curious to apply a custom designed to safeguard the proper growth of babies' limbs to dead children, and in that respect it is hardly surprising to find in a much later portrait by an anonymous Dutch artist of quadruplets born in Dordrecht in 1621 that only the three surviving babies are shown swaddled, whereas the stiff little corpse of their deceased sister Elisabet is laid out on a pillow in a white shift-like sleeveless shroud with a ruff and with a wreath around her head.<sup>78</sup> The alert faces of the three living siblings also offer an obvious contrast to the closed eyes of little Elisabet, who, according to the text on the painting, died not long after birth. One occasionally finds images of stillborn babies completely swaddled, for example in miracle scenes where infants miraculously return to life so that they can be baptized, but it is never clear whether this reflects actual practice or simply artistic convention. Toddlers were certainly not treated differently from adults when it came to the preparation of the corpse for burial. A scene in the autobiographical 'costume book' by Matthäus Schwarz of Augsburg shows a premature burial scene with a woman holding the shrouded body of a small child, its face completely hidden beneath the sewn-up winding sheet; in the caption above the image, Schwarz relates how on 22 November 1499 at the age of two years and nine months he was believed to have died and was about to be buried when he suddenly began to show signs of life.<sup>79</sup> One can compare this scene to another stained-glass roundel from Leicester, showing a burial scene as one of the Seven Corporal Acts of Mercy; the corpse being lowered into the grave is completely wrapped in a winding sheet with a mortuary cross on his chest (Figure 99). This type of metal cross, of which many examples have been

<sup>77</sup> Compare Coster, 'Tokens of Innocence', pp. 280–81: 'what many of these "chrysom" brasses actually depict are young children, who were swaddled or buried in the only sort of clothes they were likely to wear at that age, single sheets of cloth', although he appears to contradict this earlier on p. 279 with the remark that: 'It is far from clear that any of these children are depicted as ready for burial'.

<sup>78</sup> Oosterwijk, 'Chrysons, Shrouds and Infants', p. 53 and fig. 8; *Pride and Joy*, ed. by Bedaux and Ekkart, cat. 19.

<sup>79</sup> See the illustrations in Klaus Arnold, *Kind und Gesellschaft in Mittelalter und Renaissance: Beiträge und Texte zur Geschichte der Kindheit*, Sammlung Zebra, Series B, II (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1980), plate 5 (Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Brunswick, H. 27, Nr 67 a, 2), and in Riché and Alexandre-Bidon, *L'enfance au Moyen-Age*, p. 85 (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS allemand 211, fol. 4<sup>v</sup>).



Figure 99. Burial, stained-glass roundel from a set of the Seven Corporal Acts of Mercy, originally from Wygston's House, 18 Highcross St, Leicester. c. 1500–18.

found in medieval cemeteries, probably signified another sacrament: *viz.* that of extreme unction.<sup>80</sup> Similar crosses may also be observed on the shrouds of the resurrected in some late medieval Doom paintings, such as the large red cross on

<sup>80</sup> For examples of mortuary crosses from a medieval plague mass grave at Greyfriars, see Alex Werner and others, *London Bodies* [exhibition catalogue] (London: Museum of London, 1998), pp. 65–66 and fig. 5. I am grateful to Mr Philip Lankester for this reference. Crosses can also be seen on the head, breast, and lower half of a shrouded corpse in a burial scene depicted in an English book of hours of c. 1460–70 (Edinburgh, University Library, MS 308, fol. 66<sup>v</sup>); see Kathleen S. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts 1390–1490*, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, 6 (London: Miller, 1996), cat. 113 and plate 420.

the breast of a shrouded corpse lying in a coffin in the Doom painting in the parish church of North Leigh, Oxfordshire. Whether the crosses on the chrysom figures of Elyn Bray, Margaret Cryppys, and John Eyre are mortuary crosses or specific tokens of baptism is difficult to establish, but they obviously serve a similar purpose.

It is interesting to note that Margery Kempe described herself as crying while 'swathing' the Christ child as it reminds her of his later suffering and death, thus indicating a link in her mind between swaddling and shrouding.<sup>81</sup> There certainly are visual similarities between swaddling and winding sheets, which explains why some shrouded figures have been mistaken for swaddled infants while the latter have been interpreted as shrouded for burial. An example of the former are the recumbent swathed figures on the side panels of the alabaster tombs of Thomas White (d. 1482) and his son John White (d. 1507?) with their wives at Tenby, Pembrokeshire: these figures are shown in a separate panel away from the living relatives, but there is nothing that denotes them as swaddled infants.<sup>82</sup> The similarities between swaddling and shrouding are even closer in Romanesque art, where winding sheets on corpses are held together by criss-cross bands, as can be observed in illuminated scenes of the Raising of Lazarus and the Raising of the Dead in the Winchester Psalter of c. 1150–60.<sup>83</sup> The fact that the word 'swaddled' came to be synonymous in the seventeenth century with 'shrouded' further adds to the confusion.<sup>84</sup> In both cases, of course, the body is completely wrapped in cloth, although the crucial difference is that the face of the swaddled living infant is always left bare.

This brings us to the vital question: do tomb effigies present the deceased as alive or dead? Admittedly, there are shroud and cadaver effigies that emphasize death and decay, but the majority of English effigies show the deceased dressed not for burial but in costume appropriate to their gender and status in life. For this reason, knights are shown wearing armour as a sign of their status, even though they might never have worn armour while alive and certainly were not buried in it. Anne Astley's laced dress may emphasize her recent pregnancy, but

<sup>81</sup> *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 19.

<sup>82</sup> Oosterwijk, 'Chrysoms, Shrouds and Infants', p. 58 and fig. 15, with thanks to Miss Sally Badham. The figures were described as 'chrysoms' in E. Laws and E. H. Edwards, 'Monumental Effigies, Pembrokeshire', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 6th series, 12 (1912), 6–19.

<sup>83</sup> London, British Library, Cotton MS Nero C IV, fols 19 and 31.

<sup>84</sup> The OED quotes an example of 1611: 'I would onelie wish, to haue that one ceremonie at my buriall, which I had at my birth; I mean, swadling'.

her brass bears no relation to her apparel for burial (which would have been a mere shroud) nor probably to the dress she actually died in. Furthermore, the open eyes of these effigies do not necessarily mean that the deceased is presented as if alive, but may rather reflect the belief in the bodily resurrection at the Last Judgement when the elect may behold the face of God.

In general, medieval effigies can tell us something about dress worn in life, even though there are many pitfalls with retrospective effigies, as well as artistic licence and convention; they are not, however, accurate representations of the deceased or of the clothes they would have worn in death. The same is true for 'chrysom' effigies. Some may well commemorate true 'chrisomers' in the strict sense of the word, that is, infants who died before their mother's purification. However, as I hope to have shown here, it is highly debatable whether the swaddling clothes they are shown wearing on their monuments actually do represent these very baptismal 'chrysom' cloths that they are traditionally believed to have been buried in. Instead, just like adult effigies, chrysom effigies show infants in the costume appropriate to their status and age, *viz.* the swaddling clothes they were expected to wear in the earliest phase of infancy. The reality at burial was different, although the same for young and old alike: most people were buried not in their finery, but in a simple shroud. As such, there was a curious symmetry between the swaddled infant in the cradle and the shrouded corpse in the tomb, as emphasized in some medieval depictions of the Ages of Man or the Wheel of Life.

### *Conclusion*

Tragically it was not uncommon for medieval infants to die within the first few days, weeks, or months after birth. Many of these short lives were never recorded officially, and the majority of these casualties were certainly never commemorated through monuments. However, with the increasing focus on the family in the fifteenth century, more and more people chose to have all their offspring displayed on their monuments, including children who had failed to survive.<sup>85</sup> A telling example is the row of eighteen incised 'weepers' at the feet of

<sup>85</sup> Although children had been included as weepers on medieval monuments much earlier, they were not always depicted as infants, even if they had died in early infancy. See the discussion in Sophie Oosterwijk, "A Swithe Feire Graue": The Appearance of Children on Medieval Tomb Monuments', in *Family and Dynasty*, ed. by Eales and Tyas, pp. 172–92.



Figure 100. Weepers at the feet of Francis Tanfield (d. 1558) and his wife (alabaster monument), Gayton, Northamptonshire.

Francis Tanfield (d. 1558) and his wife on their alabaster monument at Gayton, Northamptonshire (Figure 100); great care appears to have been taken to depict the dead children in correct chronological order amongst their living siblings, with initials carved underneath each living and dead child.<sup>86</sup> Even those who had died in early infancy were not forgotten, and some were even given memorials in their own right, such as Elyn Bray at Stoke D'Abernon.

Although these effigies of swaddled infants may now seem alien to modern viewers, to contemporaries they were testimony both to the grief felt at such an early loss and to the blessed state that these innocents would surely enjoy in Heaven.<sup>87</sup> After all, however short-lived, every human creature was possessed of an immortal soul that would ultimately face eternal salvation or damnation. This is evident from the joint brass at Sheriff Hutton in Yorkshire, commemorating the twins Dorothy and John Fenys or Fiennes who died in 1491, presumably after receiving the sacrament of baptism, although no age or dates of birth and death are given (Figure 101).<sup>88</sup> The badly worn brass shows two rather disproportionate cocoons with tiny heads resting on tasselled cushions, but the criss-cross bands across their bodies are the unmistakable characteristic of swaddled babies. The Latin epitaph sums up the feelings of the parents who may have lost their first offspring in these two infants:

<i>Hic Dorethea ffenys cu' fre Joh'e quiescit</i>	Here Dorothy Fenys rests with her brother John.
<i>In celis lauro Donat' uterq; virescit</i>	Both flourish in Heaven, having been given a laurel wreath.
<i>Thomas Dacre Baro sua consors Anna parentes Illor; fuera't clara virtute fruentes A° d'ni 1491</i>	Thomas Dacre, Baron, and his wife Anne were their parents who rejoiced in their shining virtue. Anno Domini 1491

<sup>86</sup> Although the swaddled children are almost as tall as their fully dressed living counterparts, the criss-cross bands suggest that they represent infants rather than shrouded older children. Curiously, one swaddled child has been squeezed on top between the daughters on the right, almost as an afterthought.

<sup>87</sup> In this I disagree with the bald statement in Nigel Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 52: 'Certainly, we should not imagine sentiment as the motive for those patrons who paid for those tiny effigies of swaddled children which are such a familiar feature of post-Reformation English monuments'. I am grateful to Dr Phillip Lindley for drawing my attention to this.

<sup>88</sup> Sophie Oosterwijk, 'A Chrysom Brass at Sheriff Hutton, Yorks', *Transactions of the Monumental Brass Society*, 16 (2002), 471–73.



Far from being merely two more statistics, or casualties to an all too common premature death, the Fenys twins were remembered by their parents with a brass that shows them for what they were when alive — cherished infants still in the swaddling stage, albeit depicted rather naively — while at the same time expressing the fond hope that their innocence would find its reward in Heaven.



Figure 101. Joint 'chrysom' brass to the twins Dorothy and John Fenys or Fiennes (d. 1491), Sheriff Hutton, Yorkshire (North Riding).

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# Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing

## Textiles and their Metaphors in the Late Middle Ages

Christianity is a religion of clothing. To become a priest or a nun is to take the cloth. The Christian liturgy is intimately bound with veiling objects and revealing them. Cloths hide the altar, making it all the more spectacular when it is revealed. Fragments of imported silk cradle the relic, thereby giving identity to the dessicated bone. Much of that silk came from the east, meaning that a material of Islamic origin was a primary signifier of sanctity in Christianity. *Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing* brings together twelve essays about text and textile, about silk and wool, about the formation of identity through fibre. The essays bring to light hitherto unseen material, and for the first time, establish the function of textiles as a culturally rich way to approach the Middle Ages. Textiles were omnipresent in the medieval church, but have not survived well. To uncover their uses, presence, and meanings in the Middle Ages is to reconsider the period spun, draped, clothed, shrouded, and dressed. Textiles in particular were essential to the performance of devotion and of the liturgy. Brightly dyed cloth was a highly visible maker of meaning. While some aspects of culture have been studied, namely the important tapestry industry, as well as some of the repercussions and activities of cloth guilds, other areas of textile studies in the period are yet to be studied. This book brings an interdisciplinary approach to new material, drawing on art history, anthropology, medieval text history, theology, and gender and performance studies. It makes a compelling miscellany exploring the nature of Christianity in the largely uninvestigated field of text and textile interplay.



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*Cover image: Christ's winding cloth as one of the instruments of the Passion in a Flemish prayer book. MS Harley 3828, fol. 69r (London, The British Library. Reproduced with permission)*

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