



FIG. 1. *Hedwig Codex*, Silesia, 1353, fol. 12. Top: “Here the Tartars carry the head of Duke Henry, St. Hedwig’s son, on a lance to Castle Liegnitz.” Bottom: “Here St. Hedwig sees in a dream the soul of her son, Duke Henry, borne by an angel into Paradise”; Hedwig’s speech scroll reads: “Do not weep, dearest ones; it is God’s will.” Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, Ludwig XI 7 (83.MN.126) (photo: The J. Paul Getty Museum).

JACQUELINE E. JUNG

The Tactile and the Visionary: Notes on the Place of Sculpture in the Medieval Religious Imagination

NIGHTTIME brought little rest to the heavenly messengers of the Middle Ages. Like St. Joseph so long before her,¹ St. Hedwig, duchess of Silesia, received a visit from an angel while sleeping one night in 1241 (Fig. 1). This one needed no words to convey its news: as it cradled in veiled arms a diminutive version of her eldest son Henry, who had been leading the Silesian defense against the invading Mongols, Hedwig understood that he had fallen. Sad as it was, the revelation emboldened Hedwig to comfort her female kin, and spared them all the unpleasant alternative means of learning the news: by witnessing Henry's head impaled on an enemy spear and brandished before the gates of the nearby Castle Liegnitz (Legnica).²

The images depicting this episode appear in the so-called *Hedwig Codex*, a Silesian manuscript made in 1353 and presently housed at the Getty Library (Ms. Ludwig XI 7; fol. 12^r). The bulk of the codex is comprised of the saint's long biography, known as the *Legenda maior* (composed ca. 1300 and incorporating much of her canonization dossier), and includes some sixty-one colored drawings that refer to—but, as we shall see, in no way straightforwardly illustrate—the

definitive episodes in the saint's busy life as an aristocratic wife and mother, co-founder and fervent supporter of a Cistercian convent at Trebnitz (Trzebnica), and nurturer of the urban poor.³ The depiction of Hedwig's dream departs from the narrative in two important ways: first, by bringing to view the supernatural mechanism by which the duchess learned of her son's death (the text merely relates the she knew of it three days before the ducal messenger arrived at her shelter); and second, by standing near the very beginning of the *Legenda*, despite the fact that the battle occurred just two years before Hedwig's own death in 1243.

On the verso of the image of Hedwig's dream is the famous full-page frontispiece in which, before the eyes of her descendents—the manuscript's patrons—Duke Ludwig I of Liegnitz and his wife Agnes, the duchess stands as a glorious visionary image herself (fol. 12^v; Fig. 2).⁴ Splendidly draped but uncrowned and barefoot, she gazes steadily toward us while clutching a series of small objects, most prominent among them an ivory statuette of the Virgin and Child of the kind that enjoyed vast popularity during the late thirteenth

1. I refer to the lecture by Pamela Sheingorn, "Ecce angelus Domini apparuit in somnis Ioseph: Seeing the Dreams of Joseph the Carpenter" at the Princeton conference, which immediately preceded my own paper.

2. A transcription and German translation of the text of the *Legenda maior*, composed around 1300, are included in the fascimile *Der Hedwigs-Codex von 1353, Sammlung Ludwig*, ed. by W. Braunsfels (Berlin, 1972), 2 vols.; the text pertaining to this episode is found in 2:109 (corresponding to fol. 73^v in the manuscript).

3. See J. Krása and K. Kratzsch, "Beschreibung der Handschrift und kunsthistorische Einordnung der Miniaturen," in *Hedwigs-*

Codex, 2:9–34. The best historical biography of Hedwig is J. Gottschalk, *St. Hedwig, Herzogin von Schlesien* (Cologne, 1964).

4. Cf. the catalogue entry in *Krone und Schleier: Kunst aus mittelalterlichen Frauenklöstern*, ed. by J. Frings and J. Gerchow (Bonn and Essen, 2005), 365–66, which states that the full-page miniature divides a sequence of images depicting the saint's life in the world—from her marriage to her death—from another sequence showing her holy life in the convent. In fact, the scenes of her death and burial appear near the end of the manuscript, exactly where they should in a chronological account.



FIG. 2. *Hedwig Codex* (83.MN.126), Silesia, 1353, fol. 12^v. St. Hedwig with Duke Ludwig of Liegnitz and Duchess Agnes. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, Ludwig XI 7 (83.MN.126) (photo: The J. Paul Getty Museum)

and fourteenth centuries (Fig. 3).⁵ As they rise from between Hedwig's fingers, the little figures embrace each other with unusual verve; the Virgin clasps the Infant's chest and pulls him toward her as he chucks her chin with one hand and hugs Hedwig's finger with the other.⁶ The intimate pose of the holy figures recalls that of the angel cradling Duke Henry's soul in the previous image; indeed, the close juxtaposition of the pictures makes the statuette of mother and child seem almost a materialization of Hedwig's own maternal tenderness toward her lost son, even if the text makes no such claims.

What the author of the *Legenda* does tell us, later in the text, is of Hedwig's special devotion to the Mother of God, which prompted her always to "carry on her person a little image of [Mary] in ivory (*ymaginem eburneam*), often holding it in her hands so that she could gaze upon it lovingly. Looking at it strengthened her devotion and aroused her to even greater love for the glorious Virgin. When she blessed sick people with this image, they were instantly cured."⁷ No less than the statuette's iconography, then, its material qualities—its palpability, its easy portability—emerge here as essential factors in Hedwig's attachment to the image.⁸ If the text strikes a balance between the visual and tactile elements of Hedwig's devotion, the accompanying picture presents a different view (fol. 46^v; Fig. 4). Here the saint's eyes are directed not toward the ivory Virgin in her hands but toward larger sculptures of the church's patrons, Sts. Lawrence and Bartholomew, standing on an altar, the latter bearing his flayed skin over his shoulder like a grisly banner.⁹ In the adjacent scene, in which the heroine extends her *imaginem* to the lips of ill men and women, Hedwig again looks past, rather than at, the carved figures.

5. For other examples that predate the Hedwig Codex, see *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*, ed. by Peter Barnet (Detroit, 1997), 122, 124, 127, 144.

6. For further observations on the figurine, see J. F. Hamburger, *The Visual and Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Medieval Germany* (New York, 1998), 437–40.

7. *Hedwigs-Codex*, 2:94: "Matrem vero Domini inter alios sanctos, quia maiori, ut dignum erat, amplexabatur amore, ideo ipsius parvam semper apud se gerebat ymaginem, quam eiam eburneam sepe accipiens in manibus deferebat, ut ex dilectione sepius eam



FIG. 3. Ivory statuette of the Virgin and Child, Troyes, 18.5 cm high, ca. 1350. Victoria and Albert Museum (Inv. Nr. 7-1872) (photo: The Victoria and Albert Museum).

posset respicere et respiciendo devocius se valeret ad amorem gloriose virginis amplius excitare. De qua ymagine dum aliquando benediceret languidos, protinus curabantur."

8. On the format of the ivory, see E. Walter, "Hedwigs Stellung zur bildenden Kunst im Zisterzienserorden," in his *Studien zum Leben der hl. Hedwig Herzogin von Schlesien* (Stuttgart and Aalen, 1972), 13–35.

9. A similar sculpture of Bartholomew holding his skin draped over his arm, made ca. 1470, now stands in the Musée d'art et d'histoire, Fribourg, Switzerland.



FIG. 4. *Hedwig Codex*, Silesia, 1353, fol. 46^v, detail. “Here she displays fitting reverence to the saints, of whom she had many images and relics, and especially a little image of the Blessed Virgin. With this she blessed the sick and healed them.” Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, Ludwig XI 7 (83.MN.126) (photo: The J. Paul Getty Museum).

Nor do they look at her: rather, they squirm and shift positions in her hands, so as better to engage visually with their beholders—either the sick who kiss them, or us who watch from beyond the vellum. What we see, then, seems to be a vision of living sculptures—a vision that the saint herself can only feel.

But is it proper to think of our visual apprehension as privileged here, and to relegate Hedwig’s tactile perception to “mere” feeling? What happens if we imagine our way into the pictures, relinquishing our position as *beholders* and identifying instead with the body that *holds*? What role did tactile perception play

in those encounters with God that, for lack of a more precise term, we have been calling “visionary”? And what part did sculptured images, which appealed to the sense of touch more directly and vividly than any other medium, play in molding imaginative perception? As my title indicates, I want both to pay homage to and to build upon the model of the relation between devotional images and religious imagination forged in 1969 by Sixten Ringbom’s “Notes on the Place of Art in Late Medieval Private Piety” and honed so beautifully, twenty years later, in Jeffrey Hamburger’s essay “The Visual and the Visionary”¹⁰—a model that, over

10. S. Ringbom, “Devotional Images and Imaginative Devotions: Notes on the Place of Art in Late Medieval Private Piety,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 73 (1969): 159–70; and J. F. Hamburger,

“The Visual and the Visionary: The Image in Late Medieval Monastic Devotions,” *Viator* 20 (1989): 161–82 (revised version in *Visual and Visionary*, 111–48). D. Freedberg’s *The Power of Im-*

the last twenty years, has helped an entire generation of scholars understand something of the intelligence of medieval images, as vehicles of communication not only between artists and viewers but also between viewers and God, and something of their crucial role in shaping not only devotional practices but indeed the highest levels of theological discourse.¹¹ My essay makes no claim to comprehensiveness or finality, nor does it seek to diminish the significance of the visual issues that have so fascinated scholars in recent years. I wish, rather, to flesh out our picture of the medieval religious imagination by pulling forth those dimensions of perceptual experience that exceed the strictly visual, and engaging with artistic media that transcend the strictly pictorial. It is my hope that my paper will be regarded less as a conclusion to this volume's invitation to "look beyond" than as a provocation to keep looking *at* things—and to do so, perhaps, from some different perspectives.

Medieval Senses of Touch

In our quest to penetrate the medieval "mind's eye," or to "see how others saw," we have gained important insights into the conceptual complexity with which medieval people approached sight and its objects.¹² No less familiar to medievalists today than the Gregorian dictum that "pictures are the books of the unlettered"¹³ is the Augustinian hierarchy of visual modes invoked

ages: Studies in the History and Theory of Response (Chicago, 1989) also looms large in my thinking about this subject.

11. See especially the essays in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, ed. by J. F. Hamburger and A.-M. Bouché (Princeton, 2006); H. L. Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia, 2000); M. H. Caviness, *Visualizing Women in the Middle Ages: Sight, Spectacle, and Scopic Economy* (Philadelphia, 2001); and C. Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart: Narrative Effect in Pictorial Lives of Saints from the Tenth through the Thirteenth Century* (Berkeley, 2001).

12. Hamburger and Bouché, eds., *Mind's Eye* (as in note 11); *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. by R. S. Nelson (Cambridge, 2000).

13. See H. L. Kessler, "Gregory the Great and Image Theory in Northern Europe during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. by C. Rudolph (Oxford, 2006), 151–72.

by many of the authors in this volume—a model that, for all its authority, shifted in valence over the course of the Middle Ages in conjunction with the changing forms and functions of images.¹⁴ Paradoxically, even as we seek to understand the nature of Augustine's supreme "intellectual" vision, a variety of sight free from the material constraints of bodies and images, we are recognizing more and more the corporeality that undergirded medieval ideas of optics. Using very different materials, such scholars as Georgia Frank and Susannah Biernoff have shown that from late antiquity through the end of the Middle Ages, the visual process was conceived in fundamentally embodied, even tactile terms.¹⁵ The notion of optical rays shooting forth from active eyes to grasp a desired object or image, pull it back, and imprint itself within the supple matter of the brain—or, in a converse process, of self-replicating objects flying through the air into the eyes and minds of observers—is clearly enthralling to many of us medievalists, not least for its contrast with the aloof, cerebral understandings of visual perception and intellection characteristic of post-Enlightenment science.¹⁶

Yet for all the sexy "carnality" of medieval vision as we understand it—with its penetrations and exchanges, assimilations and transformations—both the extramission and intromission models of sight necessarily rely upon some *distance* between beholders and the things beheld. And although vision was always understood to be rooted in the body, medieval commentators them-

14. It is also crucial to recall that Augustine's writings were often mediated by other commentators, and that other Church Fathers, such as Jerome, held competing understandings of vision. The varieties of twelfth-century ideas about vision(s) are being explored by Andrew Kraebel, a Ph.D. student at Yale University.

15. G. Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2000); S. Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (London, 2002).

16. See D. C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago, 1981); and, as above, Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment*. For very different applications of medieval optical theory to art historical questions, see M. Camille, *Gothic Art: Glorious Visions* (New York, 1996); J. Bennett, "Stigmata and Sense Memory: St. Francis and the Affective Image," *Art History* 24 (2001): 1–16; and B. V. Pentcheva, "The Performative Icon," *Art Bulletin* 88 (2006): 631–55.

selves drew sharp distinctions between haptic and optical perception.¹⁷ Many shared with Aristotle the impression that vision, that most “spiritual” sense, which provided knowledge of things far away and did so for multiple percipients simultaneously, seemed nobler than the sense of touch, which was grounded in the individual body and relied on direct contact with external objects.¹⁸ For all its advantages, however, vision was recognized by other writers as weak and unreliable. Richard of St-Victor, in his commentary on the Apocalypse, provides us with a litany of flaws in the optical apparatus: “since [corporeal vision] is narrow, it does not comprehend the greatest things; since it is blunt, it does not discern the smallest; since it is lazy, it does not reach things far away; and since it is not attentive, it does not penetrate hidden things.”¹⁹ Visual stimuli, being distant, were subject to all sorts of interferences on their passage from object to brain—and people knew all too well that demons were apt to use visual illusions to deceive even the most devout.²⁰ The optical apparatus, moreover, was a delicate thing, vulnerable to the vagaries of penal law (blinding, of course, being a frequent punishment) and the more prolonged abuses inflicted by advancing age and bad lighting. The continued—even, in some cases, heightened—intellectual activity of the blind made clear that the sense of sight was not essential to mental acuity.²¹

Touch, by contrast, was a robust sense: it provided direct, immediate knowledge of the world, and, in its ability to distinguish dangerous objects from safe ones and good food from bad, was even indispensable for

life. Despite its apparent baseness, no less an authority than Thomas Aquinas asserted that tactuality—the capacity both to touch and to be touched—would be present in glorified human bodies after the Resurrection.²² In his commentary on Aristotle’s *De anima*, Aquinas elaborated that touch was the one bodily sense that people possessed “at a far higher degree of precision than ... any other animal.”²³ “The preeminence of touch in man,” he noted, “is the reason why man is the wisest of animals.” Countering the possible objection that sight is a superior indicator of “mental capacity,” Thomas reminded his readers that touch, being distributed throughout the body, “is the basis of sensitivity as whole,” so that “the finer one’s sense of touch, the better ... is one’s sensitive nature as a whole, and consequently the higher one’s intellectual capacity.” “Fine touch,” moreover, “is an effect of a good bodily constitution or temperament” in a way that fine vision or hearing, which revealed the sensitivity of only small portions of the body, were not.

Rooted in the flesh, the tactile sense connected people to the earth and all its material dangers; yet, properly controlled, it could also lead to God. The elevating power of touch comes to view in a drawing from a twelfth-century manuscript made in Heilbronn Abbey, in which generic male figures clamber up a ladder whose rungs are identified with the five senses (Fig. 5).²⁴ In contrast to most medieval theoretical constructions of the sensory hierarchy—and to modern understandings of cognitive development, where touch is most elemental—*vis[us]* forms the very first step one

17. See R. Jütte, *Geschichte der Sinne: Von der Antike bis zum Cyberspace* (Munich, 2000), 41–114.

18. Aristotle, *On the Soul. Parva Naturalia. On Breath*, trans. by W. S. Hett (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), Book II, Chs. 7–11.

19. Richard of Saint-Victor, *In Apocalypsim Joannis*, Migne PL 196: 683–888 at 686; trans. by A. Kraebel; also discussed by B. Nolan, *The Gothic Visionary Perspective* (Princeton, 1977), 35–38; and M. Caviness, “‘The Simple Perception of Matter’ and the Representation of Narrative, ca. 1180–1280,” *Gesta* 30 (1991): 48–64.

20. See L. Bitel’s contribution to this volume; as well as N. Caiciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 2003).

21. On the valences of sightlessness in the Middle Ages and be-

yond, see M. Barasch, *Blindness: The History of a Mental Image in Western Thought* (New York, 2001).

22. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles, Book 4: Salvation*, trans. by C. J. O’Neil (Notre Dame, 1975), ch. 84, par. 14, 322–23.

23. T. Aquinas, *Aristotle’s De Anima in the Version of William of Moerbeke and the Commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. by K. Foster and S. Humphries (New Haven, 1951), 303. This and the following remarks appear in the chapter on smell (lec. 19, pars. 482–85, pp. 303–4). Contrasting smell and taste, which Thomas considers “a modality of touch,” leads Thomas into the excursus on the latter sense from which the quotations above are drawn.

24. Jütte, *Geschichte der Sinne* (as in note 17), 91, gives no identifying information beyond its origin at Heilbronn Abbey and its present location in the Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nuremberg.



FIG. 5. The Ladder of the Senses. Drawing in a manuscript from Heilbronn Abbey, 12th century, now in the Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nuremberg (photo from R. Jütte, *Geschichte der Sinne: Von der Antike bis zum Cyberspace* [Munich, 2000], 91).

25. See *Virtue and Vice: The Personifications in the Index of Christian Art*, ed. by C. Hourihane (Princeton, 2000); *Time in the Medieval World: Occupations of the Months and Signs of the Zodiac in the Index of Christian Art*, ed. by C. Hourihane (Princeton, 2007).

26. See E. Sears, "Sensory Perception and Its Metaphors in the Time of Richard of Fournival," in *Medicine and the Five Senses*, ed. by W. Bynum and R. Porter (Cambridge, 1993), 17–39; C. Nordenfalk, "The Five Senses in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 48 (1985): 1–22.

27. On touch as an "extreme," see Jütte, *Geschichte der Sinne* (as in note 17), 81–83.

takes upon entering the world. Passing up over *auditus*, *gustus*, and *odoratu[s]*, one finally reaches *tactus*; at this point the ladder cleaves into two strands, one, endowed with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, leading the person up toward heaven, and the other plunging him down into the demon-seething pit of hell. In contrast to the Virtues and Vices or the Labors of the Months,²⁵ the five senses had no stable iconography in medieval art; they could take the form of prancing horses, young women, doors labeled with bodily emblems (an eye here, an ear there), or, as at Heilbronn, a ladder.²⁶

In theological, scientific, and pictorial discourses alike, tactuality was positioned, along with sight, as an extreme sense; unlike the uncontrollable, strictly receptive senses of hearing, smell, and taste, touch registered and reflected the will of the percipient.²⁷ The stern signs in art museums warning visitors not to touch the objects heighten our awareness of the urge to enhance our visual experience with physical contact, and call attention to the processes of self-control that restrain us from running hands or fingers along sumptuous surfaces.²⁸ Unlike sight, which, if not consciously channeled, absorbed all stimuli within the visual field regardless of their spiritually beneficial or corruptive qualities, an active touch grasped only what it wanted.²⁹ An episode from Jacques de Vitry's *Vita of Marie de'Oignies* (written shortly after her death in 1213) makes this abundantly clear.³⁰ When one of the young beguine's trusted male friends broke his usual decorum and "clasped her hand from an excess of spiritual affection," he instantly "felt the first masculine stirrings rise within him." Upon hearing Marie quote Christ's admonition that the Magdalene not touch him

28. See also J. Hall, "Desire and Disgust: Touching Artworks from 1500 to 1800," in *Presence: The Inherence of the Prototype within Images and Other Objects*, ed. by R. Maniura and R. Shepherd (Aldershot, 2006), 145–60.

29. Active touch must be distinguished from passive touch, which registers stimuli encroaching from outside: cold winds, rain, physical punishment, etc.

30. Jacques de Vitry, *Life of Marie d'Oignies*, Book II, Ch. 75, in *Two Lives of Marie d'Oignies*, trans. by M. H. King and H. Fleiss (Toronto, 1998), 118.

(John 20:7), the embarrassed young man “withdrew from her presence and thereafter . . . carefully guarded himself against such temptations.”³¹

For many clerical and monastic writers, who championed the abnegation of sensory delights in both cloister and world, the perils of *tactus* seem to have outweighed its salvific promise. The shift, in the thirteenth century, toward exclusively visual devotional practices—from looking at relics through transparent stones or glass³² to *Augenkommunion*, the consumption of the Eucharist through the eyes rather than the mouth³³—seems to confirm the pre-eminence of opticality in the medieval sensory apparatus. Yet as numerous historians of religion are showing, many medieval writers—male and female, lay and religious—used the more immediate bodily sense of touch, as well as that of taste, to express and explore their hopes for communion with God.³⁴ Even if people agreed that the *visio Dei*, the sight of God’s own face, would be the final and greatest reward of the Elect in Heaven,³⁵ accounts of those extraordinary encounters we call “visionary” often extol touch as the contemplative’s ultimate prize on earth. In a period in which material images were a ubiquitous component of devotional practice, what better way to imagine divine union, which could only take place in the infinitely dark (or infinitely bright) realm of intellectual vision, than as immediate bodily contact?

Along with the sermons of Bernard of Clairvaux and the poems of Hadewijch,³⁶ the visionary writ-

ings of the abbess Gertrude of Helfta (1256–1301/2) are especially rich in their evocations of multisensory modalities of divine communication, and sometimes explicitly reflect on the tensions between visual and tactile perception. In one long and lavish liturgical vision in which Christ revealed himself in various areas of the choir during the Eucharistic celebration, Gertrude expressed not gratitude but frustration with the *Augenkommunion* she was being offered. “Lord,” she exclaimed after receiving the kiss of peace, “although I am now filled with the most incredible sweetness, yet it seems to me that *when you were on the altar you were too far from me*. Grant me, therefore, during the Blessing of this Mass, the favor of feeling that my soul is united to you.”³⁷ No one, then or now, could accuse Gertrude of being a lackadaisical spectator, especially of liturgical rites—yet no matter how dynamic her optical rays may have been as she shot them toward the Host, they clearly did not suffice. Christ responded by enabling Gertrude “to [feel] herself clasped to his breast and firmly held in divine union that was as sweet as it was close.” We can surmise from other episodes that this union needed to be brief as well. At an earlier point in the *Herald*, as Gertrude wondered how she could “sometimes be deprived of the Lord’s visit without feeling any particular distress,” Christ volunteered that “‘too great a proximity sometimes prevents friends from seeing each other clearly. For instance, if they are very near to one another, as sometimes happens in embracing and kissing, it is not possible for them to have

31. The episode of the *Noli me tangere*, and the related scene of the Doubting Thomas, both beg for further discussion, but raise too many issues to be dealt with here. For a compelling interpretation of the former scene, see J.-L. Nancy, *Noli me tangere: On the Raising of the Body* (New York, 2008).

32. C. L. Diedrichs, *Vom Glauben zum Sehen. Die Sichtbarkeit der Reliquie im Reliquiar* (Berlin, 2001); J. E. Jung, “Crystalline Wombs and Pregnant Hearts: The Exuberant Bodies of the Katharinenthal Visitation Group,” in *History in the Comic Mode: Medieval Communities and the Matter of Person*, ed. by R. Fulton and B. W. Holsinger (New York, 2007), 232–33.

33. Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment* (as in note 15), 133–64, presents this practice as emblematic of later medieval visuality.

34. See G. Rudy, *Mystical Language of Sensation in the Later Middle Ages* (New York, 1999). For olfactory and gustatory as-

pects, see R. Fulton, “‘Taste and See That the Lord is Sweet’ (Ps. 33:9): The Flavor of God in the Monastic West,” *Journal of Religion* 86 (2006): 169–204; A. W. Astell, *Eating Beauty: The Eucharist and the Spiritual Arts of the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 2006); and S. A. Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley, 2006).

35. For the theology behind this notion, see C. W. Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York, 1995), 279–317.

36. These are the main examples studied by Rudy, *Mystical Language* (as in note 34).

37. Gertrude of Helfta, *The Herald of Divine Love*, ed. and trans. by M. Winkworth (New York, 1993), Book 3, Ch. 17, p. 175; my emphasis.

the pleasure of seeing each other clearly at the same time.’ And with these words she understood that when grace is withdrawn, merits accumulate.”³⁸

In these accounts, vision and tactility are mutually exclusive and mutually reinforcing—two equally valuable sides of the same coin. In others, touch is given the upper hand. A vision recounted in the sister-book of the Swiss Dominican convent of St. Katharinenthal—one of a handful of chronicles from German convents detailing the virtues of the community’s members and the marvelous ways God rewarded them³⁹—tells of a Sister Berta von Herten, who was tormented by a yearning to leave her community and join a local forest-dwelling recluse called Guta. One day, while praying in the refectory after Mass, Berta “saw the Lord sitting high above her in the refectory, his face glowing like the sun, and waving to her with his hand.” When she approached him and flung herself at his feet, Christ “took her up and tilted her head toward his lap and treated her all sweetly and lovingly.” The mental image evoked here resembles nothing so much as the beautiful sculptures of Christ and St. John, which populated the Katharinenthal convent (and other monastic establishments) in various incarnations (Fig. 6).⁴⁰ As Berta reveled in the Lord’s embrace, she noticed “that the refectory wall had become like glass, and on the other side of the glass there was a little person behaving as though her heart would

break, so gladly would she come through the glass to our Lord.” Christ explained to Berta that the person was Guta of the Woods; “the glass that you see between her and me is the individual will; because she is not subject to a rule of obedience, she can never come as close to me as you.”⁴¹

For modern art historians attempting to visualize this episode, Albrecht Dürer’s famous woodcut of the perspectivist at work might spring to mind: on one side of a transparent barrier, a still figure intently gazing; on the other, a mass of desirable embodiedness.⁴² Dürer’s graphic stand-in may assume a cool, scientific attitude toward his object as he translates her form to paper, but for Guta vom Walde, casting her optical rays toward the Lord bears no such fruit. Indeed, seeing him without the possibility of touch seems to torment her more than not seeing him at all.

Even without considering the positive valences of touch in medieval understandings of the senses—an area of perceptual experience strangely neglected in the literature despite the widespread interest in the historicized body⁴³—our increased recognition of the theological import of vision in the Middle Ages and of the corporeal quality of medieval optics should cause us to pay careful attention to images that possessed real bodies and thus offered at least the potential of physical contact.⁴⁴ The large image of Christ and St. John in the nuns’ choir at Katharinenthal, in front of

38. Gertrude, *Herald*, Book 1, Ch. 17, p. 86. Similarly, Angela of Foligno, upon admiring a painted image of Saint Francis in the arms of Christ, heard the Lord promise to “hold [her] this closely—even closer than the eyes of the body can see”; quoted in Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment* (as in note 15), 136.

39. G. J. Lewis, *By Women, For Women, About Women: The Sister-Books of Fourteenth-Century Germany* (Toronto, 1996).

40. On the large figure reproduced here, which stood on an altar in the nuns’ choir, see *Krone und Schleier* (as in note 4), 409–11; three smaller versions from the same convent are discussed at 416–17. For a fuller discussion of the large group, see A. Knoepfli, *Die Kunstdenkmäler des Kantons Thurgau, Band IV: Das Kloster St. Katharinenthal* (Basel, 1989), 227, 231–34.

41. R. Meyer, *Das ‘St. Katharinentaler Schwesternbuch’: Untersuchung, Edition, Kommentar* (Tübingen, 1995), 102, *Vita* 12:4–17. For discussion of this passage with regard to transparency motifs, see Jung, “Crystalline Wombs” (as in note 32), 232–33.

42. The picture has come to emblemize modern viewing prac-

tices, as suggested by its use on the cover of J. C. Taylor, *Learning to Look: A Handbook for the Visual Arts*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, 1981). On the explicit rejection of touch in this woodcut, see Hall, “Desire and Disgust” (as in note 28), 148.

43. On the connection between the neglect of touch as a subject of investigation and the cultural predominance of two-dimensional media, see C. Classen, “Fingerprints: Writing about Touch,” in *The Book of Touch*, ed. by C. Classen (Oxford, 2005), 1–9. For an anthropological and philosophical perspective, see H. Böhme, “Der Tastsinn im Gefüge der Sinne: Anthropologische und historische Ansichten vorsprachlicher Aisthesis,” *Anthropologie*, ed. by G. Gebauer (Leipzig, 1998), 214–25. Important moves have been made toward incorporating touch into the study of historical response by Bennett, “Stigmata and Sense Memory” (as in note 16).

44. See also M. O. Boyle, *Senses of Touch: Human Dignity and Deformity from Michelangelo to Calvin* (Leiden, 1998); and G. A. Johnson, “Touch, Tactility, and the Reception of Sculpture in

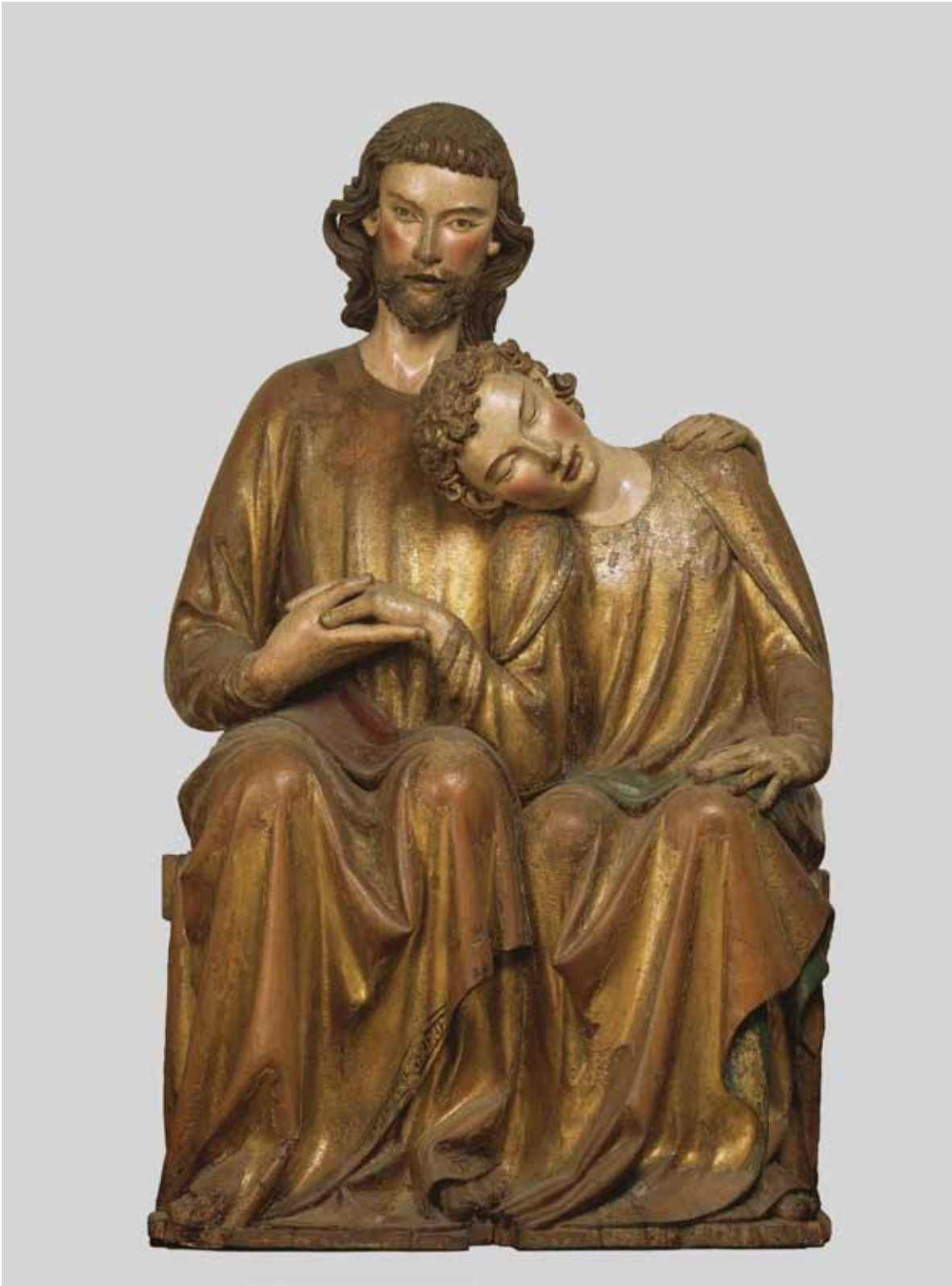


FIG. 6. Master Henry of Constance, Christ and St. John Group from Katharinenthal, ca. 1300, walnut with original polychromy, 141 cm tall. Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Inv. Nr. 2094 (photo: Museum Mayer van den Bergh).

which some sisters were observed to turn transparent or levitate,⁴⁵ shaped not only the iconography of Bernini's vision but also its elevation of embodied contact.⁴⁶ John's eyes are closed, so that all communication between himself and Christ occurs through the body. Christ presses one hand against his beloved's shoulder while pulling his right hand up into a *dextrarum iunctio*—the conventional gesture of marriage.⁴⁷ The tensed fingers of John's left hand splay out over his thigh, as if holding in place the green cloth that undulates, in tandem with Christ's red cloth, across his lap. Carved from a single block of wood, the figures form a compact mass within a smooth outer contour; internally, limbs and folds form a rhythmic composition of interlocking curves that unite the figures across the sculpture's frontal plane as well as in depth. If the *image* of Christ embracing his beloved provided its viewers with the iconography of divine union, the *object*, with its sensual projections and crevices, its overlappings and mergings, allowed them to imagine how union might feel. Although the iconography of Christ and John quickly found its way into manuscript painting, where it assumed other meanings,⁴⁸ the sensual aspects of embodied union could be conveyed best through a three-dimensional medium. It is surely no accident that this subject—along with the equally

tactile Pietà—became a favorite motif in devotional sculpture from its introduction at the turn of the fourteenth century.⁴⁹

It is likewise no accident that, when late medieval artists depicted visionary events—as in the wings of Rogier van der Weyden's *Bladelin Altarpiece*—they often portrayed the things seen in “the mind's eye” as sculptures hovering in space (Figs. 7–8).⁵⁰ Despite many medieval writers' notorious lack of linguistic distinction between carved and painted images (or even between material images and mental ones), such paintings affirm the contention by Hans Belting and other media anthropologists that, beyond iconography, the shapes and materials in which images (*Bilder*) present themselves deeply affect the way people absorb and respond to them.⁵¹ Scholars of modern visionary culture are making clear the integral connection between habits of looking developed through exposure to certain kinds of media and the structures of mental imagery—what people are capable of seeing and inclined to see in their minds or to read into their exterior environments.⁵² Modern American counterparts of Rogier van der Weyden's ancient seers, for example, accustomed to absorbing images from flat, brightly lit screens, are apt to gaze not through windows but *at* them—for example, in the cases at Clearwater, Florida, and Milton,

Early Modern Italy,” in *A Companion to Art Theory*, ed. by P. Smith and C. Wilde (London, 2002), 61–74, which came to my attention only as I was finishing revisions to this article. With the exception of J. Ziegler, *Sculpture of Compassion: The Pietà and the Beguines in the Southern Low Countries, c. 1300–c. 1600* (Brussels and Rome, 1992), scholars of medieval sculpture have been slow to address the tactile appeal of the works they study.

45. *Katharinentaler Schwesternbuch* (as in note 41), 130:42–44; 152:50–54.

46. The seminal work on the relation between visions and the images—both those they generate and those to which they refer—is E. Benz, *Die Vision: Erfahrungsformen und Bilderwelt* (Stuttgart, 1969).

47. J.-C. Schmitt, *La raison des gestes dans l'Occident médiévale* (Paris, 1990), 329.

48. J. F. Hamburger, *St. John the Divine: The Deified Evangelist in Medieval Art and Theology* (Berkeley, 2002), 105–11; M. Wehrli-Johns, “Das Selbstverständnis des Predigerordens im Graduale von Katharinenthal: Ein Beitrag zur Deutung der Christus-Johannes Gruppe,” in *Contemplata aliis tradere: Studien zum*

Verhältnis von Literatur und Spiritualität, ed. by C. Brinker et al. (Bern, 1995), 241–71.

49. As a motif extracted from a larger narrative, the Christ-John Group, along with the Pietà, was once regarded as the quintessential *Andachtsbild*: see W. Stechow, *Andachtsbilder gotischer Plastik* (Berlin, 1923); W. Pinder, *Die deutsche Plastik vom ausgehenden Mittelalter bis zum Ende der Renaissance* (Wildpark-Potsdam, 1924), 1:92–95; and H. Wentzel, *Die Christus-Johannes-Gruppen des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1960).

50. Cf. B. Rothstein, “Vision, Cognition, and Self-Reflection in Rogier van der Weyden's *Bladelin Triptych*,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 64 (2001): 37–55, which suppresses the sensory modalities beyond vision on which the painting plays.

51. See especially H. Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie: Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft* (Munich, 2001) and the essays in *Bild und Körper im Mittelalter*, ed. by K. Marek et al. (Munich, 2006).

52. W. A. Christian, Jr., *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* (Princeton, 1981); P. Apolito, *The Internet and the Madonna: Religious Visionary Experience on the Web* (Chicago, 2005).



FIGS. 7 & 8. Rogier van der Weyden (ca. 1399–1464), the *Bladelin Altarpiece*, ca. 1445. *Left wing*: The Tiburtine Sibyl reveals a vision of the Mother of God to the emperor Augustus. *Right wing*: The Three Magi behold the star in the form of the Infant Christ. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (photo: Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, N.Y.).

Massachusetts—discerning in trapped condensation the flickering outlines of familiar holy images.⁵³

In a culture in which three-dimensional images were far more publicly accessible than those in two dimensions, it comes as no surprise that sculptures provided the direct impetus for, and were the subject of, much visionary experience in medieval Europe.⁵⁴ In certain respects, sculptures are more “user-friendly” than manuscript paintings, easier to perceive as animated—especially in the flickering candlelight of dark church buildings. Our customary reliance on photographic reproductions makes it all too easy to forget the embodied presence of sculptures, and the power of their ability to mimic the volumes, masses, textures, and even scale of living human forms, their sometimes aggressive intrusions into our real space, and their obedience to the rules of motion parallax, which causes the shape of things to shift in conjunction with a beholder’s movement.⁵⁵ At the same time, large sculptures displayed on altars, screens, and beams in medieval churches were visually accessible to multiple persons at once, and had the advantage over living bodies of being predictable in their positioning and bodily poses. Predictable, at least, in theory; their very fixity made it all the more thrilling when sculptures slipped into animate life.

* * *

53. See D. Morgan’s contribution to this volume. For photographs of the images at Clearwater and Milton—and many more apparition sites—see http://www.visionsofjesuschrist.com/miraculous_images.htm.

54. See E. Vavra, “Bildmotiv und Frauenmystik: Funktion und Rezeption,” in *Frauenmystik im Mittelalter*, ed. by P. Dinzelsbacher and D. R. Bauer (Ostfildern bei Stuttgart, 1985), 201–30. Even when written accounts likened a visionary visitor to a painting—as in the case of St. Teresa of Ávila analyzed by L. Corteguera in this volume—the painted depiction itself shows Christ in the form of a robust, shadow-casting sculpture, resembling the late Gothic Ascension Christs that were hoisted into church vaults during rituals; see J. Tripps, *Das handelnde Bildwerk in der Gotik* (Berlin, 1998), 150–54 and Abb. 45, 53–55, 60c.

55. Insightful discussions of the phenomenology of figural sculpture are offered, from very different standpoints, by T. Flynn, *The Body in Sculpture* (London, 1998) and K. Gross, *The Dream of the Moving Statue* (Ithaca, 1993).

56. For eyewitness reports, with photographic documentation, see www.visionsofjesuschrist.com.

Moving Crucifixes in Medieval Europe

When statues of Jesus, Mary, or other saints come to life today—as they do with surprising frequency⁵⁶—their range of mobility is quite limited, with most movement confined to the eyes: gazes shift, eyelids blink, tears flow.⁵⁷ Crucifixes generally displayed greater flexibility in the eyes of medieval visionaries, detaching their limbs from the cross or opening their mouths to address or even kiss devotees. St. Hedwig’s experience with an animated crucifix in the convent at Trebnitz is characteristic of such encounters. As the nuns dined one evening, Hedwig entered the abbey church, kissed their choir stalls, and flung herself onto the ground before the altar, where there loomed a large “*ymag[o] crucifixi*” with a “formidable expression.”⁵⁸ As she prayed, the figure of Christ “removed its right hand and arm from the cross; extending it, he blessed her” and, with a sonorous voice, promised to grant all her requests. Although the text does not indicate that Hedwig saw the crucifix move—it was a “voyeuristic” sister, spying on her from a doorway, who reported the activity⁵⁹—the accompanying picture (fol. 24^v; Fig. 9) shows an alert Hedwig kneeling at the mangled feet of a life-sized crucifix that closely resembles a fourteenth-century *crucifixus dolorosus*, such as that in the church of St. George in Cologne (Fig. 10).⁶⁰ Blood drips from Christ’s attached arm and gushes from his side wound

57. For case studies of sculpture animation in the early twentieth century, see W. A. Christian, Jr., *Moving Crucifixes in Modern Spain* (Princeton, 1992).

58. *Hedwigs-Codex* 2:78, where Hedwig is seen “*procedentem seque prosternentem et referentem more solito gracias omnium Creatori ante altare ibidem in honore virginis gloriose constructum, cui supereminet crux non parve magnitudinis, expressam continens venerandam ymaginem crucifixi. Ubi dum in oracione prostrata moram faceret, ut solebat, ymago iam dicta manum et brachium dextrum de ligno crucis absolvens extendensque ipsam benedixit dicens voce sonora: Exaudita est oracio tua et, que postulas, inpetrabis.*”

59. On “voyeurism” in medieval images, see P. Klein’s essay in this volume.

60. On this example, see G. Hoffmann, *Das Gabelkreuz in St. Maria im Kapitol zu Köln und das Phänomen der Crucifixi dolorosi in Europa* (Worms, 2006), 73–75.

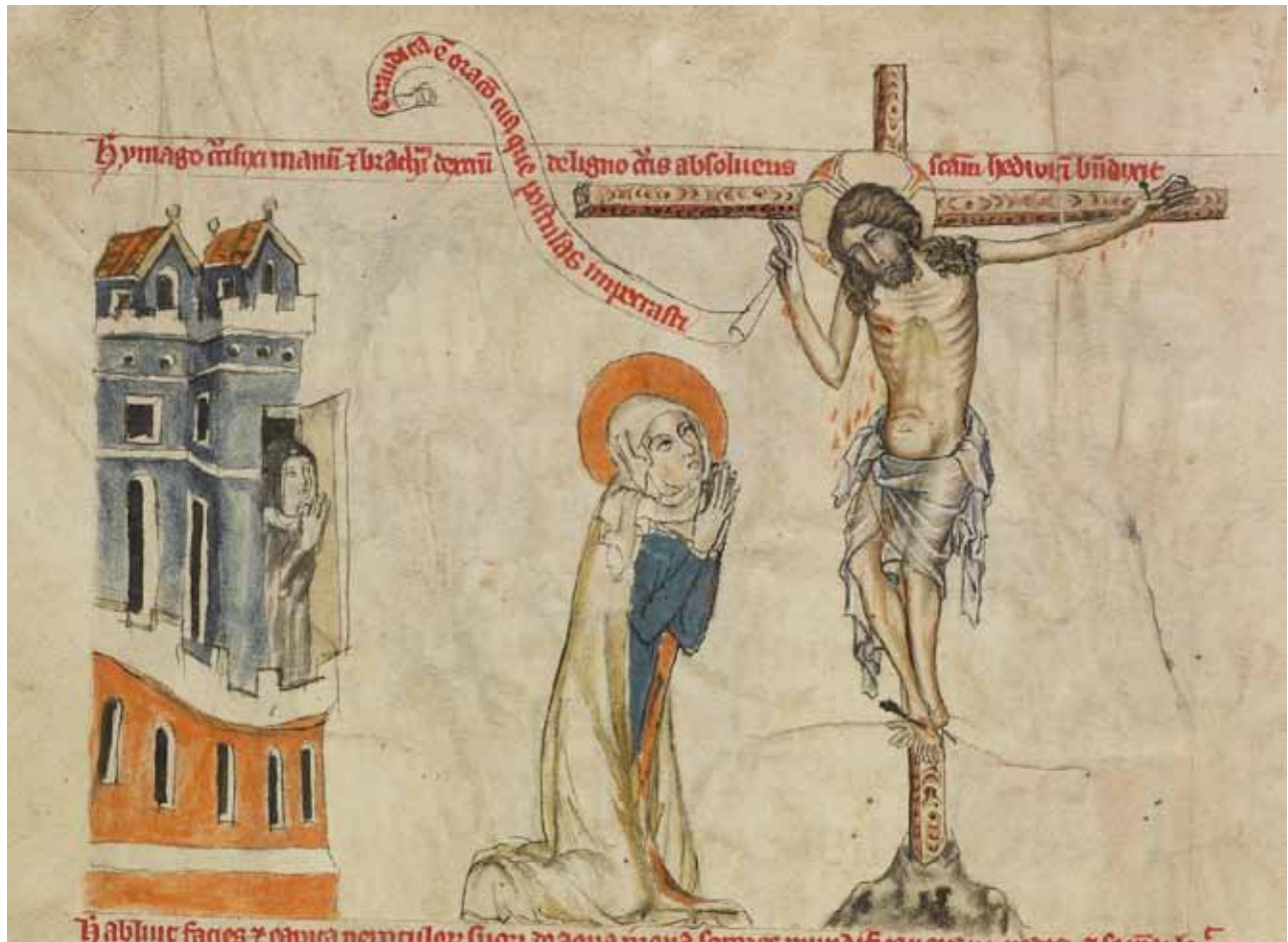


FIG. 9. *Hedwig Codex*, Silesia, 1353, fol. 24^v, detail. “Here, detaching his right hand and arm from the cross beam, the image of the crucifix blesses St. Hedwig.” Christ’s speech scroll reads: “Your prayer has been heard. You will receive what you have requested.” Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, Ludwig XI 7 (83. MN.126) (photo: The J. Paul Getty Museum).

as Hedwig gazes toward his ashen, asymmetrical face. Taken in conjunction with the text, which *denies* Hedwig the sight of the sculpture, the image reveals what the saint apparently envisioned in her prayers: a God whose merciful spirit could overcome even the basest abjection—abjection rendered so palpable in contemporary representations.

Encounters with animated crucifixes did not always provide comfort. Take the case of the nun Lukardis, who entered the Cistercian convent in Oberweimar

(Saxony) in 1274 and died in 1309⁶¹—just as the grisly *Gabelkreuze* were coming into vogue. Lukardis had already gained renown within her community both as a faster of unusual stamina and as an unwitting performance artist whose body was prone to spring into fantastic contortions or launch into strange movements with little obvious motivation.⁶² Praying one day during a period of illness, Lukardis “saw herself, in spirit, move into a certain portal (*per quoddam ostium*), in which she discovered Jesus Christ as if newly

61. On this saint, see A. M. Kleinberg, *Prophets in Their Own Country: Living Saints and the Making of Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1992), 101–21.

62. For Lukardis’ marvelous behavior, see C. W. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1989), 113–14, 131–32, 203.



FIG. 10. *Crucifixus dolorosus* in Church of St. George, Cologne, ca. 1350–75, walnut with original polychromy, 166 cm high (photo: author).

attached to the cross, shredded by the flail and piteously drenched with blood.” Having “looked closely” at this spectacle (*quem diligentius intuens*), the young woman fell at his feet, half-dead with horror (*praemortua et exanimis*). Upon Christ’s demand that she “rise up and help” him, the nun “lifted her eyes” to find

his right arm loosened from the cross, pathetically hanging down; this seemed to her to sharply amplify the suffering Christ’s pain. Approaching him with great compassion (*condolendo multo*), the beloved handmaiden tried to tie the arm back to the

cross with a silken thread, but could not succeed. She then began to lift his arm with her hands and, with groans, to hold it in place. The Lord then said to her: “Attach your hands to my hands and your feet to my feet and your breast to my breast, and thus shall I be helped by you to find relief (*ut levius habeam*).” Once the handmaiden of God had done this, she instantly sensed within herself the harshest pain of wounds in her hands, feet and breast, even though no wounds were visible to the eyes.”⁶³

These pains soon materialized as stigmata.

63. “Vita venerabilis Lukardis,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 18 (1899): 305–67 at 314: “Vidit etenim in spiritu se transire debere per quoddam ostium, in quo Iesum Christum recenter cruci quasi iam affixum, flagellis caesum repperit et sanguine miserabiliter per-

fusum. Quem diligentius intuens famula Dei praemortua et exanimis cecidit ante pedes eius. Cui Dominus: *Surgas*, inquit, *ut me iuves*. Per quod intellexit quod non tantum memoria passionis suae, immo deberet etiam ipsum compassione sedula adiuvare. Ad verba

Although Lukardis' *Vita* does not specify whether the holy woman was praying before an actual crucifix when her vision occurred, a profoundly sculptural imagination underpins the encounter. For one thing, the body of Christ does not float freely but has a specific spatial location: he hangs in a door, like the carved crucifix at Naumburg Cathedral.⁶⁴ And although the sight of the bleeding body places Lukardis in a heightened emotional state, it is the figure's tangible properties—the weight of the arm, its mass, its obedience to laws of gravity—that cause her both physical agony and, in the end, physical grace. As with contemporary crucifixes (see Fig. 10), no outward sign of divine transcendence lifts this Christ from the realm of agonized humanity. Seemingly incapable of returning his arm to the *patibulum* independently, the Crucified relied on the young woman's muscular energy to resume his accustomed position. Following that bodily contact, which left no room for sight, the pain conveyed by his twisted limbs and lacerated flesh transferred over to her.

Visionaries of the twelfth century, accustomed to a

very different view of the crucified Christ in monumental sculpture, had correspondingly different imaginative encounters with him.⁶⁵ The case of the abbot Rupert of Deutz sharing an open-mouth kiss with a crucifix that stood upon an altar is perhaps the best-known instance—and certainly most startling to modern sensibilities, to judge from the close attention and widely divergent interpretations it has received in the scholarly literature.⁶⁶ This was not, however, the only physical dalliance the great Benedictine enjoyed with an animate crucifix. Let us return to the account of 1126, to which Eric Palazzo has already introduced us.⁶⁷ When last we saw Rupert, he was dreaming of standing, at night, in the nave of an unspecified church in the Rhineland, his eyes fixed “on the image of the Savior nailed to the cross at an elevated spot” (*aspiciebat per visum in quadam ecclesia Salvatoris imaginem, cruci confixam in loco sublimi*). We saw how he noticed it looking back at him as if alive, “with a face like a king's, with radiant eyes and an awe-inspiring gaze” (*vivens imago visa est, vultu quasi regio, radiantibus oculis, aspectuque prorsus reverendo*); and we joined him

tamen Christi tandem viribus aliquantulum restituta, pavida respondit: *Quomodo te iuvare possum, mi domine? Et elevans sursum oculos vidit eius brachium dextrum solutum a cruce misere dependere, per quod sibi dolor patientis Christi augeri acrius videbatur. Unde accedens dilecta famula condolendo multo, tentabat filo sericeo sibi ad crucem ligare brachium; sed nequivit. Coepit igitur manibus tollere brachium eius et cum gemitu sustinere. Cui Dominus: Iunge, inquit, manus tuas manibus meis et pedes tuos pedibus meis et pectus tuam pectori meo, et sic ero per te adiutus ut levius habeam. Quod dum fecisset famula Dei, in momento sensit sibi inesse acerrimum dolorem vulnerum interius tam in manibus quam in pedibus et in pectore, licet nondum vulnera ad oculum apparerent.*” My translation differs slightly from Kleinberg's, *Prophets*, 104.

64. On the significance of this zone, see J. E. Jung, “Seeing through Screens: The Gothic Choir Enclosure as Frame,” in *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West*, ed. by S. Gerstel (Cambridge, Mass., 2006), 185–213.

65. On this point I disagree with Freedberg, *Power of Images* (as in note 10), who at 307 states that crucifixes “had for so long been the centrally ardent focus of all believers' attention that they had become fetishistic objects to a much greater extent than all other images, and their form was therefore more or less irrelevant to the kinds of response they engendered.”

66. S. Lipton, “‘The Sweet Lean of His Head’: Writing about

Looking at the Crucifix in the High Middle Ages,” *Speculum* 80 (2005): 1172–1208 at 1175–82; R. Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York, 2002), 309ff.; R. C. Trexler, “Gendering Jesus Crucified,” in *Iconography at the Crossroads*, ed. by Brendan Cassidy (Princeton, 1993), 107–19 at 108; C. W. Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, 1992), 86; R. Haacke, “Die mystischen Visionen Ruperts von Deutz,” in *Sapientiae Doctrina: Mélanges de théologie et de littérature médiévales offerts à Dom Hildebrand Bascour O.S.B.* (Leuven, 1980), 68–90 at 88–89; and C. Meier-Staubach, “Ruperts von Deutz literarische Sendung: Der Durchbruch eines neuen Autorbewußtseins im 12. Jahrhundert,” in *Wolfram-Studien XVI: Aspekte des 12. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by W. Haubrichs, E. C. Lutz and G. Vollmann-Profe (city, 2000), 29–52. E. Beitz, *Rupertus von Deutz: Seine Werke und die bildende Kunst* (Cologne, 1930) seeks in Rupert's writings the origins of certain trends in medieval iconography and representational practice, but does not mention the crucifix vision I discuss here.

67. See E. Palazzo's contribution to this volume. Rupert of Deutz, *Commentaria in Canticum canticorum*, ed. by H. Haacke (Turnholt, 1974), Liber v, 110; my translation. An eloquent new translation and analysis of this whole passage appears in Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion* (as in note 66), 334–41.

in marveling as the corpus “drew its right hand down from the beam and with great vividness made the sign of the cross over the viewer” (*manumque suam dextram de patibulo adducere, signaculum crucis super aspicientem edere magnifica expressione*).⁶⁸

Beyond its liturgical significance, the gesture reveals something about the medial specificity of this image in Rupert’s imaginative devotions, for, breaking the plane defined by the cross, it requires a three-dimensional limb capable of moving freely in space. On a representational level, it also breaks the body out of the cruciform position that the gesture itself reproduces. With these multiple disruptions of expected norms, vision and signs gave way to sensation and movement. In a sudden move that would leave him feeling his own limbs tremble “like the leaves of a tree when the wind shakes them violently” (*sicut tremit folium arboris, ubi ventus vehemens illud concusserit*), Rupert was rapt into the air (*in ipso visu . . . virtus signaculi videntem sursum rapuit*). “With his hands outstretched” he was drawn “to those hands attached to the cross, and likewise his mouth [clung to] that mouth, so that, in the end, it seemed that his whole body adhered to that other body” (*manibus expansis ad manus illius confixas cruci, ita ut os quoque ori, totumque corpus admotum videretur ejus corpori*). This is the same image of contact in which Lukardis’s vision had culminated—though in place of pain Rupert awakened to find himself “trembling with great delight” (*multum delectabiliter uigilans tremuit*).

The textual frame of this report is Rupert’s commentary on the Song of Songs, specifically the heady chapter 5 verse 4, wherein “My beloved put his hand through the key hole, and my bowels were moved at

his touch.” This context suggests that the import of the crucifix vision to Rupert had less to do with iconographic content *per se*—the seer’s special devotion to Christ crucified—than with the transcendent effects of tactility; for the visionary report was prefaced, with no transition, by a very strange account of another nighttime encounter. Here, Rupert recalls feeling “a certain likeness of a hand” (*quadam similitudinem manus*) creeping downward from the head of his bed to rest upon his chest.⁶⁹ Finding its touch “most delightful” (*erat autem tactus suavissimus*), Rupert responded by “grasping the hand with one of his own hands and stroking the sign of the cross upon it, wandering both inside and out; this motion seemed to please the hand very much” (*Et apprehendens illam suis utriusque manibus demulcebat signaculo crucis, peragrans intus et exterius, quibus delinimentis valde manus eadem delectari videbatur*). Although this silent interchange came to a halt when Rupert’s fingers moved too far up his companion’s arm—the person, it seems, did not want to be discovered (*quod ipse cuius erat manus, nollet se apprehendi*)—the monk allowed the experience internally by summoning up the line from the Song of Songs. Now he imagined the hand pressing into his chest “as if through a keyhole” to reach, caress, and hold his heart, and felt his “heart, within that hand, rejoicing with indescribable joy, leaping up and dancing about.”⁷⁰ This encounter shares with the crucifix vision not only the effect of rapturous trembling in the percipient’s body (*tremore sancto et divino*); both also place embodied contact with another being at the center of an intense emotional experience. Vision played no role whatsoever in the encounter with the hand except in its absence—and while the meeting of eyes and

68. Throughout the passage, the protagonist is a young woman (*adolescensula*), to whom Rupert refers in the third person. Although some scholars, such as P. Dinzlacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1981), 151, take this at face value, medieval commentators already recognized that Rupert was referring to himself; see Fulton, *Judgment to Passion*, 336–37.

69. Cf. Dinzlacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur*, 151, who identifies the hand as Christ’s. The text does not make this claim.

70. The practice of imaginative work, as described by M. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), and the role of

embodied experience in shaping thought, comes to view with special clarity here. Rupert, *Commentaria* (as in note 67), 110, where, after the hand leaves, “Memorabat etiam eadem adolescentula, scilicet anima nuptiis istis dedita, canticisque nuptialibus intenta, quoniam dilectus in visu noctis conspicuus, manum suam miro modo pectori ejus, quasi per foramen iniecit, et cor ejus intrinsecus apprehendit, tenuitque aliquandiu suavissime stringens, et gaudebat ineffabili gaudio cor illud intra manum illam subsiliens atque tripudians. Porro de tremore illo, tremore sancto et divino, tale experimentum sibi evenisse fideli narratione referebat. My translation; but see also Fulton, *Judgment to Passion*, 334–35.

the reading of gesture marked the starting point of the crucifix encounter, sight was transcended in the great, gravity-defying melding of bodies at the end.

Rupert's reports of animated crucifixes never downplay the fact that he was engaging with an artificial body—a large-scale sculpture in a particular spatial location, normally out of reach of viewers—and they demonstrate the combination of frustration and excitement that such distance could arouse.⁷¹ Space teased beholders, daring them to overcome the separation of vision and press against the desired body with hands and feet, breast and lips.⁷² The predilection for life-sized, robustly corporeal sculpted crucifixes as the dominant image in churches (as opposed to, say, low reliefs or paintings) extended the promise of satisfying bodily contact at the end of the journey. We do not know what object in particular so excited Rupert of Deutz, but enough eleventh- and twelfth-century crucifixes survive in Germany—as well as Spain, where they exhibit closely related forms—that we can gain a general sense of their character (Fig. 11).⁷³ Although many of these look relatively planar when seen head-on (as they are typically rendered in photographs), views from the lowered standpoint Rupert describe bring out a strong degree of plasticity: knees jut out and hips sway, bellies bulge and shoulders tip back, and heads tilt down as if observing be-

holders on the ground. An interest in the three-dimensional possibilities of sculpted crucifixes was present at the very inception of the genre—witness the tenth-century Gero Crucifix in Cologne Cathedral⁷⁴—and manifest an early, enduring interest in the fleshly humanity of Christ. The gore of the late Gothic *crucifixi dolorosi* may be absent in such cases, but the very physicality, the tangible presence, of Ottonian and Romanesque crucifixes gives them an insistently earthly character that our traditional designation “triumphal” belies.⁷⁵ With their three-dimensional simulation of flesh hammered into place—which the alert faces and lack of blood only make all the more uncanny—these early crucifixes hover forever “betwixt and between” triumph and abjection, life and death, body and image.

It was precisely the interpretative openness of these sculptures, I think, that made them resonate so powerfully in the imaginations of trained contemplatives. In their very ambiguity, their lack of clearly defined markers of meaning, the figures are best thought of as *embodied templates* for imaginative projection.⁷⁶ On them the pictorial “craft of thought,” about which Mary Carruthers has taught us so much, could be practiced and refined; radiant gazes and blessing arms could be beamed onto the bodies with minimal interference from overly naturalizing details.⁷⁷ Even in thirteenth-century crucifixes such as that at Naumburg

71. For the crucifixes displayed atop screens, see M. Beer, *Triumphkreuze des Mittelalters: Ein Beitrag zu Typus und Genese im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert* (Regensburg, 2005).

72. See, for example, the nun Margaret Ebner, whose yearning to “kiss ... and press ... close to my heart” a “large crucifix in choir” that was “too high up for me and ... too large in size” was satisfied when, in a dream, she “stood before the image” and “my Lord Jesus Christ bent down from the cross and let me kiss His open heart and gave me to drink of the blood flowing from His heart”; from the “Revelations,” in M. Ebner, *Major Works*, trans. by L. P. Hindsley (New York, 1993), 96.

73. On the Spanish example at The Cloisters, see *The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Europe in the Middle Ages*, with essays by C. Little, T. B. Husband, and M. B. Shepard (New York, 1987), 64–65. For German survivals, see J. Pfeiffer, *Studien zum romanischen Kruzifixus der deutschen Plastik* (Giessen, 1938); U. Engelmann, *Christus am Kreuz: Romanische Kruzifixe zwischen Bodensee und Donau* (Beuron, 1966); E. J. Hürkey, *Das Bild des Gekreuzigten im Mittelalter* (Worms, 1983); P. Thoby, *Le crucifix des origines au Concile de Trent: Étude iconographique* (Nantes, 1959). A recent

exhibition in Freising presented two newly restored wooden crucifixes, which the conservators dated (not without controversy) to the years around 900 and 1000, respectively; see *Kreuz und Kruzifix: Zeichen und Bild*, ed. by S. Hahn et al. (Freising, 2005), Cat. 11.19 (crucifix from Enghausen) and 11.20 (crucifix from Schaftlach), 191–98.

74. The best study remains R. Hausserr, *Der tote Christus am Kreuz: Zur Ikonographie des Gerokreuzes* (Bonn, 1963).

75. The contrast between the “triumphal” crucifixes of the early Middle Ages and the “suffering” crucifixes of the Gothic period has long been a staple in the literature; for a particularly sensitive formulation, see R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven, 1953), 237–38. For a nuanced analysis of the expressive shifts that accompanied formal changes in crucifixes of the early thirteenth century, see G. Lutz, *Das Bild des Gekreuzigten im Wandel: Die sächsischen und westfälischen Kruzifixe der ersten Hälfte des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Petersberg, 2004).

76. I owe this formulation to Sara Ryu, a Ph.D. student at Yale University.

77. Carruthers, *Craft of Thought* (as in note 70).

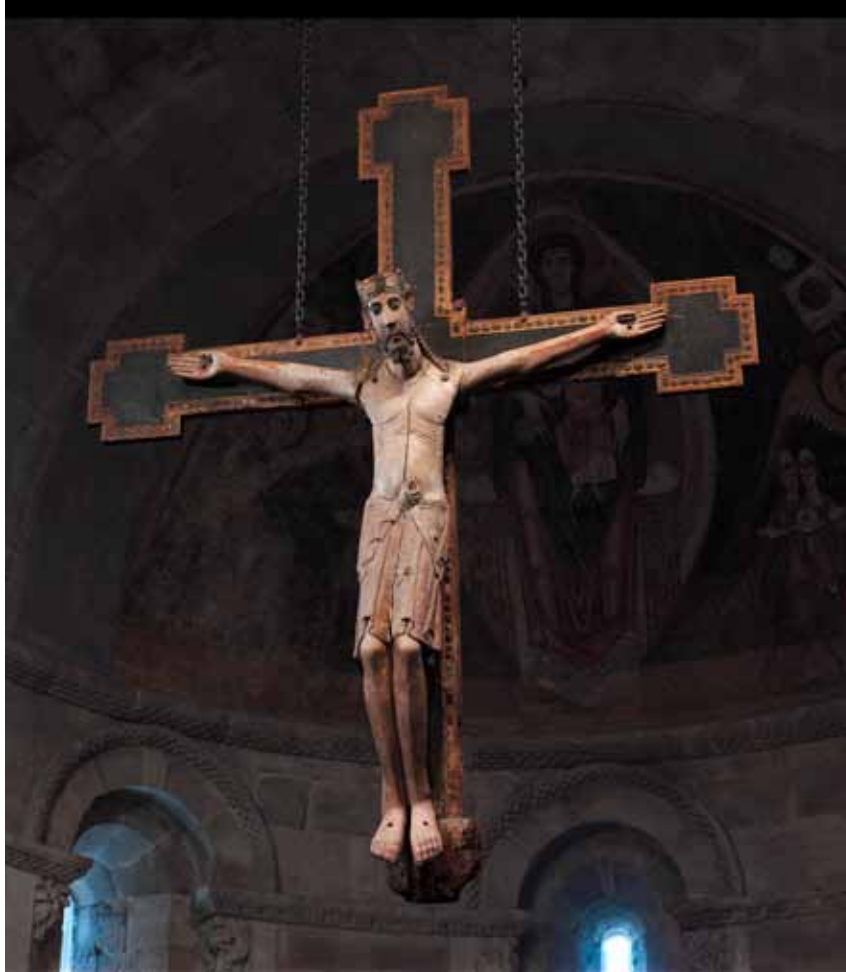


FIG. 11. Crucifix, Léon, ca. 1150–1200. Corpus: white oak and pine with polychromy, gilding, and applied stones; Cross: red pine, polychromy, 8 ft. 6½ in. × 6 ft. 9¾ in. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters (Samuel D. Lee Fund, 1935, 35.36a, b) (photo © The Metropolitan Museum of Art).

Cathedral (Fig. 12), which seem to veer so decisively toward a so-called “Gothic realism,” the movements of beholders generate a shifting array of perceived images, allowing even those with little time or talent for prolonged contemplation to experience the jolt of the body’s sudden animation (Fig. 13).⁷⁸ The sculpture that creates different meanings at different standpoints, that seems to move and speak in conjunction with a viewer’s own movements, and that allows or

teases with the prospect of touch, is no less “a simulacrum of the visionary” than the images in manuscripts.⁷⁹ It is therefore little wonder that, when men and women of various social stripes wanted to picture the experience of communion with God, they imagined themselves embraced by a crucifix.⁸⁰

It is likewise little wonder that, when those heavenly rays discussed by Hans Belting struck the body of Francis of Assisi, it was not into *any* image of the

78. For two different aspects of this phenomenon, see J. E. Jung, “Beyond the Barrier: The Unifying Role of the Choir Screen in Gothic Churches,” *Art Bulletin* 82 (2000): 622–57 at 631–32; and *idem*, “Seeing through Screens” (as in note 64), 205–10.

79. Hamburger, *Visual and Visionary* (as in note 6), 143.

80. For this trope in painting, see Freedberg, *Power of Images* (as in note 10), 306–7.

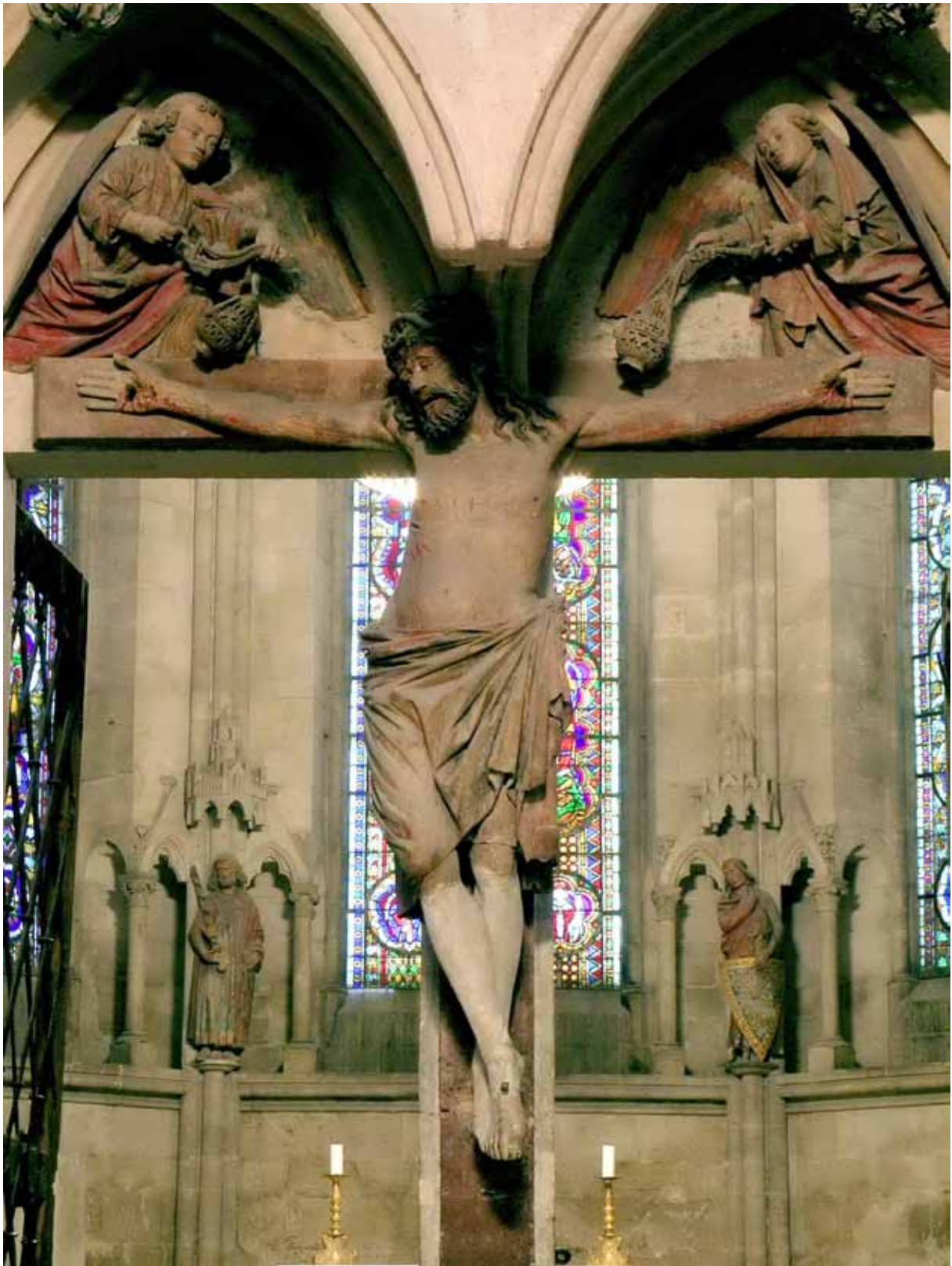


FIG. 12. Naumburg Cathedral, crucifix on west choir screen, limestone with polychromy, ca. 1249–55 (photo: author).



FIG. 13. Naumburg Cathedral, detail of crucifix on west choir screen, limestone with polychromy, ca. 1249–55 (photo: author).

crucified Christ that the saint transformed, but quite precisely into a *sculpted* one.⁸¹ For all their other differences, both of Francis' biographers insisted that the stigmata on his hands and feet were not the open perforations that painters would show but rather fleshly protuberances. Thus Thomas of Celano in his *First Life of St. Francis* (1229/30):

[Francis's] hands and feet seemed to be pierced through the middle by nails, with the heads of the nails appearing in the inner side of the hands and on the upper sides of the feet and their pointed ends on the opposite sides. The marks in the hands were round on the inner side, but on the outer side they

81. Cf. H. Belting's contribution to this volume. For a very compelling analysis on Francis' stigmatized body and its representation, see Bennett, "Stigmata" (as in note 16).

82. *St. Francis of Assisi, Writings and Early Biographies: Eng-*

were elongated; and some small pieces of flesh took on the appearance of the ends of the nails, bent and driven back and rising above the rest of the flesh. In the same way the marks of the nails were impressed upon the feet and raised in a similar way above the rest of the flesh.⁸²

Bonaventure's account in the *Legenda maior*, which definitively replaced Thomas' biography in 1266, retains and even amplifies the volumetric quality of the wounds. As with Rupert of Deutz, Francis' optical experience culminates and is superseded by physical sensation: "As the vision [of the seraph] disappeared, it left his heart ablaze with eagerness and impressed upon his body a miraculous likeness." And as with Lukardis of Oberweimar, physical sensation quickly passes into physical change:

There and then the marks of nails began to appear in his hands and feet, just as he had seen them in his vision of the Man nailed to the Cross. His hands and feet appeared pierced through the center with nails, the heads of which were in the palms of his hands and on the instep of each foot, while the points stuck out on the opposite side. The heads were black and round, but the points were long and bent back, as if they had been struck with a hammer; they rose above the surrounding flesh and stood out from it.⁸³

Far from receding (or rising) into the realm of the purely visual, Francis' stigmata persisted in their object-ness even after his death. As his brothers examined the corpse, they marveled to see

in his holy hands and feet . . . the nails which had been miraculously formed out of his flesh by God; they were so much part of his flesh that, when they were pressed on one side, they immediately jutted out further on the other side, as if they were made of solid material which reached right through.⁸⁴

Francis had typically concealed his wounds under baggy garments so that they would not be visible, let alone touchable, to his companions during life. After his death, the curious brothers became like so many

lish Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis, ed. by M. A. Habig, 2 vols. (Quincy, Ill., 1991), 1:309.

83. Habig, ed., *St. Francis*, 1:731.

84. *Ibid.*, 1:742.

Doubting Thomases, testing the wounds not just with eyes but also with fingers; unlike Thomas, however, they could not pierce the marvelous body, but rather found it pushing back against them.

Even the side wound—which, “just like the wound in our Savior’s side,” was open and penetrable, and often bled while Francis was alive—assumed the character of sculpture after his death. “The nails [in his hands and feet] were black like iron,” Bonaventure continues, “but the side wound was red, and the flesh was contracted into a sort of circle, so that it looked like a beautiful rose.”⁸⁵ The open wound over the heart thus did not offer an inlet into the saint’s body, but rather spilled out into the world, blossoming into a flower, insisting on its material presence even as it became an image.⁸⁶

Sculptural Iconography and the Haptic Imagination

My foregoing analysis suggests that medieval carvers of wood and stone deployed the sensuous qualities of their medium to prompt the desire that could lead to visionary experience. In the brief survey that follows I want to show that they also harnessed iconography and formal design to reflect on the sensory domains peculiar to their medium—and that they did so with no

less sophistication or self-awareness than those painters on whom my colleagues have shed so much light.⁸⁷ Just as Giotto and Apocalypse illuminators thematized the *gaze* in their images, providing models for viewers who, like St. John, peer into illusory worlds beyond the earthly sphere, so sculptors, from the very re-emergence of their medium as a monumental art form in the twelfth century, made the act of *touching* a central theme in their works. What pictorial medium was better suited to show the plunge of a finger into a wound, as in the relief of the Doubting Thomas at Silos (Fig. 14),⁸⁸ or the succumbing of a body to gravity—and struggle of others against it—such as we see in the Deposition Group carved into the Externsteine in Westphalia (Fig. 15)?⁸⁹ The removal of Christ’s body from the cross, of course, formed the subject of narrative sculptural ensembles throughout Europe long before Rogier van der Weyden translated the scene so movingly into paint (and it is important to recall here that his great painting at the Prado explicitly simulated sculpture).⁹⁰ The surviving examples of such groups in Italy and Spain, which likely played a role in extra-liturgical plays, all dramatize the interplay of weight, support, and movement that sculpture, as a medium, was specially equipped to convey (Fig. 16).⁹¹ Nicodemus, who tends to be shown either supporting Christ’s arms or grasping him around the chest or hips, was the

85. *Ibid.*, 1:742.

86. Bonaventure’s description anticipates such images as the Röttgen Pietà in Bonn (ca. 1300), where the coagulated blood bursting from each of Christ’s wounds echoes the forms of the roses on the base. For further discussion of this and related examples, see C. W. Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia, 2007), 176–77.

87. See, in particular, the contributions by H. Belting, P. Klein, and R. Emmerson in this volume.

88. E. Valdez del Álamo, “Touch Me, See Me: The Emmaus and Thomas Reliefs in the Cloister of Silos,” in *Spanish Medieval Art: Recent Studies*, ed. by C. Hourihane (Tempe, Ariz. and Princeton, 2007), 35–64.

89. W. Matthes and R. Speckner, *Das Relief an den Externsteinen: Ein karolingisches Kunstwerk und sein spiritueller Hintergrund* (Ostfildern, 1997) propose a ninth-century date for these sculptures, based on their close similarities to Carolingian ivory carvings.

90. Conversely, numerous sculptors of the fifteenth century would translate Rogier’s composition back into three dimensions, albeit on a smaller scale; see N. Verhaegen, “The Arenberg ‘Lamentation’ in the Detroit Institute of Arts,” *Art Quarterly* 25 (1962): 295–312; L. van Caster-Guette, “Réminiscences rogériennes dans la sculpture brabançonne,” in *Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire de l’art offerts à Professeur Jacques Lavalleye* (Louvain, 1970), 297–304.

91. For the spectacular ensemble from Erill la Vall (Lleida), now in Vic, whose characters have jointed arms, see *The Art of Medieval Spain, A.D. 500–1200*, ed. by J. P. O’Neill (New York, 1993), 316–18. For the Volterra group pictured here, and other Italian examples, see *Il teatro delle statue: Gruppi lignei di Deposizione e Annunciazione tra XII e XIII secolo*, ed. by F. Flores d’Arcais (Milan, 2005). On the relation of such groups to liturgical rites, see E. C. Parker, *The Descent from the Cross: Its Relation to the Extra-Liturgical “Depositio” Drama* (New York, 1978); H. Belting, *Das Bild und sein Publikum im Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1981), 224–44.



FIG. 14. Monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos, cloister, northwest pier, relief of the Incredulity of Thomas, ca. 1100 (photo: C. and E. V. del Álamo).

patron saint of medieval sculptors, and although this has been explained with reference to legends that he carved the first crucifix just after Christ's burial,⁹² it is tempting to think that it was his hands-on engagement with the corpse itself that made him a fitting prototype for creators of tactile arts.

At least some members of religious communities had occasion to assume the role of Nicodemus in Good Friday rituals, when they removed crucifixes from

92. C. Schleif, "Nicodemus and Sculptors: Self-Reflexivity in Works by Adam Kraft and Tilman Riemenschneider," *Art Bulletin* 75 (1993): 599–626.

93. See O. B. Hardison, Jr., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama*



FIG. 15. Externsteine (Westfalia), rock-hewn relief of the Deposition, late ninth or early twelfth century (photo: Bagradian, GFDL).

their usual locations and buried them elsewhere in the church.⁹³ Looking at the jointed *corpora* from the late Middle Ages—such as the devastatingly realistic example from Döbeln in eastern Saxony (Fig. 17)—one need not wonder that the suffering human Christ was such a vivid presence in imaginative devotions, or that visionaries such as Lukardis of Oberweimar felt such a strange mixture of grace and panic in his presence.⁹⁴ The hollow head of the Döbeln crucifix is pierced with

in the *Middle Ages* (Baltimore, 1965), 134–38; for the use of sculptures in those rites, see Tripps, *Handelndes Bildwerk* (as in note 54), 122–41; Parker, *Descent* (as in note 90).

94. See the exhibition catalogue *Zeit und Ewigkeit: 128 Tage in*



FIG. 16. Deposition Group from Volterra Cathedral, wood with modern polychromy, mid-thirteenth century (photo: Colum Hourihane).

small holes through which tufts of hair were pulled, adding to the already uncanny sense of verisimilitude that the sensitive modeling of surfaces, the naturalistic polychromy, and the flexibility of its limbs achieve.⁹⁵

Like the life-sized, bewigged effigies of English royals newly studied by Kristin Marek, this and other moveable crucifixes, in their relation to once living but now absent bodies, created an uneasy slippage between im-

St. Marienstern, ed. by J. Oexle, M. Bauer, and M. Winzeler (Halle an der Saale, 1998), 121, 130; for a view of this crucifix with its arms outstretched, see Tripps, *Handelndes Bildwerk* (as in note 54), Abb. 44. For the still unsurpassed survey of surviving examples, see G. Taubert and J. Taubert, "Mittelalterliche Kruzifixe mit schwenkbaren Armen: Ein Beitrag zur Verwendung von Bildwerken in der Liturgie," *Zeitschrift des deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft* 23 (1969): 79–121.

95. For a fully bewigged figure from Bad Wimpfen, see Tripps, *Handelndes Bildwerk* (as in note 54), color plates 10e and 10f. For further discussion of highly lifelike late Gothic crucifixes, see F. Joubert, "Stylisation et vérisme: Le paradoxe d'un groupe de Christs franconiens du XVème siècle," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 51 (1988): 513–23; and J. Paoletti, "Wooden Sculpture in Italy as Sacral Presence," *Artibus et historiae* 26 (1992): 85–110.



FIG. 17. Jointed crucifix, wood with polychromy, leather, linen, and hair, in Church of St. Nikolai, Döbeln (Saxony), ca. 1510 (photo from *Zeit und Ewigkeit: 128 Tage in St. Marienstern*, ed. J. Oexle, M. Bauer and M. Winzler [Halle an der Saale, 1998], 130).

itation and substitution, enabling beholders easily to see—and even feel—the represented persons materializing before them.⁹⁶

Anyone confronted with the reality—or even just the prospect—of handling the effigy of Christ had a ready model for imitation in sculptured Pietàs, which had become ubiquitous throughout Europe at least since the end of the thirteenth century (Fig. 18).⁹⁷ A group of doll-like figures of Mary and the dead Christ from the Rhineland (now in the Schnütgen Museum) is unusual in being comprised of detachable bodies;⁹⁸ the majority of medieval Pietà sculptors embraced, in different ways, the “exceedingly difficult” challenge for which Wölfflin would give Michelangelo so much credit—namely, of “placing the body of a full-grown man on the lap of a seated woman.”⁹⁹ Joanna Ziegler has distinguished between the *Art* of Michelangelo’s great work, with its celebration of pure marble materiality, its Classical calm, and its proud assertion of authorship, and the cultic functionalism, emotionalism, and strict focus on content that, in her view, characterize medieval renditions.¹⁰⁰ I should like to extend—

96. See K. Marek, *Die Körper des Königs: Effigies, Bildpolitik und Heiligkeit* (Munich, 2009).

97. On the development and significance of this theme in Germany, see Stechow, *Andachtsbilder*; Pinder, *Die deutsche Plastik*, 97–101 (both as in note 47 above); W. Passarge, *Das deutsche Vesperbild im Mittelalter* (Cologne, 1924); for French examples, see W. H. Forsyth, *The Pietà in French Late Gothic Sculpture: Regional Variations* (New York, 1995).

98. Tripps, *Handelndes Bildwerk* (as in note 54), Pls. 64a and 64b.

99. H. Wölfflin, *Classic Art: An Introduction to the Renaissance*, 5th ed. (London, 1994), 41.

100. J. E. Ziegler, “Michelangelo and the Medieval Pietà: The Sculpture of Devotion or the Art of Sculpture?” *Gesta* 34 (1995): 28–36; for a fuller discussion of this genre, see her *Sculpture of Compassion* (as in note 44). A different approach to the comparison between Michelangelo’s Roman Pietà and its medieval predecessors is offered by J. F. Hamburger, “‘To Make Women Weep’: Ugly Art as ‘Feminine’ and the Origins of Modern Aesthetics,” *Res* 31 (1997): 9–33 at 9–13.



FIG. 18. *Pietà* from Brunau am Inn, Salzburg or Passau, limewood with original polychromy, ca. 1435. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Skulpturensammlung, Inv. 7669 (photo: author).

and, ultimately, nuance—this distinction by considering the degrees of manual engagement between the two figures. Michelangelo departs radically from medieval traditions by making his Mary resist touching the body splayed across her mammoth lap (Fig. 19). As Christ lies cradled between her knees, she extends her left hand *away* from him; the fingers of her right hand, which lift his upper body, press not against flesh but against cloth. This distancing gives Christ's body

the character of a devotional image itself, to be gazed at in quiet adoration. Viewers are compelled to join Mary not in a dialogue with Christ but in what Wölfflin called a “mute monologue of anguish”—a form of *kontemplative Versenkung* that, for all this work's sumptuousness, is strictly hands-off.¹⁰¹

Michelangelo's forebears, by contrast, exploited the distinctive characteristics of the sculptural medium both to express connections between the figures and to

101. Wölfflin, *Classic Art*, 41 (as in note 99). The phrase “*kontemplative Versenkung*” (contemplative immersion) comes from E. Panofsky, “*Imago Pietatis: Ein Beitrag zur Typengeschichte des*

‘Schmerzensmanns’ und der ‘Maria Mediatrix,’” in *Festschrift für Max J. Friedländer zum 60. Geburtstag* (Leipzig, 1927), 261–308.



FIG. 19. Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), marble *Pietà* in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, 1498–99 (Photo: Stanislav Traykov, GNU).

explore the relations between visual and tactile sensibilities. One is hard-pressed indeed to find a medieval *Pietà* in which Mary's hands are not as active as her eyes.¹⁰² Her right hand always supports Christ's back directly, with her fingers sometimes pressing into his long hair; in most fourteenth-century examples, her left hand typically cradles his hand, lifts his wrist, or clasps his thigh or groin, while in fifteenth-century examples Mary might instead finger her veil, as if preparing either to wipe her own tears or to enshroud her son.

The varied manual activities of the Virgin ensure

that viewers will not see her performance as a “mute monologue” *about* her object of contemplation but rather as part of a dialogue *between* herself and an only temporarily muted other—a dialogue played out further through the interplay of opposing forms: male and female, active and passive, seated and lying, clothed and naked. Weights and masses, diagonals and curving lines, concave and protruding forms balance out or grind against each other in complex and ever-shifting ways. Christ's body may jut out from Mary's hands in stiff and angular lines (Fig. 20),¹⁰³ or droop from them

102. See the pictorial survey in Passarge, *Deutsches Vesperbild* (as in note 97).

103. This is the type Passarge, *Deutsches Vesperbild*, calls the “treppenförmiger Diagonaltyp” (36–49 and Figs. 1–17).



FIG. 20. *Pietà* from the Cistercian Church in Lubiąż (Silesia), wood with modern polychromy, 178 cm, ca. 1370. Warsaw, National Museum (Inv. No. Śr. 4) (photo: author).

in rubbery curves, as in the many depictions wherein Christ's body is miniaturized, as if he were a baby.¹⁰⁴ Whereas most *Pietà*s, like Michelangelo's, are oriented toward a dominant frontal viewpoint, the breathtaking example from Unna, now in Münster (ca. 1380), reveals itself fully only through the viewer's motion around it (Fig. 21).¹⁰⁵ Christ's legs wrap stiffly around the back of Mary's seat, their inert angularity amplified by the sumptuous swirls of her cloak, while her

arms enfold and lift his blocky torso tight against both her heart and her lap.¹⁰⁶ For all the muscularity of her grasp, slippage seems imminent; her left knee rises as if to wedge him into place. No one angle captures the pathos—or the sculptural virtuosity—of this rendition of interlaced bodies, with its spiraling movement toward ever greater unity and ever greater despair, as the faces of mother and son merge as if in a final kiss (Fig. 22).

104. Passarge, *Deutsches Vesperbild*, calls this type "Maria mit dem kindhaft klein gebildeten Christus" (50–55 and Figs. 18–23).

105. G. Jászai, *Gotische Skulpturen 1300–1450*, Bildheft des Westfälischen Landesmuseums für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte

Münster 29 (Münster, 1990), 59–61, with further literature; Passarge, *Deutsches Vesperbild*, 49 and Fig. 17.

106. A stylistically very different example, which likewise demands a viewer's movement, may be found in the Liebighaus in Frankfurt; see Passarge, *Deutsches Vesperbild*, 48 and Fig. 16.



FIG. 21. Two views of the *Pietà* from the parish church of St. Clemens in Unna; made in Mainz, walnut, ca. 1380. Münster, Westfälisches Landesmuseum (Inv. No. E 140 WLM) (photos and photomontage: author).



FIG. 22. *Pietà* from the parish church of St. Clemens in Unna, detail from right side; made in Mainz, walnut, ca. 1380. Münster, Westfälisches Landesmuseum (Inv. No. E 140 WLM) (photo: author).

Now, all these figures may to some extent serve as embodied analogues to the Eucharist in its monstrance,¹⁰⁷ and they certainly do give visible form to the many literary evocations of the Virgin's grief under the cross.¹⁰⁸ But as sculptural objects, they go well beyond the needs of cultic display or devotional immersion in subject matter. In their consistent thematization of weight, mass, and volume, despite a wide array of compositions and styles, they reveal a self-conscious sense of artistry on the part of their makers—a confident display of what sculpture can *do*. On a different register, in their consistent focus on the interaction of bodies, they impress upon viewers the significance of tactile sensation in any achievement of union with God. Mary's touch of Christ's flesh and hair calls attention to the sort of suspended animation in which this cadaver rests; whereas Michelangelo's Christ has already become an object for the pious gaze to contemplate, the medieval corpses are cradled and caressed as if they were still human. The gestures seem to materialize the voice of Mary in so many late medieval Passion plays and devotional tracts, as, grasping and kissing the lifeless limbs and pressing the body to her heart, she recalls her son's vibrant infancy and strains to detect lingering warmth in his cold flesh.¹⁰⁹ In that sense, the Pietà becomes an emblem of the medieval sculptural encounter itself—for what else were sculptures (as critics always scoffed) but lifeless matter?¹¹⁰ Yet they were lifeless matter that could—and did—come to life under the hopeful gazes of those who prayed before them.

Sculptures could also come to life in the fingers of devotees. The feet of the Baby Jesus, subject of

much tender attention in devotional handbooks such as the Pseudo-Bonaventurian *Meditations on the Life of Christ*¹¹¹—were especially apt to kick free from the material constraints of the medium, just as they kicked free from the Mother's body.¹¹² The experience of Sister Anne of Constance, in the Katharinenthal convent, is representative of large genre of miracle stories concerning animate images:¹¹³ “walking in front of the image of Our Lady holding Our Lord on her arm”—probably the large sculpture that stood in the nuns' choir (Fig. 23)—“she took the Baby's little foot [*füssli*] in her hand with great devotion, and felt it become flesh and blood.”¹¹⁴ In its very matter-of-factness, this account reveals that the touching of sculptures was an expected part of devotions, and suggests that the sense of touch, no less than spiritual vision, could be cultivated and sensitized through the process. Often this sort of haptic animation was an end in itself, but it could also form the starting point for larger revelations. When Adelheit Öthwins, fretting over her brother's decision to leave his monastic order, prayed before a statue of the seated Madonna with the Baby on her lap, the Child responded by kicking out his *füssli* for her to fondle until she felt it become flesh and blood; he then withdrew it and his Mother took over, consoling Adelheit with tender words.¹¹⁵

The alternation of animated roles in this case, with both Mary and Jesus responding directly to the contemplative, is typical of visionary encounters with the Virgin and Child groups that figured so prominently in the ecclesiastical and urban topographies of later medieval Europe (Fig. 24).¹¹⁶ Art historians have long located the significance of this type of Gothic sculp-

107. Belting, *Bild und Publikum* (as in note 91), 134.

108. W. Pinder, “Die dichterische Würzel der Pietà,” *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 42 (1920): 145–63.

109. See the Virgin's outburst in Henry Suso's “Little Book of Eternal Wisdom,” Ch. 19, in *The Exemplar, with Two German Sermons*, trans. by F. Tobin (New York, 1989), 264–65. Further examples are found in S. Sticca, *The Planctus Mariae in the Dramatic Tradition of the Middle Ages*, trans. J. R. Berrigan (Athens, Ga., 1988).

110. For debates that drew on the “lifeless matter” trope in Byzantium, see Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing* (as in note 11), 29–51; for a wider ranging analysis, see Freedberg, *Power of Images* (as in note 10), 378–428.

111. *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illuminated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. by I. Ragusa and R. B. Green (Princeton, 1961), 38.

112. On the prominence of the Infant's feet in Gothic sculpture, see M. Grandmontagne, *Claus Sluter und die Lesbarkeit mittelalterlicher Skulptur: Das Portal der Kartause von Champmol* (Worms, 2005), 365–382.

113. See also Freedberg, *Power of Images* (as in note 10), 301–16.

114. *Katharinentaler Schwesternbuch* (as in note 41), 107, *Vita* 23:1–13.

115. *Katharinentaler Schwesternbuch* (as in note 41), 139–40, *Vita* 53:1–11.



FIG. 23. Workshop of Henry of Constance, two views of standing Virgin and Child from Katharinenthal, ca. 1300. Oak with remnants of original polychromy and eighteenth-century garb, 171.5 cm tall (photo from I. Futterer, *Gotische Bildwerke der deutschen Schweiz* [Augsburg, 1930], figs. 30–31).

ture in the new, humanized relationship it conveys between the charming courtly Mother and her adorable infant—a relationship that emerges all the more forcefully through its contrast with the aloof, impersonal

Sedes sapientiae groups of earlier centuries.¹¹⁷ Medieval visionaries, by contrast, seem to have cared less about the figures' interactions with each other than about each character's engagement with themselves. The creators of these sculpture groups—of which the wonder-working Madonna in the south transept arm of Magdeburg Cathedral (ca. 1270–80), reproduced here, is a charming example—often encouraged such an approach by splitting the figures' attention in different directions, such that a beholder might feel addressed by the Virgin from one standpoint and by the Infant in another.¹¹⁸ The resulting *Mehransichtigkeitkeit* (orientation toward varying perspectives) of Gothic Madonna and Child groups could go some way toward explaining how, for example, the randy young men in preachers' *exempla*, who betrothed themselves to their local statue of the Virgin and were later thwarted in their amorous adventures with ordinary girls, were able so easily to imagine the baby away, attending exclusively to Mary's "body of unsurpassed beauty,"¹¹⁹ while monastic women could consistently zero in on the Infant.¹²⁰ Even when the Virgin also came to life in their visions, her role was to hand off her Child to the women, permitting them, however briefly, to assume her role as his guardian, and sometimes demanding him back again. In a vision at Katharinenthal, Adelheit of St. Gall once beheld "Our Lady walking through the choir carrying the Christ Child on her arm and bowing to each [lay] sister. When she reached the nuns who were singing [the antiphon 'Ave stella' to Our Lady], she gave each sister the baby to hold on her own arm."¹²¹

At Katharinenthal, a life-sized statue of Mary that

116. On the Magdeburg Madonna, shown here, see Ernst Schubert, *Der Dom in Magdeburg* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1994), 78–79. Central European museums, in particular the National Gallery in Prague's Cloister of St. Agnes, the National Museum in Warsaw, and the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg, are treasure-troves of vivacious, multi-directional Virgin and Child groups from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.

117. See Southern, *Making of the Middle Ages*, 238–39 (as in note 74). On *sedes sapientiae* sculptures, see I. H. Forsyth, *The Throne of Wisdom: Wood Sculptures of the Madonna in Romanesque France* (Princeton, 1972).

118. For a brilliant analysis of a particularly fine Madonna and

Child group's demands for and responses to mobile viewing, see Grandmontagne, *Claus Sluter* (as in note 112), 106–36.

119. See K. A. Smith, "Bodies of Unsurpassed Beauty: 'Living' Images of the Virgin in the High Middle Ages," *Viator* 37 (2006): 167–87.

120. See U. Rublack, "Female Spirituality and the Infant Jesus in Late Medieval Dominican Convents," *Gender and History* 6 (1994): 37–57.

121. *Katharinentaler Schwesternbuch* (as in note 41), 106, *Vita* 20:26–29. A similar vision occurred in the convent at Engelthal; see Vavra, "Bildmotiv," 207 (as in note 54).



FIG. 24. Three views of Madonna and Child, Magdeburg Cathedral, ca. 1270/80; over-life-sized stone figure with 19th-century polychromy (photos and photomontage: author).

occupied the nuns' choir seems to have played a crucial role in giving shape and substance to this and other visionary encounters in this convent (see Fig. 23).¹²² Despite the “extreme makeover” imposed on the figure in the eighteenth century, which trimmed down her waist and clipped her hair to accommodate a lavish Baroque wig and gown, her slightly downturned face and gaze still reveal the aura of psychological as

well as physical presence that made it easy for her to slip into life. Like many Madonna and Child groups of the time, the Virgin holds her baby out, away from her side, as if to offer him to passersby to touch—an invitation that, as we have seen, the sisters regularly accepted. If we hold this interactive potential in mind, the ubiquitous statues of that Madonna and Child that populate churches and museums assume new inflec-

122. See I. Futterer, *Gotische Bildwerke der deutschen Schweiz, 1220–1440* (Augsberg 1930), Pls. 30–32. For a color photo of the figures in their costumes, see *Krone und Schleier* (as in note 4), Cat. 311, 412–13.

tions. Although in some cases the figures direct their attention only toward each other, many guide and reward movement by providing, from certain angles, views of the Christ Child actively reaching out toward beholders.¹²³ The kind of engagement such sculptures seek with viewers can take humorous forms, as when the Madonna is posed as if ready to hand off the Baby to the nearest passerby (Fig. 25).

Such figures both responded to and stimulated people's desire not only to see but also to touch and play with the Infant, desire sparked, in no small part, by devotional handbooks such as the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* and other visionary writings themselves. The sisters at Katharinenthal and the numerous other convents that flourished in German-speaking lands during the fourteenth century regularly enjoyed the company of the Baby Jesus (*kindli*).¹²⁴ Summoned by their prayers during or after liturgical services, or during chores, meals, or illnesses, he would pop up to offer what they called *viel spiel*—great play—and with it, great joy.¹²⁵ The women's *gesichte* (visions) involved an infant who was sometimes primarily visual—seen from afar, like the Magi's apparition in the *Bladelin Altarpiece* (Fig. 8). But often they involved a solid, three-dimensional child that could, and wanted to, be held in the hands, hide under skirts, cavort in bed, suckle at breasts, or sit before his seer on the refectory table, a child that could press sweet apples into the hand and kisses onto the lips, a child that sometimes asked to be dressed or put into (or taken out of) bed.¹²⁶

123. Numerous examples can be found in the Cloister of St. Agnes in Prague, among them the Madonna of Žebrák, made in Prague ca. 1380.

124. See U. Rublack, "Female Spirituality" (as in note 120).

125. These visions, and their relation to material culture, form the subject of my paper "Viel Spiel: The Baby Jesus and the Play of Art in a Swiss Dominican Convent," which I first presented at Yale University in October 2007 and am preparing for publication. Transcriptions of the primary sources (most from the *Katharinenthaler Schwesternbuch*) will be included in that redaction.

126. See Lewis, *By Women* (as in note 39), 100–105; for further remarks on the kind of visions that transcend distance, including



FIG. 25. Standing Virgin and Child from Franciscan church, Plzeň, ca. 1430. Prague, National Gallery, Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia (photo: author).

In the Katharinenthal sister-book, like others of its genre, reports of the marvelous *kindli* tend to be lapidary at best. The most detailed accounts of such play with the Christ Child come from the highly personal *Revelations* of Margaret Ebner (1291–1351), a Dominican nun who resided in the Bavarian convent of Maria Medingen during the first half of the fourteenth century. Margaret's encounters with the Baby demonstrate with unparalleled clarity the close connections between sculpture, touch, and those marvelous experiences we call visionary. "I have a statue of our Lord as a child in the manger," she tells us:

I was powerfully attracted to it by my Lord with delight and desire and by His gracious request. This was spoken to me by my Lord: 'If you do not suckle me, then I will draw away from you and you will take no delight in me.' So I took the image out of the crib and placed it against my naked heart with great delight and sweetness, and perceived then the most powerful grace in the presence of God so that I began to wonder how our dear Lady could have ever endured the continuous presence of God.¹²⁷

Like Rupert of Deutz's elevated crucifix, Margaret's sculpture of the Baby Jesus was urged into animation by a process of concentrated, desirous gazing; as with both Rupert and Gertrude of Helfta, the distance involved in looking was overcome by the reward of intimate touch.¹²⁸

My investigations of other German conventual materials have led me to surmise that the *kindli* of women's visions were, in essence, immaterial, imagina-

tively generated versions of the sculpted Baby Jesus dolls that populated conventual chambers from at least the fourteenth century onward (Fig. 26).¹²⁹ The visions, I suggest, were conceived in the women's hands, as they held, fondled, and dressed the sculptures; they gestated in their minds as the women contemplated those interactions and re-performed them imaginatively (for example, creating fantastic outfits for the babies through the process of prayer);¹³⁰ and then they emerged into the world, beamed out through the nun's eyes so that she could see the baby superimposed on her surroundings.¹³¹

Another vision from Katharinenthal allows us to glimpse something of this process in action. One Christmas Day, Sister Cecilia von Wintertur felt a "great desire to see Our Lord as a little child. As she was contemplating this, she saw a tiny *kindli* walking on the altar. When the custodian Elsbeth von Stoffeln walked up to the altar, the Child went to her and followed her wherever her duties took her. She saw this the whole time that mass was being sung."¹³² Crucial for my purposes is the fact that this story appears not in Elsbeth's *Vita* but rather in *Cecilia's*; the custodian, indeed, was oblivious to her diminutive companion's presence. Evidently what made the incident worth recording was Cecilia's ability to summon up the Child in visible form and imprint him on the material world—the reversal of the optical process by which images typically impressed themselves on the eyes. The fact that, in many visions at Katharinenthal and elsewhere, the Child often races into the seer's hands,

Christ-Child visions, see Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur* (as in note 68), 146–50.

127. Ebner, *Major Works* (as in note 72), 132.

128. See also Ebner, *Major Works*, 134, where the Baby demands to be suckled and the seer happily obliges. These accounts are discussed further in R. D. Hale, "Rocking the Cradle: Margaretha Ebner (Be)Holds the Divine," in *Performance and Transformation: New Approaches to Late Medieval Spirituality*, ed. by M. A. Suydam and J. E. Ziegler (New York, 1999), 211–40, which likewise places emphasis on the tactile dimensions of nuns' encounters with the Baby.

129. Jung, "Viel Spiel" (as in note 122). To my knowledge, a catalogue of medieval Baby Jesus dolls remains a desideratum. Meanwhile, see *Spiegel der Seligkeit: Privates Bild und Frömmigkeit im Spätmittelalter*, ed. by F. M. Kammel (Nuremberg, 2000), 175–77;

Henk van Os, *The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages in Europe, 1300–1500* (Amsterdam, 1994), 100–1; *Zeit und Ewigkeit* (as in note 94), 104–5; and *Krone und Schleier* (as in note 4), 113 (a figure from Rostock who retains his fabulous outfit), 457–58.

130. T. Lentjes, "Die Gewände der Heiligen: Ein Diskussionsbeitrag zum Verhältnis von Gebet, Bild und Imagination," in *Hagiographie und Kunst: Der Heiligenkult in Schrift, Bild und Architektur*, ed. by G. Kerscher (Berlin, 1993), 120–51.

131. The ability to superimpose mental images on the physical world is characteristic of shamanic practices in various cultures; I draw here on R. Noll, "Mental Imagery Cultivation as a Cultural Phenomenon: The Role of Visions in Shamanism," *Current Anthropology* 26 (Oct. 1985): 443–61.

132. *Katharinentaler Schwesterbuch* (as in note 41), 136, *Vita* 47:1–6.



FIG. 26. Standing Baby Jesus with jointed arm, Oberlausitz, first quarter of fifteenth century; wood, with base and polychromy from the nineteenth century and silk and linen pants from the late seventeenth century, from Cistercian convent of St. Marienstern, Panschwitz-Kukau (Saxony) (photo from Dresden, Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, in *Zeit und Ewigkeit: 128 Tage in St. Marienstern*, ed. J. Oexle, M. Bauer and M. Winzeler [Halle an der Saale, 1998], 104).

adding pleasurable tactile sensations to the mental satisfaction of successful “thought-crafting,” testifies to the impact of the three-dimensional material substrate of the inspiring image.¹³³ It enables us to recognize the myriad sculptures of the seated, standing, or reclining Mary playing with her baby not just as evidence of the heightened devotion to the Virgin that characterized late medieval culture but also, more specifically, as mirrors of and models for people’s imaginative encounters with the Infant Christ.¹³⁴ And it brings us back, at last, to St. Hedwig.

When we encountered the duchess earlier, she was holding her ivory statuette of the Virgin and Child, using it as an instrument of private prayer, as a tool of social healing, and as an emblem of her devotion. We noticed that the figures seemed animated, shifting position from one scene to the next. Looking more closely at the images, and bearing in mind the interactive potential of sculptures, it becomes important to notice that the movements of the ivory figures register and reflect those of the living body that holds them: Mary holding the Christ Child becomes an analogue of Hedwig holding the sculpture, and vice-versa. As if in a kind of feedback loop, the little figures simultaneously are activated by the saint’s hands and provide a model for her own devotional acts. Watch how their bodies move: when they are clutched with one hand near Hedwig’s waist, Mary grasps Christ’s belly (Fig.

133. My understanding of the interaction among art, imagination, and visionary experience owes much to Carruthers, *Craft of Thought* (as in note 70).

134. For sculptures of Mary playing with the Baby in various ways, see *Krone und Schleier* (as in note 4), 454–55. An especially beautiful example is the relief of the Nativity at Katharinenthal from ca. 1330, reproduced in *ibid.*, 415.



FIG. 27. *Hedwig Codex*, Silesia, 1353, fol. 87. Top: "Here she healed Sister Jutta of a dangerous and fatal inflammation of her hand and arm." Bottom: "Here St. Hedwig is buried, and a radiance appeared and an exceedingly sweet fragrance wafted from her body." Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, Ludwig x1 7 (83.MN.126). (Photo: The J. Paul Getty Museum).



FIG. 28. *Hedwig Codex*, Silesia, 1353, fol. 137^v, detail. Translation of St. Hedwig's relics by clergy and nobles. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, Ludwig XI 7 (83.MN.126) (photo: The J. Paul Getty Museum).

4, left side); when they are extended toward the pursed lips of townsfolk, they lunge forward with lifted hands (Fig. 4, right side); when they are cradled against the chest, Mary lifts the baby against her own (Fig. 2).

And when they are nestled against the womb, as Hedwig lies on her deathbed, they merge together fluidly, like Christ embracing St. John (fol. 87; Fig. 27). Toward the end of the pictorial cycle, as her bodily daughters grieve and her monastic sisters sing, Hedwig herself becomes a kind of devotional sculpture, one with wonder-working powers that reside in her own tactile presence; touching the arm of the newly deceased saint, Sister Jutta, standing behind her, is cured of a deadly infection that has swollen her own hand and forearm. Hedwig would go on to be bur-

135. See *Hedwigs-Codex* 2:154: "... mater incorrupta ymaginis sue retinacula tanto tempore a corrupcionis vicio preseravit intacta." This implies a full identification of Mary herself with

ied with the little statue, but its story does not end at the grave. Upon the exhumation and translation of the new saint's remains in 1267, twenty-four years after her death, the assembled clergy and nobles were thrilled to discover that the three fingers clutching the statue remained intact (fol. 137^v; Fig. 28)—protected, her biographer explained, by the incorruptible Mother of God herself.¹³⁵ The new, partially organic sculptural ensemble was processed, along with her brain (encased within her skull) and other bodily fragments, into the church at Trebnitz, to become the chief prize of the Cistercian community she had established there—a solid, enduring manifestation of their patron's connection to God.¹³⁶

Within the larger narratives that I have tried to her material representation, affirming the propriety of Hedwig's image-devotion.

136. Cf. Hamburger's discussion of the image of Hedwig's

piece together from so many fragments of the past—the story of Hedwig, but also the story of touch, its objects, and their impact on the imagination in the late Middle Ages—the iconic depiction of the holy woman assumes a new significance (see Fig. 2). It becomes emblematic not only of a special affinity for *images* on the part of medieval women but of a fierce adherence, across medieval Christian culture, to the *materiality* of images, the *things* of devotion. Tangibility, as much as visibility, is key to the representation: the book squeezed around fingers, the rosary beads stretched

between hands, the flaccid boots stubbornly flung over the forearm (a mocking concession to a husband and a confessor who commanded the saint to wear shoes), the statuette—all these testify to the value of *objects* as bearers of the sacred. The manuscript's tiny patrons gaze from their ambiguous space at the border of the architectural frame—but what holds them in thrall is a marvelous body, composed volumetrically, like a sculpture itself, and demonstrating, through its manual activity, its power to know—to *grasp*—the divine.¹³⁷

translation in *Visual and Visionary* (as in note 6), 438, which overlooks the fact that what the bishop holds is the *hand* clutching the statuette. Once again, the artist has flouted the text: whereas the latter specifies that only three fingers of one hand survived, the picture shows us the right hand with four fingers and the left, holding the ivory figures, completely intact.

¹³⁷ Many thanks go to Colum Hourihane, Lisa Bitel, and the speakers and audience members of the Princeton Symposium, in which it was an honor to participate. The present paper took

shape over the course of two other greatly enriching communal endeavors: an interdisciplinary summer seminar called “The Vision Thing: Studying Divine Intervention,” organized by William A. Christian, Jr., and Gábor Klaniczay and sponsored by SIAS, in 2007, and a graduate seminar I taught at Yale on “Visions and Art in Medieval Europe” in spring 2008. The participants in both forums will recognize how deeply our conversations have shaped my thoughts.