Words and Matter
The Virgin Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Parish Life

Editors
Jonas Carlquist
and Virginia Langum
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Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Risinge Old Church, Östergötland (c. 1400).
Photo: Cecilia Lindhë.
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Words and Matter: The Virgin Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Parish Life

Jonas Carlquist

The Virgin Mary was one of the most prominent persons of the European Middle Ages. Although she is only mentioned in the Bible a few times,1 her cult spread widely and her life reached everyone somehow, rich or poor. As words, her legacy was reiterated and praised in poetry, exempla, sermons, and legends. As matter, her image was found in churches around Europe, where she was honored and glorified by the human senses from the visual depictions of panels and manuscripts, to the rhythms of chant. Mary’s compassion, her humility, her obedience and all other embellishing virtues were taught to her followers and made commonly known to her worshippers. Interpretation of how these stories were made and disseminated, as well as how these different media and genres intersect, is fundamental to understanding the reach and impact of the Virgin Mary and the Marian cult in late medieval and early modern culture and parish life.

The fascination of the cult of the Virgin Mary has endured. During recent years scholars from many disciplines have discussed Mary, the cult of the Virgin Mary and her place in contemporary societies. The Virgin Mary and her cult have been analyzed from theological, historical, literary, iconographic, and social perspectives. Many monographs and articles have been written,2 yet they are by no means exhaustive. Old questions remain unanswered and new standpoints emerge. In the twenty-first century, the Virgin Mary, the words and matter that concern her, continue to arouse our curiosity.

This book is about the Virgin Mary in late medieval and early modern parishes. The late medieval period was the golden age of the Marian cult and she was massively worshipped in both words and material artefacts. Her life and her deeds were praised and glorified in various ways within the church, and her cult impressed the everyday life of parish churches. The contributors to this volume analyze both the words about the Virgin Mary and the objects displaying her in order to enlarge our understanding of the impact of her cult during the late medieval period and the years after the Reformation. By combining words and matter we aim to sketch aspects about medieval life in parish churches, and also to emphasize the importance of Mary in late medieval devotion. Visual and material culture were closely related and worked together in the cult. The essays in this volume therefore concern matter, words and specifically, the meeting of matter and words.

The foundation for this book is a conference held at Umeå University in November 2012. Over three days, scholars from many parts of Europe gathered to discuss the cult, manuscripts, and images relating to the Queen of Heaven. In addition, participants discussed the different temporal and geographical contexts for the cult of the Virgin Mary. Professor Miri Rubin of Queen Mary, University of London opened the conference with an introduction to the field. Other plenaries were Professor Beat Kümin from University of Warwick who presented ongoing parish research at the Warwick Network for Parish Research, Professor Catherine Oakes from Kellogg College, University of Oxford who introduced a discussion about the development of the visual culture about the Virgin Mary, especially from a perspective of materiality, and Pro-

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2 For example Warner 1976; Clayton 1990; Wright 2006; Rubin 2009.
In the second chapter we encounter another sort of Marian parish iconography but this time from Rome, the centre of Western Christianity. Barbara Fabjan describes and interprets the Marian scenes on the glass windows in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo. The differences between the small parish churches on Gotland and the impressive church in Rome are reflected in the Marian iconography. As Sopraintendenza of the medieval church art in Rome Barbara Fabjan is saturated in this material as evidenced by her comprehensive and nuanced discussion.

In the second part of this book we meet art and written texts in combination. First, art historian Eva Lq Sandgren discusses images for devotion found in manuscripts made for the female convent of Vadstena Abbey. Sandgren presents a methodology for understanding how images collaborate with written texts outside the monastery even where comparable material from the Swedish parish churches is missing. Sandgren focuses on the nuns’ devotion for the passion of Christ, especially His wounded heart, which is a frequent motif in their – usually vernacular – prayer books, but the same theme can also be seen in sculpture and embroidery. The passion theme was central for the Birgittines and it is of interest to how material culture collaborates with textual culture in the Birgittine context.

Anne Mette Hansen’s contribution also concentrates on images in prayer books. While Sandgren is an art historian, Hansen is a philologist and she approaches the concept from a philological perspective. With examples taken from Marine Jespersdatter’s prayer book, Hansen argues that images of the Virgin Mary interact with texts, resulting in a unified devotional experience. As Hansen mentions, the identity of Marine Jespersdatter is not known but she might have been from an aristocratic family, thus offering a perspective from a different social context than Sandgren’s monastic material. According to Hansen, words and matter in combination give us a good glimpse of private Marian meditation, and both media are of importance in the experience.

In the next chapter, Karoline Kjesrud presents conceptions of...
Langum shows that although Mary was clean from Eve's sin and her delivery was painless – as for example Saint Birgitta maintains – Mary's later sufferings, above all at her son's death, extend to compassion for all mothers who suffer and love their children.

A closely related subject is discussed in Katie L. Walter's contribution about the Virgin Mary and the excremental. By analyzing the Middle English translation of *Stimulus Amoris, The Prickynge of Love*, and its appended texts, Walter shows how medieval people handled Mary's motherly duties, such as the care of an incontinent child. As the *Prickynge*’s appended texts demonstrate, it is Mary's maternal affects of love and compassion disrupt the binary of disgust/jouissance otherwise elicited by the excremental body. Walter's article displays devotion to the Virgin Mary on a less discussed but intriguing level.

The last part of this volume concerns the Virgin Mary in the reformed parish. During the conference, this issue was very much in focus: what happened to the parish cult of the Virgin Mary under the influence of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation; were there new contributions to Mary's textual and visual culture. There is often a divide between scholars working with the medieval period and scholars working with the early modern period, leaving a lacuna in our knowledge of what happened during the intervening years. One scholar who rectifies this is Stephen Bates who, in his essay, examines Marian devotion in the vernacular between 1525 and 1537. By analyzing the vernacular English rosary and following its development from the late medieval period until the middle of the sixteenth century, Bates gives an exciting picture of the small changes in the lay Marian view. Just as Anne Dillon earlier has supposed, Bates finds that Rosary devotion in the early sixteenth century was not a 'spiritual remnant' of late medieval piety, but a Jesuit revision.

The second contribution to this theme is Elizabeth Tingle's article about the Virgin Mary and the dead. Tingle argues that despite the
Protestant Reformers’ denial of Mary’s intercessory role in salvation and reconfiguration of the geography of the afterlife, Mary’s pre-eminence as intercessor was maintained in early-modern Catholicism because Mary catered for departed souls as well as for the living. One reason behind this was that Marian devotions accommodated collective as well as personal religiosity. Tingle demonstrates that the cult of the Virgin evolved in different ways; Mary displaced other saints from the hierarchy of intercession, Mary reassumed her role as the most important patron for the souls in Purgatory, the presence of Mary made the Eucharist more efficacious, and Mary was used as a weapon in the battle for orthodoxy, against Protestants and also against popular heterodoxy in Catholic communities. Tingle maintains convincingly that this development can be seen in the influence of popular post-mortem practices on the material and the physical economy of the counter-reformation Church.

In the last chapter in the volume, Nils Holger Petersen, an expert on premodern liturgy, discusses the development of Marian Feasts during the Lutheran Reformation in Denmark. In a short overview he shows how Marian theology was transformed as Protestants came to reject the traditional intercessory roles of Mary and the saints. By analyzing collections of model sermons written in Danish, Petersen can detail the differences in Marian theology before and after the Reformation. According to Petersen, the concept of Mary developed into a complex and paradoxical figure, every positive description followed by derogatory statements.

Our ambition with this volume is to display how words and matter have defined the role of the Virgin Mary during the centuries before and after the Reformation in different cultural contexts within Europe. Diverse views of her emerge dependent upon place and period. The Virgin Mary’s role as an intercessor for all people made her both loved and honored, but also complicated. Both words and matter must be seen as rhetorical tools that display her status in different social networks. By analyzing these media together we can reach a better understanding of the Virgin Mary, of history, and mentalities – something of which we intend this volume to be a part.

Finally, the editors of this book, Jonas Carlquist and Virginia Langum, would like to thank Riksbankens Jubileumsfond for their generous publication support. We would also like to thank the editors at Runica et Medievalia, particularly Staffan Nyström and their anonymous reviewers. Furthermore, the initial conference from which this book was inspired was financed by the Marcus Wallenberg Foundation.
I. Mary in Medieval Parish Art
Virgin, Mother, Queen, and Bride: Visual Representations of the Virgin Mary in Wall Paintings by Passionsmästaren of Gotland

Ann-Catrine Eriksson

Introduction

If you walk into one of Gotland’s 95 remaining medieval churches, there is a good chance you will find the walls covered with paintings that runs like strips around the nave (Fig. 1). In close to 40 churches, large picture programmes from the mid-fifteenth century by the workshop of Passionsmästaren (the ‘Master of the Passion’) have survived, which by Swedish standards is a large corpus of wall paintings.1 The paintings are Christocentric, but the Virgin Mary is present in all scenes of Jesus’ childhood and in many of the scenes of the Passion, and she is, therefore, a vital part of the narrative. The aim of this study is to see how Passionsmästaren constructs the character of the Virgin Mary in the picture programmes to illuminate the visual use of the Virgin Mary in medieval culture, particularly in these very common wall paintings on Gotland. Emphasis will be on the perspectives of dress and pose, gesture and activity, and finally on intimacy and touch in order to address these questions: How is the Virgin Mary depicted in the picture programmes of Passionsmästaren? What virtues and traditional allegories are portrayed in the depictions of the Virgin Mary? How can one understand the medieval viewer’s perception of the representations of the Virgin? The picture programmes are composed of series of images that focus on the Passion, but the story of Jesus’ childhood is often present and occasionally the wall paintings also include portraits or legends of various saints. The style and composition of the images

Fig. 1. The interior of Ganthem church. Photo: Ann-Catrine Eriksson.

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1 In the only major study of the workshop, Söderberg (1942) dates the paintings to around 1420–1430, and absolutely no later than 1450 (pp. 45–49). This is contested by Lindgren 1996, p. 373, who points to a figure in Anga Church of St. Bernhard of Siena who was not canonised until 1450, as evidence that the workshops must have been working in the mid-fifteenth century. The most likely source for the name Passionsmästaren is the art historian Johnny Roosval (1924), who also provided fictive names to many anonymous medieval masters on Gotland. Gotland is believed to have had over 100 churches during the Middle Ages; most of them were parish churches. In Antikvarisk Topografiska Arkivet’s digital photo archives and the published inventories of the churches of Gotland, I find 36 churches with remaining paintings of Passionsmästaren, but there are probably gaps in the documentation of the workshop. Usually the number is reported as being ‘around forty’, because this is the number of ‘passion paintings’ that Söderberg 1942 recorded, p. 19.
are reminiscent of coloured block prints with linear figures against a plain white background with simple decorative stencils. Architectural features and a painted drapery frame the images. The depicted characters are of a simple design and they rarely overlay to create depth and perspective but they are also very expressive through gestures, emotion, and activity. The illusion of space and perspective is created by keeping the compositions and figures proportional, thus the artists working at the workshop must have had some kind of formal training. A few objects, like pieces of furniture or plants, are included as visual rhetorical evidence of the story. Even if many scenes are re-used in most of the churches, there are variations in single scenes and in presentation. The number of scenes, their size, and the placement of the picture programme in each church might vary because the composition is subordinate to the architecture and dimensions of the room.6

The works of Passionsmästaren have often been judged as old-fashioned compared to the artistic developments of Scandinavia, and this is partly because they are said to lack an individual hallmark from a known artist.4 Because of the repetitive patterns in the wall paintings it has been assumed that the workshop was working close to a model.5 In this article, however, artistic skill assumes no relevance. Instead, this study focuses on the popularity and reach of the style in a particular region. No other workshops on the island had the same level of influence on the visual design of Christian ideology, and the sheer quantity of work in a Swedish context is also very impressive.6 A common interpretation is that the poor quality of the works was due to economic stagnation.7 However, it is important to remember that even if the compositions are plain on a superficial level, the size of the picture programmes is quite remarkable and must have involved a lot of work and money.8 Perhaps bad times generate new visual needs in the hope of a more prosperous future.

Quotations, Figures, and the Production of Presence

This study is based on paintings from 14 churches that have been studied in situ.9 The reading is influenced by Mieke Bal, professor of cultural analysis, and her concept of ‘quotation’. Artists often use well-known figures, signs and symbols – which together make up ‘quotations’ – in order to convey and (re)activate a story or a message in an image.10 In a Christian context both artist and audience search for theological truth in both the scriptures and in the visual tradition within Christianity. Artists never merely translate a text into images, instead they create new narratives based on

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6 If compared to the far better known and well-documented workshop of Albrekt Pictor, with its main corpus in the regions of Södermanland and Uppland, the works of Passionsmästaren are almost even in numbers, but Pictor covered ceilings as well as nave and choir walls in more complex composed picture programmes involving scenes from both the Old and New Testaments that resembled the narratives of different Biblia Pauperum.

7 The explanations for stagnation in the economy include civil wars, plagues, Danish occupation, and loss of trading opportunities. For a historical background, see Söderberg 1942, pp. 12–15; Pernler 1977, pp. 119, 123–124, 126; Andrén 2011, pp. 11–17.

8 Unfortunately, documents from medieval Gotland are rare and it is hard to find information on patrons or donations in connection with the paintings.

9 The churches visited, and that contains scenes with the Virgīn Mary, are Ale, Anga, Eke, Endre, Fide, Gammelgarn, Ganthem, Gerum, Hamra, Hemse, Lye, Rone, Silte, and Öja. The illustrations come from the churches of Anga, Fide, Ganthem, Gerum and Hemse.

10 See Bal 1999, pp. 1, 8–9.
different sets of signs or metaphors in addition to those found in a
text.\textsuperscript{11} Bal suggests, therefore, close reading of images, so that one
can understand how an artwork builds a story rather than simply
tells it.\textsuperscript{12} In such a reading, comparisons are made to other art-
works as well as to different sets of texts, and in this study close
attention is also paid to signs of dress, pose, gesture, activity, inti-
macy, and touch. This allows us to better understand how the work-
shop of \textit{Passionsmästaren} ‘built’ the character of the Virgin Mary
and made her present for the viewer. Gender analysis is necessary
to fully understand the depictions of the Virgin Mary, and art
historian Lena Liepe’s study of the representations of the human
body in Nordic medieval art have been a useful source of inspira-
tion in this regard.\textsuperscript{13}

A common theme in all images in the programmes of \textit{Passions-
mästaren} is that there is always a situation or an action depicted
in the story that involves at least two characters. Each scene forms
what art historian George Didi-Huberman calls a figure, a uniform
metaphor that symbolises important components in the major
themes of the picture programme – the Incarnation and the Salva-
tion of mankind.\textsuperscript{14} It is the story of the scene that is important, not
the individual characters, and this is why it is occasionally hard to
identify certain characters unless one pays attention to the sym-
bols. That the images must be recognised as figures that are part
of a larger narrative is also quite clear because the picture pro-
gramme lacks a main scene. The only exception is that of the Holy
Three Kings as it always uses twice the space compared to the other
figures.\textsuperscript{15}

The picture programmes are easy to read if one has a basic
knowledge of both the biblical stories and their traditional depic-
tions. To see them one must move around the nave, but this enables
variation in reading and making narratives. Literary theorist Hans
Ulrich Gumbrecht understands medieval culture as a ‘production
of presence’ where visual art and other artistic or ritual expressions
took place in a space that emphasised activity in order to make the
stories of the Bible present in the very room – a way of making it a
real situation.\textsuperscript{16} From such a perspective the wall paintings of \textit{Pas-
sionsmästaren} are arranged in such a way as to make the biblical
stories constantly alive, tangible, and present.\textsuperscript{17} Literary historian
Mary Carruthers discusses medieval art in terms of rhetoric, and
the concept of \textit{enargeia} (sensous vividness) in particular aims at a
similar experience described by Gumbrecht.\textsuperscript{18} All human senses
were intended to participate in the experience of material and
mental images in order to generate a movement, \textit{ductus}. This expe-
rience of being moved by the images, both physically and spiritu-
ally, persuaded the viewer of their truth. Medieval images were
intended to do something, not just represent something.\textsuperscript{19} It was
likely an overwhelming, and yet comfortable, experience to enter
into a decorated room of \textit{Passionsmästaren} because the visitors to
the church would find themselves in the very centre of the biblical
world, side by side with the Virgin Mary and other holy characters.

\textbf{Dress and Pose of the Virgin Mary}

The Virgin Mary is dressed in three different manners in the works
of \textit{Passionsmästaren}. The most common depiction of the Virgin
shows her in a white loose-fitting dress, sometimes with a neck-
band. Over her dress she wears a blue cloak that also covers her
hair in the fashion of a married woman (ex. Fig. 5, 7). There are two
exceptions to this type in the figures of the Annunciation and the

\textsuperscript{12} Bal 2001, pp. xii, 8.
\textsuperscript{13} Liepe 2003.
\textsuperscript{14} See Didi-Huberman 1999, pp. 28–30.
\textsuperscript{15} There are also a few examples where the workshop has used different architec-
tural orders for the framing colonnettes in order to stress the importance of
certain figures. This can be seen in the churches of Anga, Lojsta and Hemse and
in relation to the figures of the Holy Three Kings, the Crucifixion and/or the
Assumption of Christ.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid. pp. 28–29.
\textsuperscript{18} See Carruthers 1998, pp. 130–133.
\textsuperscript{19} Carruthers 2013, p. 15.
Holy Three Kings. In the figures of the Annunciation the Virgin Mary is depicted as a virgin with her hair loose and uncovered (Fig. 2). She wears a red dress, covered by a blue cloak. In the figures of the Holy Three Kings, a crowned Virgin Mary is depicted as a queen and of almost equal stature as the kings (Fig. 3). However consistent with the Christocentric nature of the picture programme, she is not more important than her son, and thus He is crowned king. In short, the workshop of Passionsmästaren dresses the Virgin Mary according to her established roles in Christianity as virgin, (married) mother, and queen.

Her dress does not signify femininity by emphasising the waist, hips, or breasts. Her hands are visible, but never her feet. The dress is quite simple and should be understood as a sign of her humility. It also has a timeless quality that is common for holy characters in Christian art.\footnote{See Liepe 2003, p. 65.} This can be compared with the dress of Joseph of Arimathea who in the Descent From the Cross or in the Entombment wears medieval clothing as a sign of his mortal or human status. One can see the Virgin Mary wearing similar dresses in earlier medieval images on baptismal fonts or portals on parish churches in Gotland. It is sometimes hard to identify the Virgin when other women are accompanying her in the Visitation, the Descent From the Cross, and the Entombment (Fig. 8, 12, 5). This owes to the relative unimportance of each character in the whole figure as discussed earlier; we do not need identification to understand the content. However, the male characters of St John the Evangelist and Joseph of Arimathea can be more easily identified than the Virgin, because they have an individualised and established look. This should probably be interpreted as a more general convention for representing different genders.

When it comes to pose all of the figures but one place the Virgin to the right of her Son, on His ‘heart-side’.\footnote{Compare this with examples of the twelfth-century baptismal fonts in the churches of Grötlingbo and Gerum or the fourteenth-century portals of the churches of Lye and Martebo.} This arrangement has a theological origin and is based on the prophecy of the Book of Psalms 45:9: ‘upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Holy Three Kings. In the figures of the Annunciation the Virgin Mary is depicted as a virgin with her hair loose and uncovered (Fig. 2). She wears a red dress, covered by a blue cloak. In the figures of the Holy Three Kings, a crowned Virgin Mary is depicted as a queen and of almost equal stature as the kings (Fig. 3). However consistent with the Christocentric nature of the picture programme, she is not more important than her son, and thus He is crowned king. In short, the workshop of Passionsmästaren dresses the Virgin Mary according to her established roles in Christianity as virgin, (married) mother, and queen.

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figures of the Holy Three Kings on many baptismal fonts from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries on Gotland. In these images the Virgin is depicted frontally while Passionsmästaren has painted her in a less static three-quarter profile. That the Virgin Mary alludes to sculptures can be compared to medieval Nativity plays known from continental Europe from the twelfth century where the actors playing the three kings performed together with a sculpture of the Madonna and Child. Gumbrecht understands medieval theatre as making presence by creating a situation, by means of choreography, in a space shared with spectators. In these situations the images of the Virgin and Child are active parts of this very space.

It is hard to know if the Nativity plays were already influencing the visual arts as early as the twelfth century in Scandinavia, but during the fifteenth century both the plays and the models used in visual arts were well known.

Gestures and Activities of the Virgin Mary

Gesture illustrates communication in medieval art, and models for this derive from classical rhetoric that also influenced both clerical ceremonies and judicial procedures. The representations of gestures and other activities of the Virgin Mary are interesting in connection to the valuation of her character. They can be read as signs of her presence in both the narrative and in her actual placement within the paintings that creates the enargeia making her a part of the viewer’s world. At times these signs are quite subtle, but even so there is no doubt that the medieval public understood them because such gestures were an integral part of their social interactions.

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24 See Kirschbaum (ed.) Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie (1972), vol. 4, p. 431.
25 Calling the angel Gabriel ‘he’ is a linguistic necessity; however it is not really correct because Gabriel is not human and, as a consequence, of no particular gender.
26 See Kirschbaum (ed.) Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie (1972), vol. 4, p. 41.
27 This can be seen in the churches of Anga, Hemse and Öja. See Kirschbaum (ed.) Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie (1968), vol. 1, p. 542.
28 See Kirschbaum (ed.) Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie (1972) vol. 4, p. 41.
A consequence of the Virgin Mary being part of a Christocentric programme is that she is often the more passive character in the figures. However, she is depicted with gestures and occasionally with specific attributes that are of great importance to the narrative and to her part of the story. In the Annunciation the Virgin Mary is always captured with her right hand in a listening gesture (Fig. 2). This is a common model for the figure and can be seen, for example, on portals in parish churches on Gotland from the fourteenth century. The term logos is central for the figure because it was decided early in Christian history that it was the Word that made the Virgin Mary pregnant, and her gesture is part of this belief called conceptio per aurum. Gabriel’s speech is illustrated with the scroll he is holding in his left hand with Ave Maria written on it and with his right hand’s gesture of speech. The angel can be judged to be more vigorous than the Virgin because talking is considered more active than listening. In this particular model of the Annunciation, the emphasis is on the explanation of the miraculous Incarnation and not on the Virgin Mary’s reactions. However, it does curiously lack the presence of God in the form of a ray of light, or the Holy Ghost as a dove as depicted in the previously mentioned portals. This absence makes her gesture even more important for the viewer’s understanding of the miracle.

In the figures of the Crucifixion, the Virgin Mary is portrayed with her hands folded over her belly, or sometimes over her chest, in a formally unified form (Fig. 4). This is a passive gesture that gives a sense of powerlessness as well as respect and submission. She slightly bows her head and shows dignity in her grief, and these are signs of her obedient and humble nature. The figure is often visualised quite differently in Scandinavian art from the same time period, where the Virgin Mary is often shown swooning and crying.

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34 Compare with examples of portals in the parish churches of Bro, Lye and Martebo.
35 See Kirschbaum (ed.) Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie (1972), vol. 4, p. 430.
36 Ibid. p. 431.
The Virgin Mary’s gesture of reaching out her clasped hands in front of her is a sign of admiration. Its ancient origin derives from the tied hands of prisoners of war surrendering to a new master. In Christianity this represents the submission to God’s will and is commonly used in praying. In the images of the Passion, the workshop used this gesture on the Virgin in the figures of Christ’s Assumption and the Pentecost as signs of celebrating God’s wisdom (Fig. 6). The Virgin is also praying in the figure of Christ as Pantocrator in the churches of Eke and Ganthem (Fig. 7), but here this gesture should be interpreted differently. Here she acts as an intercessor on Judgement Day and prays for the mercy and the forgiveness of the sins of mankind.

The Virgin Mary’s grief was much debated among theologians because many believed that the visual arts should illuminate her virtues of faith, obedience and humility. More often, characters of a lower moral status were depicted with grand and expressive gestures in order to convey their vices visually. The Virgin’s calm reactions in the works of Passionsmästaren show her faith in God’s will and are signs of her virtues that others should venerate and try to imitate as good Christians.

39 Compare, for example, with the Swedish translation of Meditationes Vitae Christi where the Virgin Mary is expressively sad, crying and feeling her son’s pains, see Klemming 1860, pp. 201–210. See also altarpieces in the parish churches of Hökhuvud and Tensta (Uppland), and Klockrike and St. Laurentii (Östergötland) for comparison. Her expression has also been explained as pains of labour, see Rubert of Deutz (d.1130) in Gambero 2005, p. 141; Rubin 1994, p. 114.

40 For a general discussion of medieval theology and art see Belting 1991, pp. 11–12; for examples of theologians discussing the virtues and experiences of the Virgin Mary see Gambero 2005, pp. 212–213 (Bonaventure), pp. 269–270 (Umbertino di Casale), p. 313 (Dionysius the Carthusian).

41 Liepe 2003, p. 103. In the paintings by the workshop of Passionsmästaren this is notable in the anti-Semitic depictions of Jews.


43 See Oakes 2008, pp. 65–99, where she in the chapter ‘The Virgin as Intercessor’ discusses similar and alternative depictions.
in Luke 1:39–55, the visual representation is very condensed because the biblical text contains so much speech. First, there is Elizabeth’s salutation and then the Virgin’s praise in the Magnificat. Both image and words express the happiness and joy of the Incarnation and the Virgin Mary’s place within it.\footnote{Oakes 2008, pp. 92–94, 281.}

As mentioned earlier, the women look identical. Their dresses are painted in contrasting colours so that in some sense they are distinct for the viewer. Their nimbuses are united into one singular form, which emphasizes that together they form the narrative of the figure. With the embrace the figure celebrates the happiness that God will be born of Mary as well as joy that Elizabeth is expecting John the Baptist. One can find models for a similar figure on baptismal fonts from Gotland made in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The contour of the combined nimbuses forms a heart-shape, which is even more visible on the baptismal fonts attributed to the workshop of Sighraf.\footnote{For more on Sighraf, see Åkestam 2010, pp. 100–103.} A heart may symbolise many things in Christian art, but the general meaning is a sign of God’s love and charity.\footnote{See Kirschbaum (ed.) Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie (1970), vol. 2, p. 247.}

As already mentioned, the Virgin Mary is most intimate with her son; she either holds Him in her arms or touches Him. She slightly caresses His head in the Nativity, but this is probably meant to be more of a pointing gesture and the Virgin should be interpreted as an intercessor more than a mother in the Nativity. The workshop of Passionsmästaren was strongly influenced by an older tradition where the Virgin was shown lying in bed watching her son, while images from the same time period usually depicted her holding and caressing him.\footnote{See Kirschbaum (ed.) Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie (1970), vol. 2, p. 104–107.}

If the Virgin’s gesture is interpreted as a caress, intertwines the Incarnation and the Passion. This emphasises the Virgin’s part in the coming salvation for mankind in images making Judgement Day present.\footnote{Liepe 2003, pp. 114–115.}

**Intimacy and Touch**

A type of gesture occurring in several figures of the picture programmes is that of the Virgin Mary physically touching another character. Touch in medieval art can be understood as a sign of both support and force, but in this particular context it should mainly be read as an affirmative expression.\footnote{See Kirschbaum (ed.) Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie (1970), vol. 2, p. 230. One exception is in the church of Öja, where another common but not so intimate variation of the embrace is represented.} In most cases, the Virgin has physical contact with her son, but another important example is her amiable embrace with Elizabeth in the Visitation that also involves a kiss of peace (Fig. 8).\footnote{See Kirschbaum (ed.) Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie (1970), vol. 2, p. 104–107.}

*Fig. 8. The Visitation, Hemse church. Photo: Cecilia Lindhé.*
then she is interacting with her child, and this would indicate that some influence of more intimate depictions has slipped into the works of Passionsmästaren.

In the figures of the Holy Three Kings, the Flight to Egypt, and the Pietà, the Virgin Mary holds Christ in her arms, while in the Presentation in the Temple she supports Him while He stands on the altar. In all four figures, her touch is an indication of her being the Mother of God, but there are some stylistic differences in the figures.

As noted before, the depiction of the Virgin with child in the Holy Three Kings resembles the figure of the Madonna and Child (Fig. 3). There is no real interaction between mother and child; instead the infant directs His attention to the adoring kings. However, her role as an intercessor is visible in the figure, because of the connection of the Virgin Mary with both the church and wisdom (Ecclesia and Sedes Sapientiae). In the legends, the Virgin speaks God’s message, but in the images of Passionsmästaren it is Christ who is depicted with a speaking gesture. She will, however, become a role model for the kings when their story develops further. Upon returning home, the kings become the first christened pagans; they live in purity and start to evangelise. According to the legends, it is the Virgin Mary who speaks God’s message in her son’s place and, therefore, becomes the prime intercessor.

In the Flight to Egypt, mother and child are facing each other in a manner reminiscent of Gothic versions of the Madonna and Child (Fig. 9). This model depicts them communicating as they look at each other and Jesus strokes His mother’s chest. Perhaps this can be read as a sign of comfort because one of her Sorrows is the Massacre of the Innocents as described in Matthew 2:16–18. In sculptures from the same period, one can find a similar touch, but the Virgin responds by caressing the child thus emphasizing the intimate emotional content a bit more.

In the Presentation in the Temple their relationship is again depicted more formally, as the child turns His attention to the priest Symeon and the Virgin supports her son as He stands upon the altar (Fig. 10). According to Luke 2:25–39, it is Symeon and not the Virgin Mary who conveys the message of God, and so he warrants more of the attention in the figure. This figure is also a depiction of one of the Virgin’s Sorrows as Symeon tells her of her son’s destiny, and her support of the child’s body can thus be read as a sign of obedience and faith in God’s plan for the Salvation to come.

Because the figure of the Pietà was developed during the Gothic period, there is also a link to the figures of the Madonna and Child of that era, both in style and in content (Fig. 11). Once again, in the legends the Virgin Mary is allowed to speak God’s intention,

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51 Compare with Johannes of Hildesheim’s record of the legend where the kings are so struck by the presence of the child that they do not remember the Virgin’s words, only her praise of God. See Kyhlberg 1940, p. 53.

52 This can be found in the Swedish translation of Meditationes Vitae Christi, see Klemming 1866, p. 2.

53 Compare with altarpieces from Häverö church (Uppland) and in Vadstena Abbey church (Östergötland).
through her grief, in her son’s temporary absence. In the works of *Passionsmästaren* the Virgin holds her son’s dead body by the neck with her right hand and grabs one of His arms with her left hand. She looks down on His face with an expression of intense grief, and she sits upon an altar similar to that of the figure in the Holy Three Kings. Occasionally the altar looks more like the sarcophagus that is part of the figure of the Entombment, a symbol of the sacrifice both mother and son endured in order to save mankind from sin. The altar and the sarcophagus were also signs of the body of Christ and the expected Resurrection as the Eucharist mysteries became more important in the late Middle Ages.

Even if the Pietà shows a very miserable moment, the viewers could still find hope in the presence of Christ’s body, exposed as a sacrifice by the Virgin, as it will make the Salvation possible.

The Virgin Mary also touches her son’s dead body in the Descent From the Cross and in the Entombment. In the last figure this touch is what distinguishes her from the other two women (Fig. 5). She is usually placed in the middle of the group of women in the figure. She is the only woman who can handle Christ’s holy body with her bare hands, and this makes her more important than the rest of the characters in the figure. This signifies both that she is His mother and that she is free from sin. The men handling the body are in a sense more practical in preparing Christ for burial, and this can be seen as occupying a different temporal space than the Virgin. Together, however, they make the situation tangible in the figure for the intended spectators by visually combining the realms of heaven and earth.

One notable example is the revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden where the Virgin describes her experiences on Golgotha, and these revelations were used in Scandinavian sermons of Good Friday. See Klemming 1857–1858, p. 33 for St. Birgitta’s revelations. See examples of Swedish sermons in Klemming 1879, pp. 118–119; Eijer 1974, p. 27; Andersson 2006, p. 200.

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In the Descent from the Cross the Virgin Mary holds her son’s right hand in her own right hand and places her left hand on His arm (Fig. 12). The same gesture can be found in fifteenth-century
sculptures from Uppland in mainland Sweden, and the symbolism is a bit different from other visual signs of the Virgin Mary’s touch. One can find the same gesture in an illumination concerning ‘Fästepar’ (Betrothed couple) in Magnus Eriksson’s Nation Law from the 1430s. As a quotation, this gesture can be read as a metaphor for the Virgin Mary as the bride of Christ in this particular figure. This might also be in line with her restrained sadness in the works of Passionsmästaren if they are compared to some contemporary artworks where she exhibits grand gestures and many emotions that signify her more clearly as a mother. For the mother, Christ’s death is the end, but for the bride there is a future waiting in Heaven. In the end, the death of Christ is a message of hope for all Christians, because death is to be overcome by all who believe in God’s will.

56 See sculptures originally in the churches of Tillinge and Vätö, now in the National Heritage Museum, Stockholm.
57 See Liepe 2003, pp. 154, 158.

Conclusion

The workshop of Passionsmästaren depicted the character of the Virgin Mary through the use of dress, pose, gesture, activity, and touch within the realms of Christian ideology. The Virgin is presented mainly as a mother who is dressed as a wife, but occasionally she is also represented as a virgin, a bride, or a queen. In some of the figures, she is also depicted as an allegory of the church, Ecclesia, and as the seat of wisdom, Sedes Sapientiae, because the figures can contain many levels of interpretations. Her character changes slightly within the context of the figures, and thus her gestures, activities, and touch vary in intensity and content. Even if the Virgin Mary is always subordinate to her son, she is vital to the general message of the picture programmes – to the narratives of the Incarnation and the Salvation of mankind.

Her presence offers keys for the interpretation of the different figures because she often functions as an intercessor through her gestures or touch. Her activities in the figures also reflect her theologically praised virtues of faith, love, submission, humility, and obedience. Passionsmästaren used different quotations in the paintings, and these can be traced to both earlier Romanesque art as well as to more contemporary Gothic art. For the concept of the Virgin Mary, this means that she will be more active and communicating in the models of the Gothic era, as in the Flight to Egypt and the Pietà, while she is more formal and static in the figures of an older tradition, as in the Holy Three Kings and the Crucifixion. In the Pietà, I would argue that the Virgin Mary is also made more central for the narrative because her actions and emotions are the main themes of the figure. In her son’s temporary ‘absence’, her grief speaks of God’s will even while she is exposing her son’s sacrifice.

The Virgin Mary is valuable for the picture programmes no matter how active or formal she is, but the paintings show little of the Marian cult even though it was at its height during the mid-fifteenth century in Scandinavia. The wall paintings were never part
of this tradition because they were probably used for different purposes: education, private meditation, liturgy and mass. However, we lack important historical documentation so it is hard to state why these paintings became so popular on Gotland. They have a quality of being very distinct and accessible to viewers lacking theological training, and this is exemplified by the presentation of the Virgin. However, like most of the Christian art of the Middle Ages, the figures of the picture programmes are also quite complex if studied closely because they speak of the past, the present, and the future. They made the biblical stories present in every day life through images that made God’s message true and alive for the medieval viewers, as they stood in front of the Virgin Mary and biblical characters in a shared and interactive space.

Marian Iconography in the Roman Church of Santa Maria del Popolo

Barbara Fabjan

The earliest histories of Santa Maria del Popolo, the Roman church standing near the gate of the Aurelian walls through which travellers and pilgrims came from the north, are steeped in evocative images of the Virgin Mary. These include the 'virtual' one that appeared to Pope Paschal II in the walnut tree that grew on the so-called tomb of Nero (which he had torn down to build an initial chapel in 1099);¹ the highly venerated thirteenth-century icon placed over the high altar, attributed to the hand of Saint Luke, and traditionally a gift to the church by Gregory IX, who was reputed to have brought it from the Lateran in 1231,² before great crowds; and the precious relics of the milk, the veil and the robes placed within that altar when it was consecrated.

It was enough to lead a pope like Sixtus IV della Rovere, who was famously devoted to the Virgin, to decide in 1472, just ahead of the Jubilee, to entirely reconstruct the old building in the form of a sanctuary-church. He used a modern and unprecedented cupola³ to emphasise the presence of the new altar-tabernacle commissioned from Andrea Bregno in 1473 by Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia, the future Alexander VI, in order to house the ancient icon.⁴ The conclusion of the project was accompanied by the concession of indulgences to whomever visited the image of the Madonna on her feast days.

¹ With regard to the church of S. Maria del Popolo cfr. Santa Maria del Popolo (2009).
² Tavole miracolose (2012), pp. 58–60 with previous bibliography.
⁴ Pöpper 2009, p. 225.
Since then Santa Maria del Popolo, entrusted to the Augustinian Order, became the subject of special attention on the part of the popes, who visited it or celebrated mass there on especially solemn days.

It was Sixtus IV’s affectionate nephew, Giuliano della Rovere, who became pope with the name Julius II (1503–1513), who sought to complete the building of the choir of the church with the collaboration of the architect Donato Bramante, who made it into one of the most beautiful spaces of Renaissance Rome.3

To light this space Bramante pierced the upper walls with a pair of Serlian windows, the first in Rome after those he had made in the Vatican Palace. And as in the Sala Regia, Santa Maria del Popolo housed an entirely modern type of Serlian window with historiated windows – not without a certain contrast in taste. The choice might have been made by the pope himself, who had spent considerable time in Avignon as cardinal, and who had sent an agent to France in 1505 to seek out master glassmakers.6

Vasari describes how Guillaume de Marcillat and Claudio Francese ‘made in Santa Maria del Popolo two windows behind the image of the Madonna, with stories of her life, which were highly praised by those who practised that craft’.7 The narrative section of the Marian iconographic cycle, customarily conveyed through fresco painting, was thus expressed by a luminous, brilliant medium which transformed its more summary aspects, setting it within the Serlian framework almost like a precious enamel.

Created around 1507,8 the windows have fortunately come down to us, even if marred by heavy reworking in the nineteenth century, as a rare example of Renaissance glass making in Rome, and the sole surviving work produced by Marcillat during his Roman sojourn.

The conservation carried out in 1997, carried out under my supervision, involved the dismantling of all the panels, allowing for the close examination of this extraordinary figurative text.9 This essay will detail these scenes, placing them within the Marian context of the church.

The left window contains six episodes from the Virgin’s life, from the Meeting of Anna and Joachim to the Visitation, while the one on the right contains the stories ranging from the Nativity to Christ Teaching in the Temple. Natural light is immediately given symbolic meaning here, since the window with the stories of the Virgin faces

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3 Frommel 2009, p. 383 with previous bibliography.
7 Vasari 1906, p. 419.
8 Fabjan 2008, p. 144.
9 Fabjan 2001, pp. 36–37. The works of restoration carried out in the nineteenth century caused the remaking of one fifth of the glass windows.
A careful look reveals some considerable differences in the two series of scenes, in both compositional approach and style. The right-hand window is composed of large figures, grouped together in the foreground and contained within a background of pilasters closed off by fictive marble in the lower register, while the upper one opens onto a tree-filled landscape; the background unifies the scenes, register by register, and they are separated by a band with a dedicatory inscription. On the left, the figures are smaller, placed within greater spatial depth, with elaborate architecture and, above all, space appears to be unified (again register by register) by the perspectival sweep of the floor lines, which lead to a single central vanishing-point.

Are these differences due to the simultaneous presence of different artists? Maybe so, or perhaps this is attributable to the more marked influence of Bramante, whose architecture inspired the broad, scenic stories from the childhood of the Virgin.\textsuperscript{11} In any

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At the turn of the seventh century Venantius Fortunatus wrote about Maria: \textit{Coeli fenestra facta es} (Hymn: \textit{Quem terra, pontus, aethera}). The passage of light through the glass windows was interpreted as a metaphor of Incarnation.

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\textsuperscript{11} Del Nunzio 2002, pp. 139–143.
case, a comparison with Marcillat’s subsequent work would lead us to believe that he was probably responsible for the right-hand window, more archaic but extraordinarily intense in the best-preserved figures, as one might expect from a master recently arrived from France, while the window on the left is perhaps more by the Claudio francese mentioned by Vasari, about whom we know nothing, but who was clearly an Italianizing artist with a more suave, descriptive narrative idiom.

Julius II wanted to tie his pontificate closely to the epic story of Mary, and he does so here with repeated dedicatory inscriptions, and through the papal coats of arms enclosed in oak wreaths surrounding the narratives. It may even be possible that he did not stop there, and perhaps asked the artists to use his features to depict the high priest who turns to Mary during her betrothal – a figure whose face has all the character of a portrait. Besides, we know that Marcillat had already represented Pope Julius in the window in the Sala Regia in the Vatican, destroyed by German soldiers in 1527, where the artist was asked to use political iconography.

The pope, defined as terribilis by his contemporaries, seems to have wanted to intensify his Marian devotion in these years: having returned from a triumphal Bolognese campaign on the eve of Palm Sunday 1507 he decided to make a stop at his beloved Santa Maria del Popolo, where on the following day he blessed the altar of the Madonna and celebrated mass before returning in solemn procession to the Vatican Palace. In the same year, in Rome, he founded the church of Santa Maria di Loreto next to Trajan’s Column, and extended papal protection to the Shrine of Loreto, where it was believed that in 1294 angels had brought the House of the Virgin from Nazareth.

When in September his nephew Cardinal Gerolamo Basso della Rovere, Bishop of Recanati, died, having completed the building of the church begun by Sixtus IV around the House of the Virgin in Loreto, Julius saw to it that he was buried in the choir of Santa Maria del Popolo, commissioning a monumental tomb for him from Andrea Sansovino, which was soon erected under Marcillat’s windows.

Moreover, Julius continued Gerolamo’s commitment to Loreto – and it is hardly fortuitous that this was the only place in the Papal States to benefit from the Pope’s intervention on a large scale – a project that was also entrusted to Bramante and which involved the creation of works within the church and even a papal palace, completed many years later. On the occasion of his second expedition to Northern Italy, and before heading there, Julius celebrated the Feast of the Birth of the Virgin in Loreto, and on that occasion gave the church a silver cross, a chalice and a special indulgence; on his return in June 1511, again by way of Loreto, he hung on a silver chain over the altar the cannon shot he believed the Virgin had deflected at Mirandola.

The piety of this warrior pope was expressed through foundations and donations, and in 1512, as a sign of his great favour, he donated to Santa Maria del Popolo his own portrait by Raphael (now in the National Gallery, London), adding another work by Raphael, the delicate Madonna of the Veil (Chantilly, Musée Condé), requesting they be displayed in the church on solemn occasions.

Having installed Marcillat’s windows in the choir, Julius gave Pinturicchio the task of painting the vault with frescoes (1508–1509). At the end of his career, the celebrated Umbrian painter here conceived an ‘all’antica’ ceiling, as dictated by the fashion of the times, with bands of grotesques and gilded mosaics, and the

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12 I am not convinced that the portrait of the pope corresponds to the profile of the High Priest in the scene of the Presentation to the Temple as suggested by Grasso 2009, p. 443.
14 Partridge & Starn 1980, pp. 78–79.
15 Ibid., pp. 99–100.
17 Shaw 1993, pp. 203–204.
18 Partridge & Starn 1980, p. 100.
19 Bentivoglio 2009, p. 357.
insertion of figures of Sibyls, Evangelists and Fathers of the Church around a central *Coronation of the Virgin*. The Marian theme was adopted once again, but this time not in a narrative but theological presentation. According to tradition the Coronation of the Virgin was understood as the fulfilment of God’s project of salvation for humanity, represented by his manifestation through pagan oracles (the Sibyls), the truth revealed by the Gospels (the Evangelists), and the authoritative interpretation of the Fathers of the Church.

Thus a complementary association between the two iconographic sections was created, with the historical narrative and its theological reflection supporting one another, and with the realization of a complete portrayal of the person of Mary, like the one painted by the Evangelist Luke on his little panel.
Hearts of Love and Pain: Images for Devotion in Vadstena Abbey

Eva Lq Sandgren

The Birgittine Abbey of Vadstena in Sweden has left a rich heritage of devotional images and other objects. The sisters, who numbered up to 60, were prolific in copying manuscripts and creating textiles for their own use in the monastery, but also for exchange with other ecclesiastic institutions. Among the collection of medieval liturgical textiles of Skara Cathedral is an embroidered cope hood (Fig. 1) by the Birgittine sisters. The Virgin Mary is depicted seated on a wide gothic bench with the naked child in her lap. There are two characteristics in this image of particular interest for this article: small hearts and dispersed initials. This essay aims to explain the significance of these two features that recur in several objects from Vadstena and its Scandinavian daughter foundations.

Hearts and Initials

The Virgin on the cope hood from Skara is dressed in a golden mantle with fur lining and a beautiful golden dress decorated with small hearts (Fig. 1). The fashionable garments of the late Middle Ages are often depicted in detail and the repertoire of patterns is rendered with seemingly great care. The most favoured design on this kind of damask was the pomegranate, which was altered in an immense variety of ways.1 To depict Mary’s dress decorated with hearts deviates from the standard patterns of late medieval silk damask, a design deviation probably intended by the nuns.

The framing text around the edges is a quote from the nuns’ liturgy, the Cantus sororum. However, the Cantus does not provide the only letters on this cope hood. Below the seated Mary is a short text scroll with the letters MA, reminding the viewer of the Virgin

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1 For further reading on the silk patterns, see, for example, Agnes Geijer Ur textilkonstens historia (available in several translations and editions). A wide range of references on the patterns of silk textiles are also given by Goehring 2007, pp. 121–155.
Maria. Looking further up in the spandrels above the columns there are two more letters: a minuscule ‘i’ at the left side and an ‘a’ at the right side. The four initials can be read together as ’maia’, or Maja, the most common short form for the name Maria in the older Swedish language.

The habit of not writing the complete name of the Virgin is seen on a number of objects from Vadstena Abbey and its sister houses in Scandinavia; particularly in some objects from the Finnish daughter house Nådendal. A dense embroidery probably deriving from Nådendal Abbey, now in Museiverket in Helsingfors (no 3000), carries three lines of text (ave maria gracia plena dominus) together with the majuscule letters ‘M’ and ‘A’ placed in each of the upper corners. The ‘Virgin in the sun’, embroidered on an altar frontal held in the Abbey museum of Vadstena, is also flanked by the letters ‘M’ and ‘A’, and one of the preserved textile covered reliquaries is decorated by silver vine leaves and the crowned silver letters ‘ia’. The placing of a crown above the ‘ia’ letters on the reliquary clarifies the connection to the queen of heavens, Mary. Similarly, a crown is also placed above the Marian monogram engraved under the foot of a chalice from the Danish Maribo Cathedral, a former Birgittine monastery. The same kind of interwoven Maria letters also occur in yet another object from Vadstena but possessed by Skara Cathedral, a cross from a lost chasuble (Fig. 2). Here the letters are interwoven in a more intricate manner so that all the letters in the name Maria have the middle stem in common yet are still possible to decipher. Nine repeated monograms of the same kind as in the Maribo chalice, except for the crown, are placed in a swirling creeper that decorates the vertical part of the cross. The horizontal arms of the cross have an ‘ihus’-monogram on each of the arms. Furthermore, a thin greenish blue ribbon borders the edges of the chasuble cross. On the ribbon the letter ‘m’ is woven in the fabric, repeated all along the ribbon, and alternating with roses. The Marian references enclose the entire cross in this pattern and, all along the cross the swirling creeper is a vine, referring to Christ.

Fig. 2. Marian monogram on an embroidered cross for a chasuble. A woven green ribbon with the letter M alternating with roses trims the edges of the cross. Detail of chasuble cross from Skara cathedral, embroidered in Vadstena Abbey around 1500. Skaraborgs länsmuseum, inv. no 1502. © Gabriel Hildebrand, ATA.

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2 Reproduced by Branting & Lindblom 1997 [1928], pl. 51 C, D.
3 Reproduced by Branting & Lindblom 1997 [1928], pl. 56, described by Estham 1983, pp. 120–122. The altar frontal in Vadstena church was conserved by Petias 1958, Petias no 3615.
5 Stockholm, Historiska museet, inv. no SHM 3493. The crown above the letter makes any other interpretation than the Virgin Mary unlikely.
A similar way to refer to the Virgin Mary in the enclosing decoration, as in the Skara ribbon, is displayed also in an altar cloth from Nådendal where the border repeats ‘M’ letters all along the upper edging.\(^8\) This use of the piled up ‘m’ as marginal decoration seems to have become popular in Vadstena in the decades around 1500. From the 1470s and into the sixteenth century there are a number of manuscripts and printed books (incunabula) that are adorned by large minuscule ‘m’ letters placed on top of each other, organised just as in the woven ribbon on the chasuble cross. The m-decorations were of course a suitable way to emphasise the Virgin Mary in the Birgittine context, and a pictorial idea that must have appealed to the scribal nuns as well as those weaving ribbons or making altar cloths in the joint working room.

**Hearts**

The briefly mentioned Nådendal embroidery (Helsingfors, Museiverket, no 3000) is filled with figures, letters, and ornaments.\(^9\) Some of them are appliquéd complete words and large flowers; others are embroidered on the background, which is entirely covered by dense split stitches. Its dense pattern gives an impression of ‘horror vacui’. Every little inch is used for decoration. Stylised trees, animals, lilies, roses, and hearts fill up the surface together with some dispersed letters. The recurring hearts in this embroidery are of two different kinds: double hearts and winged hearts.

Before drawing any conclusions on the interpretation of the double hearts in the Nådendal embroidery there are still some heart decorations to be mentioned. In some of the manuscripts with m-decorations in the margins, the illuminators seem to have felt a need for still more references to Mary by inserting hanging small hearts attached to the decorated initials. Sometimes the hearts are attached to the marginal stem, as a modification of the more common leaf form. This was, for example, practiced by one of the most prolific scribal nuns, Christina Hansdotter Brask,\(^10\) but she also had companions in the female as well as in the male convent of Vadstena (Fig. 3). A similar way to make a decorative use of hearts was also applied in a third textile example originating from Nådendal Abbey, found in Masku church (KM 1223:1).\(^11\) The woollen intarsia embroidery consists of eight preserved roundels in green and black that depict animals of varying design (Fig. 4). Among the identifiable animals are a peacock and two deer. They all carry branches adorned by hanging white and red hearts.

The initials as reminders of the name of the Virgin Mary do not need much explanation in the Birgittine Vadstena context, nor in late medieval spirituality, but the application of the heart as a reference to the Virgin might need some clarification. A modern reader that comes upon a heart in the margin of a book easily dismisses it as an adolescent scribble. To reach such a conclusion when discussing medieval objects would be a great misconception. There are at least two major objections: first, the medieval books were made of expensive materials as parchment and would not have been used for scribbling; second, the monastic milieu had no excuses for extravagances, neither for meaningless elaborations or occupations. The Rule of Saint Bridget left no opportunity for such digressions as useless embellishments.\(^12\) To hide such vanity from the abbess was probably not even possible as the nuns showed the abbess the work of the past week every Saturday. Transgressions were punished weekly according to the Rule of Saint Birgitta.\(^13\)

The hearts in the manuscripts and on the textiles must have had some kind of significance and this had most likely to do with the tight relation between the Saviour and His mother. This relation

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10. Professed 1459, died 1519, see Silfverstolpe 1898.
12. Christ instructs Birgitta concerning the reconstruction of the pre-existing buildings in Revelationes Extravagantes chapter 26, the restrictions on church decorations in chapters 28 and 31. See Lundén 1959, pp. 131, 133, 135.
13. Lundén 1959, p. 28 (chapter 18 in Revelationes Extravagantes).
was emphasized throughout the Revelations of Birgitta and in the daily liturgy of the Birgittines. Late medieval spirituality had indeed given Mary an important role as intercessor for the souls, and in the Birgittine spirituality her role was even strengthened. The Virgin Mary speaks to Saint Birgitta throughout the Revelations, relating the painful and sorrowful events when she witnessed the passion of Christ. Birgitta recounts that, when Mary saw the lance piercing the side of the dead Christ she felt as though His heart was her heart, and as painfully wounded as his heart. With a reference to the New Testament and the prophecy of Simeon in the temple, the piercing of Mary’s heart became a well known pictorial subject, particularly during the fifteenth century. The subject, the Sorrows...
The opposite page is also enclosed by a lavishly executed marginal border of golden stems and knot works and in this border a golden heart is painted at the far right side margin. This small heart has a horizontal wound with large drips of red blood encircling it. And inside the wound is written: *fons amoris* (fountain of love). A parallel to this bleeding heart and its inscription is found in the Birgittine context. Two of the nuns’ manuscripts have miniatures presenting exactly this kind of wounded heart with the same Latin inscription, UUB C 443 and KB A 3 (Fig. 5). The composition has expanded so as to include some of the instruments of the passion, four arrows representing the nails and, the names of Jesus and Maria. Another example of this heart and name composition was executed in a textile by the nuns in Nådendal, on an embroidered amice (Museiverket 1997:6b) (Fig. 6). Here the holy names are on the left and right hand sides respectively, with the wounded heart and limbs in the centre. Despite the ruined state of the embroidery it is still possible to detect the narrow wound on the red heart, the wounds of the hands and the feet and the angels collecting the blood from the wounds. Flow-

*Fig. 5.* Miniature depicting the wounded heart and some of the instruments of the passion, enclosed by the holy names of Jesus and Maria. Book of Hours for Birgittine use, written by the nun Christina Hansdotter Brask for the nun Katrin Pedersdotter in the late 15th or early 16th Century. Uppsala universitetsbibliotek MS C 443, folio 11v–12r. © Uppsala universitetsbibliotek.

of the Virgin, did not originate in Saint Birgitta, but was an increasingly popular devotional theme in the late fifteenth century. A Sorrows of the Virgin iconography developed where Mary is pierced by one or up to seven swords, and she is surrounded by depictions of the seven sorrowful events she experienced during her son’s life. This motif also occurs in one of the Vadstena manuscripts (KB A 1), on a woodprint from Germany. The print is pasted into a folio manuscript and enclosed by a wavy oak and acorn border painted

*Fig. 6.* The wounded heart and the wounded limbs of Christ, enclosed by the holy names of Jesus and Maria, and a liturgical quote on top and bottom. Embroided amice from Nådendal Abbey, Finland, late 15th Century. Helsingfors, Museiverket, NM 1997:6b. © Museiverket, Helsingfors.

14 For further reading see Sandgren 2011, pp. 119–140, in particular pp. 130–131.
ers, stars and zigzag stripes are an important part of the decoration all over the amice, and just below the upper inscription they are mixed with small hearts of other colours. The hearts do not occur in the lower part at all, but together with the flowers and stars they point to Mary. By doing so she is also given a comprehensive place even in this seemingly Christocentric composition. When the amice was in use by a monk, the wound composition would probably have been the most noticeable part of it, despite the height and lustre of the golden letters shaping the sacred names on each side of the central depiction.15

Presumably, the sign of the heart has as much to do with the passion and wounds of Christ, as it has to do with the sorrows of the Virgin Mary. So, the Birgittine hearts, wounded or not, may refer to the Virgin Mary as well as to Christ. It has a double interpretation where it is impossible to distinguish them. The miniatures in the two Vadstena manuscripts UUB C 443 and KB A 3 (Fig. 6) indeed work in a devotional context where the devout nun could let the mind shift between the two holy names and their close interdependence for salvation. The heart-in-heart decorations in the Nådendal embroidery (inv. no 3000) carry the same idea as the miniatures in the manuscripts and so do the hearts around the wounded heart in the amice (Fig. 7). The hearts of Christ and Mary are not just closely related; they are interdependent and inseparable. Love flows in both directions; Christ’s love to mankind and His mother on the one hand, and Mary’s love to her son and to the devout praying mankind on the other.16

15 Similar pictorial ideas with the wounds and the sacred names as in the amice and the mentioned two manuscripts are found in other late medieval manuscripts. For example Copenhagen AM 421 in 12th folio 23v, Haag, Kooninklijke bibliotheek, MS KA 31 folio 302r, MS 134 C 66 folio 245v, and London, British Library, MS Egerton 3271 folio 299v.

16 The conception that Christ could never resist forwarding a plea for indulgence conveyed by his mother, lead to the notion that the devout could always count on assistance from Mary; she was the protector of mankind, having a ‘VIP lane’ to the Father at her disposal, since she had been taken directly to heaven at her assumption.

Fig. 7. Lower part of a woollen intarsia cover with roundels depicting 1) a lion with the name of Maria, 2) a pelican surrounded by crowned letters ‘b’, ‘k’, and ‘a’ and ‘r’, representing Birgitta and Katarina, 3) a winged, crowned and pierced heart with the letters M[aria], B[irgitta] and the letters ‘i b’. Detail of a woolen red and blue intarsia cover from the late 15th or early 16th Century Vadstena Abbey, found in Dalhem church (Småland). Stockholm, Historiska museet, SHM 23022: 26. © ATA.

Initials in Context

The close relation between the pious Birgittine nuns, the Virgin Mary, Christ and, in extension to the Father, is the underlying factor that permeates everything in the Birgittine monastery, and also the spiritual life of the lay people. Whether monastic or lay, supplicants plead to Mary as the best defender when facing the last judgement. The first prayer everyone learned was Ave Maria, and then successively the Pater noster and Credo. As this was the basic catechetical teaching, even the pilgrims to Vadstena were familiar with it. The medieval devotional art objects often contain references to this kind of basic catholic knowledge, and were consequently
significance must be stronger than the others, but before any conclusions may be drawn, the letters of the next red roundel also must be mentioned. The roundel carries a winged heart, a motif previously encountered in the densely embroidered Nådendal textile (Museiverket, inv. no 3000) that was mentioned at the start of this essay. The heart in the Dalhem intarsia is however pierced by two arrows and decorated by some letters. The pierced heart and the winged heart are two independent medieval representations of the Virgin Mary, but here they are combined into one single emblem.

In the damaged borders of the Dalhem intarsia cloth (Fig. 7) there are even further letters to read, but some are probably missing, as there are just two letter fragments in the left side border. The letters of the lower border are probably to be read as ‘t’, ‘r’, ‘k’, ‘a’, ‘j’, ‘l’ and ‘i’. That all these border letters should be the initials of the embroiderers is most improbable, even if this kind of signature probably occurs in the embroideries, as in the nuns’ manuscripts. It is more likely that the lower border refers to Katarina, Saint Birgitta’s daughter and the first abbess of the order. The crowned ‘k’ and ‘b’ letters at the pelican also strengthen this possibility: Saint Birgitta and the blessed (but not canonized) Katarina. Even if the letters for the full name of Maria are written at the lion, a full lettering is not necessary for the interpretation as the cope hood and the reliquary have indicated. In the roundel of the winged heart are the minuscule letters ‘i’ and ‘b’ written below the heart, and the capital letters ‘M’ and ‘B’ on the heart. The most reasonable interpretation of the capitals is that they refer to Mary and Birgitta, while the minuscule ‘i b’ possibly refers to the donor, sponsor or ruling abbess, or even the embroidering nun. The Dalhem embroidery does not have a precise date, but the textile scholar Agnes Geijer comprehensible for all Christians. The cope hood image of the Virgin Mary (Fig. 1), contains letters referring to the Virgin although she is easy to identify anyhow. Her letters are however not distributed in any reading direction, but the eye has to move around to perceive them to read ‘Ma[r]ia’. The ‘M’ and the ‘A’ at the same time a reminder of the Ave Maria prayer, and thus even the Rosary. The continuous surrounding inscription is, on the other hand, hard to decipher, but very familiar for the stitching nuns since it was a quote from their weekly liturgy. Similar quotes from the Birgittine liturgy have been identified on further objects from Vadstena and Nådendal Abbeys, clearly indicating their origin. The lay audience of the nuns’ handiwork was probably able to understand the references to the Virgin even though the letters were spread out or intertwined. An example of this is seen also in a blue and red woollen intarsia cover from Dalhem’s church in Småland, attributed to Vadstena Abbey (Fig. 7) (Stockholm, SHM 23022:26).

Today it is hard to decipher not just the letters and their meanings but also the iconography of the damaged 12 roundels and the wide border. It has an evident reading direction however, and a Christ monogram ‘ihs’ on a heraldic shield in the top line of roundels is still recognizable. The left side of the red bottom line of roundels depicts a lion with the letters of ‘maria’ spread out in the roundel. Below the lion, an arrow pierces a heart. This is a series of references to the Virgin Mary: the lion, the letters and the pierced heart. Next to this roundel is a pelican feeding its young by piercing her breast, a common symbol for Christ. In the spandrels can be found the minuscule letters ‘k’ and ‘a’ in the upper part and, ‘b’ and ‘r’ in the lower part. Furthermore there is an ‘i’ just behind the pelican’s back, in the roundel. Since the letters ‘k’ and ‘b’ have crowns their significance might be a symbol for the Virgin Mary as well as the pierced heart, during the Middle Ages.

17 ‘Nos cum prole pia b[e]n[e]dicit virgo M’ is a quote from the nuns liturgy on Thursdays according to Estham 1991, p. 49.
18 An altar frontlet (SHM 23022:7), the Nådendal amice (1997:6b), the Nådendal intarsia (KM 1223:1) and two reliquaries (SHM 349:1 & 349:2) have inscriptions.
19 See reproduced detail in Estham 1991, p. 55. For further images see http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=g6085&g=1.

20 The winged heart might be a symbol for the Virgin Mary as well as the pierced heart, during the Middle Ages.
21 Katarina was never canonized but her translation took place in 1489 in Vadstena.
m-decorations were a reminder for the nuns or monks who read their prayer books and handled the liturgical textiles. Wherever they turned there was a visual allusion to the Holy Virgin. As professed religious, the nun or monk should have Mary as exemplar to imitate in love, humility and as follower of Christ. They should walk in the footsteps of Mary, just as on their day of profession. On that day, a banner depicting Christ and Mary, on each side respectively, was carried before the candidate, as an introduction to the forthcoming life in the footsteps of the Virgin Mary and hence of Christ.

In the Footsteps of the Virgin Mary
The pictorial world of Vadstena Abbey was created with images and messages for the inhabitants and the visitors alike, but even if they witnessed the same iconography they did not necessarily see exactly the same objects since their spaces in the church were strictly separated. The stitching nuns could add details and inscriptions that only the members of the Abbey could possibly perceive, maybe only the priest or deacon when it was a matter of embroidered liturgical vestments. The running inscriptions on the vestments and altar frontlets were primarily for the ordained and could be considered as a complement to their vocal prayers. The spread out initials were easier to perceive even in distance, and maybe possible to interpret even for the lay public; an isolated letter stands out from its context even in a candle lit church interior, and certainly when it is made of silver tin or golden thread.

The focus on the Virgin Mary in the Birgittine tradition was even more accentuated than in the contemporary spirituality of the late middle Ages, as exemplified here. The repeated allusions to the Virgin Mary in letters, monograms and symbols as hearts, roses, lilies, pearls and so on, undeniably emphasize her prominence. This was indeed important for the Rosary reciting or Ave Maria-praying Vadstena visitor who, as pilgrim, was striving for indulgence by performing requested devotional exercises and praying in front of certain images or motifs. Likewise, the small-scale hearts and the

22 According to the Webb catalogue of the Historical museum in Stockholm, see http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/bild.asp?uid=132809
23 See the examples of devotional practices in connection with indulgences, discussed in the dissertation by Hanna Källström 2011.
The Virgin Mary in Text and Image: the Prayer Book of Marine Jespersdatter

Anne Mette Hansen

Prayer books are sources of religious practice. The late medieval prayer book used for private devotion is the physical embodiment of the spiritual and textual interaction of the petitioner with the worshipped figures. The integrated complex of prayer texts, instructional rubrics, and devotional images tells why people prayed, to whom the prayers were addressed, and how the prayers should be recited. The textual artefact demonstrates a close relationship between the spiritual and the physical, between the deep devoutness of the prayer text and its physical appearance on the pages.

Prayer books were the most widely used type of book in the later Middle Ages and they have survived in innumerable copies. In Denmark there are around 30 extant manuscripts and a few printed books dating from before the Reformation in 1536. However, the invention of print and the mass-production and standardisation of devotional books did not displace the manuscript prayer books; people continued to write and copy prayers for personal use. There are copies of prayers from the first printed book of hours in Danish, published in 1514, in several handwritten prayer books compiled in the following years, e.g. the book of hours of Else Holgersdatter Rosenkrantz (GKS 1613 4o, early 16th century) and the prayer book of Marine Jespersdatter (AM 421 12mo, early 16th century), and the production of private prayer books continued in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Quite a few of these prayer books were produced for female users and in several cases the identity of the owner is known. Female ownership appears in different ways: by mention of a personal name in the so-called owner’s prayer, by description of a praying female subject, i.e. ‘handmaid’, ‘sinneress’, or ‘widow’, and by the inscription of the owners of the books on endpapers and pastedowns. In this essay I wish to discuss the Marian material in the prayer book of Marine Jespersdatter with a focus on the relationship between texts and images thereby demonstrating that prayer text and devotional image are an integrated whole.

The Prayer Book of Marine Jespersdatter

In Denmark – and in Scandinavia – the majority of the extant manuscript books are furnished with a simple decoration such as rubrication (i.e. headings, two- and three-lines initials, initial letters stroked in red, paragraph signs, and underlining written in red ink) and occasionally flourished initials. The only surviving fully illuminated prayer book is a small pocket-sized format parchment manuscript AM 421 12mo in the Arnamagnæan Collection, Copenhagen. It was produced in the years after 1514 or 1517 for the use of a woman called Marine Jespersdatter, whose name is written in red ink in the owner’s prayer (Fig. 1). The book block is made up of 17 quires, 120 folios in all. The binding method follows a contemporary sixteenth-century practice; the book block is sewn on three bands using herringbone stitching and bound in a binding made of

wooden boards covered with brown leather decorated with a number of lines and stamps. There are remnants of metal fastenings. A material codicological analysis of the book block in combination with a textual examination of the whole book have shown that the book was put together from two originally separate codicological units containing two collections of prayers, and subsequently bound. Six of the seventeen quires are signed in the lower margin of the recto-side of the first leaf of the gathering, beginning with the quire signature \textit{første q} [the first quaternion] and ending with the letter signature \textit{f}, meaning the sixth quire. These signed quires, corresponding to fols 16r–33v and fols 41r–76v, form a physical and textual entity, a collection of prayers which could be titled ‘A few godly prayers’ as the rubric on f. 16r reads: ‘Hereby a few godly prayers begin which should be read with great piety’.\footnote{Her begynnys noglæ gudelige bønner som man skal læse med stor gudelighet, \textit{AM 421 12mo}, 16r.} The remaining 11 quires, comprising fols 17r–15v, fols 34–40v, and fols 77r–120v, are all unsigned, and moreover the textual areas of the pages in these quires have been frame ruled before writing the text and the general type of initials are monochrome Lombards (Fig. 1). The quire made up of fols 34r–40v and belonging to this collection of prayers was wrongly inserted in the middle of the other collection when the two units were bound into one book.\footnote{For a detailed account of the codicological analysis, see Hansen 2012, pp. 9–13.}

On the basis of the textual content the prayer book can be dated to the years after 1514 – or 1517, as ten of the prayers in the collection containing the owner’s prayer were copied from a printed book of hours, \textit{Vor Frue Tider} [Hours of the Virgin], first published in 1514 by the Danish humanist writer Christiern Pedersen (1480–1554). It was one of the first printed books of hours in the vernacular and was printed in Paris at Josse Bade’s printing house. Prayer books in the vernacular were in demand and a few years later, in 1517, a second pirated edition was published by another Danish humanist Henrik Smith (d. 1563) and printed in Leipzig at the printing workshop of Melchior Lotter.

The identity of Marine Jespersdatter is not known with certainty. She might have been the daughter of Jesper Eriksen of the aristocratic family Lunov who is mentioned as ‘betrothed maiden Marine daughter of Jesper’ in the royal registers for the year 1517.\footnote{festemøø Jomfru Marine Jespersdotther, Suhm 1782, p. 29. It has also been suggested that Marine could be identified with Mette Jespersdatter (dead after 1512), the daughter of the nobleman Jesper Friis of Lundby and Hesselager on the island Funen and the first wife of Claus Jørgensen Urne of Hindemae (d. 1531). Mette Jespersdatter Friis had sisters who were nuns in the Benedictine nunnery at Dalum. Cf. Dahlerup 1989, p. 321.} The Lunov family had relations with the Birgittine abbey of Mariager, which makes it possible that the book was commissioned for Marine

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{fig1}
\caption{Prayer book of Marine Jespersdatter, fols 33v–34r. The name \textit{Marine jespersdoother} is written in red ink in the owner’s prayer on f. 34r. The initial \textit{H} is a five-line red Lombard. The depiction of Anna Selbdritt on f. 33v originally accompanied the prayer to the Virgin Mary and St. Anne on f. 41r. © The Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen.}
\end{figure}
and produced at the convent’s scriptorium. The textual content however, is not especially Birgittine as there are no prayers addressed to Saint Birgitta.\(^8\)

The book contains an anthology of prayers, several of which belong to the inventory of popular prayers all over Europe, among others the so-called owner’s prayer, an invocation of the triune Godhead for protection against spiritual and material enemies,\(^9\) the so-called invocation and prayer of the 72 names of Christ (De Nominibus Dei),\(^10\) the 72 names of the Blessed Virgin Mary,\(^11\) the Apostles’ creed, a prayer to the Five wounds of Christ, Seven prayers of Saint Gregory, Ave Maria, an illustrated rosary,\(^12\) prayers of the joys and sorrows of the Virgin, a prayer to one’s guardian angel, and a number of prayers to popular saints such as Christopher, Erasme, George, the Magi, Catherine of Alexandria, and Margaret the Virgin.\(^13\) It also includes the only known medieval

\(^8\) Dahlerup 1987, pp. 30–31, argues that the prayer book has been related to a Brigittine environment, but this was debated by Frederiksen 1988, pp. 11, 13, and 2001, p. 93.

\(^9\) The invocation is the initial prayer in Breviarium Lundense: ‘Lord almighty, Father and Son and Holy Spirit: Give me most unworthy servant N victory over all my enemies’ [Domine deus meus omnipotens pater et filius et spiritus sanctus: da mihi indignissimo famulo tuo .N. victoriam contra omnes inimicos meos].

\(^10\) The initial rubric of the prayer and the accompanying devotional image, a depiction of the Trinity in form of a Seat of Mercy, occupy f. 1–2. It is likely that the leaf containing the prayer text proper has been cut out of the book by a subsequent user in order to be worn as a charm for protection against evil. In the rubric it is explained that: ‘Anyone carrying on his person, night and day, the following written most holy 72 names of Christ, which have been sent by Saint Gregory for the service of human beings, shall be well protected/guarded’ [Hwosomhelst tesse efftherscrefne lxxii alsomhelligste cristi naffn som skickede ære wed sanctum gregor mennesken til gaffin ber p[o] segh dagh oc nath skall han blffue well bewaeren], AM 421 12mo, 1r.

\(^11\) For parallels in Latin, (Low) German and Old Danish, see Frederiksen 2008, p. 22.

\(^12\) A Swedish parallel is found in the prayer book of the Fraternity of the Psalter of the Virgin Mary (Cod. Gävle Ms. 2, early 16th century). The Swedish rosary has been discussed by Hedström 2009, pp. 300–308.

\(^13\) Among these prayers the following were copied from Vor Frue Tider: the prayer to the Five wounds of Christ, the prayers Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Danish translation in verse of the Latin compassionate hymn Stabat mater.\(^14\) Several of these prayers are accompanied by devotional images that belong to the standard repertoire: the Trinity, the Crucifixion, the Five wounds, Mass of Saint Gregory, Anna Selbdritt, Christ carrying the cross, the Last Supper, Madonna of the Rosary, Mother of God.

**Marian Prayers and Devotions in the Prayer Book of Marine Jespersdatter**

Of the 47 prayers 11 are Marian or addressed to Mary. Familiar representations of Mary, such as the Apocalyptic Madonna, Madonna of the Rosary, and Mother of God accompany some of these prayers. The prayers are: the 72 names of the Blessed Virgin Mary (3r), Ave Maria (19r), Rejoice, O Mary (20r),\(^15\) ‘At the cross’, i.e. Stabat mater dolosa (29r), a prayer of consolation (32r), a prayer in verse to Saint Anne and the Virgin Mary (41r), Psalter of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Trinity’ (41v–76v), a prayer at the time of death (77r), Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary (88r), Seven Joys of the Blessed Virgin Mary (90r), and finally an intercessory prayer to Mary, Mother of God (94r).

**The 72 Names of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

The prayer lists a number of names and titles of the Virgin Mary in Latin. These names to be used to honour or invoke Mary express the qualities and roles ascribed to her, e.g. ‘glorified’ [diva], God-bearer, mother of God [theotokos], ‘Queen of Heaven’ [regina], ‘immaculately conceived’ [immaculata], ‘Gate of Heaven’ [porta], Mary and Seven Joys of the Blessed Virgin Mary, prayer to the Magi, an intercessory prayer to Saint Christopher, and the prayer to Saint Erasme.


\(^15\) In Danish: O Maria, glæd dig.
‘Handmaid of God’ [ancilla], ‘Full of Grace’ [gratia], ‘Model of Faith’ [spes], ‘Star of the Sea’ [stella]. The prayer is accompanied by a representation of Mary as the Apocalyptic Madonna with child. Mary, depicted as mother of God and queen of heaven, stands surrounded by the sun while standing on the moon (Fig. 2). The rubric refers to an image of Mary and an instruction: the prayer has to be read on Saturdays at church kneeling in front of an image of Mary and should be accompanied by seven Ave Marias. However, the user of this illustrated prayer book, does not have to attend the Saturday mass at church since an image representing Mary is always at hand in the book; the prayer could be read whenever and wherever needed establishing the required situation and conditions necessary for the success of the prayer: ‘whatever he asks for he shall obtain and share the eternal joy of Heaven’, i.e. salvation.\(^{16}\) The list is completed with a versicle and a response (the penitential Psalm 102:1: ‘Hear my prayer, Lord, let my cry come to you’) and a joint prayer for salvation to God almighty.\(^{17}\)

**Ave Maria**

The wording of the angelic salutation and Elizabeth’s blessing of Mary in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke are the biblical components of the Marian prayer Ave Maria. This prayer asking for Mary to be intercessory forms a constitutional repetitive part of the Rosary and it functions as a supplementary prayer to several prayers addressed to Mary. In the prayer book of Marine Jespersdatter Ave Maria is found in a special version in which only the first laudatory part derived from the biblical narrative is represented, whereas the second intercessory part is absent.\(^{18}\)

Hail Mary – save me from the bitterness of life and soul  
Full of grace – make me share the fullness of grace  
The Lord is with you – shall also be with me in my life and in my death and in all my distress, for life and soul  
Blessed are you among women – fill me with spiritual blessing  
Blessed is the fruit of your womb Jesus – Christ, the son of the living God, the sight of whom I shall have eternally.\(^{19}\)

\(^{16}\) hwilken tesse helligste lxxii iomfru marie naffn meth vii Ave maria paa syne kner forlest [sic!] hver lagerdag vti kirken for iomfru marie belitte huvadsholst han fiaar bedit skal han foruerwe oc i thet annet werden biffuer delactig meth all glede i hiemergis righe, AM 421 12mo, 3r. Note that the praying person is being referred to by the masculine pronoun ‘he’.

\(^{17}\) Old Danish parallels are found in the prayer books AM 76 8vo from the mid-fifteenth century and AM 420 12mo dated to c. 1500.

\(^{18}\) ’Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death, Amen.’

\(^{19}\) Hel maria frels megh aff alth lyfss oc sielss beskhed fud med nadhe Giør megh delactigh aff alth nadhens fulkommenlighed herrin er meth tegh skal oc saa ware
Thereby the focus of the text is the grace of God and the blessing of the female as a God-bearer, physically as well as spiritually. This version of the *Ave* is characterised by parallelism in the form of the additional prayer succeeding each line: 'Make me share the grace of God' corresponds to 'full of grace' (meaning ‘as you yourself are filled with his grace’). 'Fill me with spiritual blessing' is analogous to 'blessed are you among women' (meaning ‘as you yourself was blessed and filled up in your womb with Christ’). The Virgin Mary is a model for imitation and the prayers express the female praying person’s wish to become like her: to share the grace of God, and to be blessed and filled with Christ (Fig. 3).

**Stabat Mater**

According to the rubric the poem ‘At the Cross’ is a prayer for the remembrance of the death of Jesus Christ and the consolation of the Virgin Mary: Below is written a prayer of the Virgin Mary in which the death and passion of Jesus Christ are commemorated and the comforting of her.\(^{20}\) In book of hours the compassionate hymn *Stabat mater* is accompanied by a depiction of the Crucifixion, a Lamentation, or more frequently by a Pietà.\(^{21}\) In the prayer book of Marine Jespersdatter the poem is illustrated with a Crucifixion (Fig. 4). The text is narrated from a maternal point of view. The mother of God stands and looks at her dying son hanging on the cross. As the text reads in the first stanza: ‘At the cross, in grief and anguish, the mother of Christ stood, flooding with tears, her son was hanging on the cross’.\(^{22}\) In crucifixion scenes Christ is often depicted on the cross, surrounded by the Virgin Mary, Saint John, and Mary Magdalene. In this crucifixion, however, Mary is not represented at all. The absence of the mother in the picture may be understood as a meditative device: reading the prayer and looking at the image, the praying person, who is most likely also a mother, may identify herself with the mother of Christ who is standing and looking at the climactic moment in her son’s passion. The privacy of the personal prayer book and devotion may also be reflected in the depiction of the solitary crucified Christ in contrast to a cavalry scene including several persons.

\(^{20}\) Item her effther skrivfwoes een bøn aff Iomfrw maria I hwilken bøn wor herres ihesu cristi død oc pynelssæ y hwffkommess och hennyss hwffslalelssæ [sic], AM 421 12mo, 29r.


\(^{22}\) Hoss korsens tre • meth sorg oc wee • stood cristi moder • med graadzens floder • hennes son paa korsyt hengde, AM 421 12mo, 30r.
Psalter of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Trinity

The principal component in the little book of prayer ‘A few godly prayers’ is the ‘Psalter of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Trinity’. This Rosary consists of three series of prayers (decades) to the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ accompanied by a narrative cycle of images. The prayers recall events (mysteries) in the lives of Mary and Jesus beginning with the Annunciation and ending with the Coronation of the Virgin and the Last Judgment. After each decade there is a petition addressed to Mary for intercession and acceptance of the Rosary. The prayers are placed on facing pages where the commemorative text is written on recto-pages and the image depicting the event is painted on the verso-pages. Each prayer concludes with a final rubric, in which the narrated event is recapitulated and a prescription is given of how the prayer should be recited in company with a number (four or five) of the repetitive prayer Ave Maria and occasionally a supplementary Pater noster.

Furthermore, sometimes the text prescribes that the prayer has to be recited in front of an image of the worshipped figure, as is the case in the prayer to Mary for her visit to Saint John the Baptist’s mother Saint Elizabeth (Fig. 5). Here the rubric specifies that the prayer has to be read in front of the image of Mary visiting Elizabeth: ‘Likewise, here you shall read five Ave Maria in front of
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the image of the Virgin Mary visiting her kinswoman Elizabeth'.

The depiction of the Nativity reflects a Birgittine influence of iconography (Fig. 6). Since early Christianity, the birth of Christ has been described as a ray of light in the darkness. In her Revelaciones celestes Birgitta of Vadstena (d. 1373) describes the birth as a revelation of light, more powerful than sunrise, and the kneeling Virgin Mary hailing her son with the words: Bene veneris, Deus meus, Dominus meus et filius meus. The infant Christ is worshipped by Mary and Joseph in a shelter; under a wooden roof the child lies naked on the ground, and his body is radiant. Mary, in her red dress, kneels in front of the child her hands laid against each other in worship. The animals in the stable, a red donkey and a blue ox are looking on. In the background Joseph is standing with his hands joined in praying gesture.

The image accompanies the prayer to Mary at the birth of Christ. After the invocation 'Most glorious Virgin Mary' the text continues with Elizabeth's praise to Mary at their visit: 'Blessed are you among women'. In the narratio, the narrative part of the prayer in which the joyful event is told, Mary expresses the words from Saint Birgitta's revelation: 'Welcome, my dear son and my God and my Lord'. The theme of the petition is the presence of the Virgin Mary by the praying person's side when the soul departs the body. The image portrays a Mary who looks affectionately and gently at her son whose face is turned to his mother. In the same way, what is asked for is that the praying person in her time of death may see the 'gentle face' of Mary and through Mary's face see the face of Christ. Thereby, the image functions both as a meditative image and as an integral part of the petitionary argument.

Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Two of the copied texts in the prayer book of Marine Jespersdatter are prayers about the sorrows and the joys of Mary. These two prayers are among the most popular prayers of late medieval Denmark. The prayer to the wounds of Christ, which precedes the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary, ends defectively on f. 87v and an examination of the composition of the actual 11th quire

23 Item her skuller i læsse .v. Aue Maria for Ionfrw M[a]r[i]es billithe som hwn søghede syn frenke elizabet, AM 421 12mo, 45r.
24 See Revelaciones VII, pp. 188–189.
25 The text reads: O Ereffwlesthe Ionfrw Maria welsigneth ware thu officer alle quine som fœdhe guditz son ffor widhen alth wee Och ther tyldadh hannum och sadhe war welkommen myn kære son oc myn kære god oc herre O Alsom sodesthe Ionfrw Maria myskundtie tegh officer megh och the meghe tyd blydhe andledhe naar som myn siel skal skylles fran [mit] legomme Amen, AM 421 12mo, 46r.
shows that a leaf conjoint with f. 88 has been cut out, leaving a remnant of the leaf. It is likely that this prayer was also accompanied by a devotional image of the Virgin on the verso-side of the missing leaf, as is the case with Seven Joys of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is illustrated with a picture of the crowned Madonna surrounded by a rosary and angels on f. 90v (Fig. 7). In support of this assumption it should be mentioned that in the illustrated 2nd edition of Christiern Pedersen’s book of hours the two prayers are accompanied by woodcuts depicting a Rosary Madonna and a Mater dolorosa respectively.

In her life on earth Mary had seven sorrows, as it reads in the rubric: ‘A prayer to be read in praise of Virgin Mary for the seven sorrows she suffered on earth’. Since the late Middle Ages these sorrows have been the object of special attention and devotion. A commemorating service is documented from 1423, and in 1727 Pope Benedict XIII dictated that the feast should take place on the Friday preceding Palm Sunday. Since 1969 Commemoratio Septem Dolorum BMV is on September 15. The sorrows of Mary are: the prophecy of Symeon/the circumcision, the flight into Egypt, the loss of Jesus in the temple, Mary meets Jesus on the way to Mount Calvary, the crucifixion, the deposition, and the burial of Jesus. According to the prophecy of Symeon in Luke 2: 34–35 a sword would pierce through Mary’s soul (heart) symbolizing her sorrows. Thus the sorrows are pictured figuratively as a sword (one, five or seven) piercing Mary’s heart. This motive was disseminated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In this version of the prayer the poor ‘sinneress’ reminds Mary of seven sorrows: ‘O most holy Virgin Mary, remember the severe sorrows you had in your blessed heart at the time’. Because of these painful experiences the mother Mary is asked to intercede with her son for consolation and salvation.

Seven Joys of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The seven parts of the prayer are formulaic. They all begin with an apostrophic invocation ‘O Virgin Mary’ after which the petition commences: ‘I ask you (humbly)’ followed by the interposed argument starting with the preposition ‘because of’ and continued in the final part of the paragraph ‘that you will listen to (pray for/save/console) me in my sorrow (grief/distress/all my sorrow/sorrow, grief and distress)’.

26 En bøn som læsís skal iomfrrw marie til lôf for de syw drøwelser hwv hagde her paav orden, AM 421 12mo, 88r.
27 Handbuch der Marienkunde I, p. 495, 499–500.
28 O alder helligste iomfrw maria ihw kom then sware drøwele thu figst i tiit benedide hierte den tiid, AM 421 12mo, 88r.
29 A [sic] alder mildeste iomffrw maria teig beder teg ydmygeligen [sic] at tw formedelst then glæde tw figst then tiid gabriel ængel bebude tegh at tw fade
intercession and a collect addressed to God almighty listing all intercessors hierarchically: the Virgin Mary, angles, apostles, evangelists, patriarchs, prophets, virgins, and saints.

The justification for praying is Mary’s seven joys: the annunciation of the birth of Jesus, the nativity of Jesus, the presentation of Jesus at the temple, the adoration of the Magi, the resurrection of Christ, the ascension of Christ to heaven, and the coronation of the Virgin in heaven. Three of the joyful mysteries of the rosary (i.e. the annunciation, the nativity, and the presentation of Jesus) and three of the luminous mysteries (i.e. the resurrection, the ascension, and the coronation) are in mind in this prayer, and a repetitive Ave Maria is included between each prayer unit. Thus the prayer can be classified as a rosary prayer, a genre classification that also indicates the interpretation of the accompanying image as a Rosary Madonna. In other versions of prayers on the joys of the Virgin, which may vary in a number as 5, 7, 10 or 15, the rubric contains detailed instructions on how to pray, e.g. in the book of hours of Karen Ludvigsdatter Rosenkrantz (Medeltidshandskrift 35, c. 1500): between each prayer unit ‘read 10 Ave Marias standing, afterwards read the following prayer on your knee’.30

**Intercessory Prayer to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God**

The Virgin Mary is depicted as Mother of God standing in a praying gesture with her hands joined together (Fig. 8). She is dressed as a married woman wearing a white headcloth and likewise the rubric presents the adored figure as ‘Lady’ (not ‘Virgin’): ‘a good prayer

that is useful to read in honour of Our Lady Mary’.31 In the beginning of the prayer, the *invocatio*, Mary is addressed as ‘Our Lady’ and ‘precious virgin’ and with a reference to the hymn *Salve Regina* the praying person appeals to Mary for her favour (*captatio benevolentiae*) praising her as ‘Queen of Mercy’ and mediator between God (‘the sun of truth shining upon man’) and man (‘who lives in night and darkness’) mediating the grace of God: ‘As the night is between the day and the sun you are between God the Father in Heaven where the true sun is that shines upon all men, and between

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30 *Les x auve maria standende och faal siden pa kne ve les bønen som hære after star skreffuen*, Medeltidshandskrift 35, 66r, The prayer, 64v–66v, is edited in Nielsen I, pp. 258–271 [prayer no. 105; variant readings from a number of prayer books are recorded in the apparatus]. Cf. digital images and a manuscript description at Saint Laurentius Digital Manuscript Library (http://laurentius.ub.lu.se/volumes/Mh_35/).

31 *Her nest effther skall byries en godh bøn aff wor ffrwæ sancta maria som er nyttelig at lesses i hennes hedher*, AM 421 12mo, 94r.
us that are in night and darkness’. The text alludes to the hymn *Stella maris* and Mary as a guiding star of the sea: ‘And as those that sail during night rejoice in watching their star rise, those who sail in distress through the dark world rejoice in seeing you as the guiding star of Heaven leading them safely to shore’.

During the prayer the adored figure is addressed by honouring names: ‘Mother of God’, ‘Queen of Mercy’, ‘Queen of Heaven’, ‘Gate of Heaven’, ‘Gate of Paradise’, ‘Star of the Sea’, ‘Gentle Woman’, and ‘Our Lady Queen of the World’, ‘Full of Grace’, ‘Mother of God and Queen of Heaven’, and ‘Mother of Mercy’. It is argued that Mary cannot refuse to grant the petition of a praying person to intercede with her son. Men should perish if Mary does not assist in getting the grace of God: ‘We are destroyed unless you help us, that your blessed son Jesus Christ will be merciful to us’. The more sinful a person is the greater the honour of Mary for being merciful: ‘The more I sin and the worse I am, the greater your honour if you have mercy on me’. And what good would it do that Mary was Jesus’ mother if she did not mollify him with her petition: ‘What would it help me that Jesus is your son if you did not soften him with your sweet prayer’. Being the mother of Christ the Judge and Christ the Saviour she is the creature worthy of softening her son’s anger whom you address: ‘Who is more worthy rightly to soften the rage of the Judge but you who were worthy of being both the mother of the Judge and the Redeemer’.

Finally, Mary cannot ignore a prayer; she turns down no one that looks for her: ‘You are the gentle mother that refuses no one and rejects no one; you do not throw away any one that flees to you’. The praying person does not pray for herself alone: ‘We are destroyed unless you help us, that your blessed son Jesus Christ will be merciful to us’.

The petition proper begins on fol. 99v–v. The Mother of Heaven is asked to intercede with her son and soften his anger towards the simple, sinful and sorrowful petitioning soul, to console good as well as bad people in order to make bad people good and to keep good people constant in faith. The text ends defectively on fol. 99v with another appeal to Mary as mother of God, and in this way the text corresponds with the accompanying image of the Mother of God throughout the prayer.

**Conclusion**

The prayer programme of Marine Jespersdatter’s Prayer Book presents an anthology of some of the most popular prayers to the Virgin Mary and demonstrates private Marian devotion in a visual way where text and image are integrated representations of the prayers. The codicological examination of the prayer book showed that the book was put together from two originally different codicological units and subsequently bound. One collection of prayers was made specifically for the use of the woman Marine Jespersdatter, while the other collection, named ‘A few godly prayers’, contains no specific user’s name but has indications suggesting the intended user was female. In the prayer ‘Rejoice, O Mary’ the adoring subject refers to herself as a widow: ‘Give me faith and hope and love and peace internally and externally and let me keep my widowhood

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32 Suo som naten er mellom daghen oc solen. suo estu mellom gud fadther i hiemmerige ther then sande soll er ther alle men lysuer oc mellom ass ther i nath oc march ere, AM 421 12mo, 95v.
33 Oc som the glædes ther om naten seiler oc ferdes then thime the see syn stierne opgange tha glædes the ther i meghen wodhe seyler vti thenne myrcke werden the Suo oc then thime wii hygghe aa at tu est faren till hiemmerige oc sidder som en lede stierne at lede ass till reth haffn, AM 421 12mo, 95v–96v.
34 wii foderwes wthen tw huelper ass till thin signede son thesum cristum at han worder ass nadelig, AM 421 12mo, 95v.
35 E thes mere ieg synder oc thes oendere iegh er thes mere er thin hedher om tw nadher meg, AM 421 12mo, 96v.
36 hwad hwæpe thet meg at thesum ware thin son wthen tw giorde megh hanum bliid meth thin sode ben, AM 421 12mo, 97v.
37 hwo er werdagh [sic!] till meth reth skyld ath blide dommerens wrede. end tw ther war werdagh at ware bode dommerens oc laserens modher, AM 421 12mo, 97v.
38 Tu est then myldhe modher ther enghen forsom oc enghen borth kaster. oc enghen ther till tegh flyer. tu bort fra tegh urger, AM 421 12mo, 98r–v.
Conceptions of the Virgin Mary in Medieval Western Scandinavia

Karoline Kjesrud

Introduction

With this article I wish to shed light on the understanding of Virgin Mary in medieval Norway and Iceland. As in the rest of Scandinavia and Western Europe, Mary was the most important saint. However, most of the scholarly interest in saints’ cults in these regions has addressed Saint Óláfr (St. Olaf of Norway), the sanctified king of Norway, and the three sanctified Icelandic bishops: Guðmundr (St. Gudmund Arason), Þorlakr (St. Thorlak Thorhallson) and Jón (St. John of Holar).\(^1\) The interest in national identity has led to a focus on peculiarities within Old Norse saints’ cults, while it has left striking connections to continental religious practices in the background. In what follows, I hope to illuminate some of these relations regarding the Virgin Mary. In doing so, I also aim to draw attention to the vivid and flourishing religious life of the time, and thus question a modern scholarly attitude that has met with little resistance, namely that the Old Norse religious practice was formal and superficial. Might the Marian sources open up a more manifold understanding of medieval spirituality in Western Scandinavia?

The historian Sverre Bagge claims that the most important roles of the saints in Old Norse society were as intercessors and performers of miracles. He finds it unlikely that the saints served as pious role models.\(^2\) He argues for this exclusively traditional and ritual


religion by pointing to the very few sources found on heresy in medieval Norway. The sources for this article are selected with the purpose of presenting a contrasting image of Old Norse religious practice. These sources tell another story, one of an intense and sincere devotion to Mary. A wide array of medieval material, including wooden sculptures, altar frontals, manuscripts containing miracles and vitae of her life, bears witness to her strong position. Churches dedicated to Mary were found all over Norway; 60 are now known to have been dedicated to her.3

The large corpus of Marian miracles in Old Norse is preserved in various manuscripts. The majority of them are unsurprisingly based on European sources.4 Miracles about the Holy Virgin were translated into Old Norse and collected by the early thirteenth century at the latest. The oldest preserved manuscript is dated to the early thirteenth century. C. R. Unger who in the late nineteenth century edited Mariu saga, the story of Mary’s life – based on different European texts, such as Legenda Aurea and Prot-evangelium Jacobi – together with a large collection of Marian miracles, claims that 51 miracles must be understood as one fixed collection.5 He suggests that this ‘older’ collection of miracles was translated from one particular Latin source. This redaction may have been the first translation of Marian literature into Old Norse, and possibly opened up a broader and deeper interest in Mary. Other collections of Marian miracles include many others than these 51, and the total corpus of medieval miracles of Mary translated into Old Norse is now known to be a large number.6 From this large corpus of Marian miracles translated from Latin to Old Norse, I will present one in detail in this essay: The Holy Virgin who Dripped Milk on a Monk. This miracle is not among the earliest 51, rather it appeared in later redactions and was copied and transmitted several times. The miracle will here serve as an example of the expanded interest in the Virgin Mary that took place in the thirteenth century. Additionally, I will discuss the Norwegian Arnafjord (Vanylven) painted altar frontal (c. 1275–1300), which incorporates the same themes as the miracle, however in a concealed manner.

The source material for Old Norse culture is characterised by a geographical division between texts and images. Most manuscripts are preserved from Iceland, whereas most art historical objects are preserved from Norway. The objects – books, sculptures and other artefacts – are thus related to different contexts. The possible meanings of the word context are many, and it is therefore useful to make a distinction between situational or cultural context. A manuscript might have been written in a monastery in Iceland, which thus constitutes its specific and situational context, but it was also situated within a broader cultural context, including both Iceland and Norway. The subdivision of the contextual approach into situational and cultural context may be helpful for comparison of sources of Icelandic and Norwegian origin. The actual artefact (e.g. manuscript, image) belongs to a situational context, defined by the milieu of production. At the same time the artefact also belongs to a more broadly defined cultural context, including ideological, cultural and intellectual movements of the period.7 Considering the physical objects as utterances and allowing them to serve as witnesses from their own time, the article seeks support in the historical acceptance of the sources as ‘remnants’, as Knut Kjeldstadli has defined the term.8 In her position as saint and object of

4 See Widding 1996.
5 In 1871, C.R. Unger edited the Life of Mary, Mariu saga, and published it together with many Marian miracles. Mariu saga is inspired by Prot-evangelium Jacobi which has functioned as inspiration to other apocryphal literature on Mary, to representations in art, and to dedications of feasts, see e.g. Clayton (1998), pp. 8–11. Manuscripts containing Mariu saga date from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The three main manuscripts containing Mariu saga are all of Icelandic origin: Holm perg. 11 410, AM 234 fol. and AM 232 fol. In addition to these, there are numerous manuscripts and fragments.

6 Unger 1871, p. IV. Groups of redactions and relations between the miracles have later been discussed by e.g. Ole Widding 1996 and Laura Tommassini 1996.
7 See Asdal et.al. 2008.
devotion, Mary may be expected to have some impact on the surrounding culture. At the same time, the cultural context influenced the elevation of her position. Lloyd F. Bitzer argues with the help of the term ‘rhetorical situation’ that every utterance is a reply to the context within which it was uttered. In his words, a rhetorical situation is ‘a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterance’. Something in the cultural context prompts the utterance, and the utterance responds to some condition in the cultural context. Hence, every utterance must be understood as a reply to a need in society. The same relationship between an utterance and its receivers that Bitzer stipulates has also been highlighted within the art historical discourse. These coinciding approaches to the material make it natural to consider both texts and images as part of a joint cultural context.

The cultural context may also be elucidated in terms of a semiotic dimension. Meyer Schapiro has argued for the usefulness of semiotics for art historical purposes, and related it to the reading of images. Reading an image demands that the reader discover all parts of the image to extract what makes it unique. The extraction of the image’s individuality serves as a platform for construing the function of the image within its context. Each object with the same semiotic content, whether represented in a manuscript or on an altar frontal, consists of signs – elements and motifs. These signs belong to an overall semiotic space, a semiosphere in Jurij Lotman’s words, not dependent on their physical occurrence. Within the semiosphere, a semiotic room may consist of all given elements and motifs concerning a given concept, in this case Mary. In this room exists every potential form expressed in texts and pictures and even other media, together with the features and symbolic positions of Mary. Presentations of her may therefore be considered as a print from this semiotic space, regardless of the medium. The potential for construal and understanding will however vary, depending on the composition and emphases displayed by each object, as understood in its more limited and situational context. Jurij Lotman defines the semiosphere as a system based on levels and their boundaries, where factors as time and geographical spaces may serve as individual levels. The idea of the semiosphere is therefore tightly connected to a cultural context. In the case of this essay concerning conceptions of Mary, we may imagine the Old Norse material as a separate room within the semiosphere; a room that can be more fully understood by recourse to the cultural context, but also one that can help us understand and fill out blank spaces within that context. In this room there may be a subdivision of Icelandic and Norwegian material. Thus, the material will be understood as part of a larger and overarching whole, at the same time as it claims its own identity. In other words, conceptions of Mary may be understood in general European terms, as well as in terms of local communities and individual perception.

Medieval communication both in text and pictures was structured into smaller units, such as scenes of action. These units may be recognised on different levels in either text or image. Both textual and pictorial material concerning Mary in medieval Iceland and Norway may be recognised by their strictly defined motifs often rendering the same content. In view of Lloyd Bitzer’s definition of rhetorical situation, each motif, whether in text or in picture, is the result of an exigence which strongly invites utterances. In the Middle Ages, texts were read aloud and hence largely independent of both the sender’s selection and emphasis of the text. Certain motifs were highlighted and others were not. The same motif-orientated practice is evident in medieval images. The transmitted result was an answer to a need in the local, situational context. Furthermore, the local and situational context was an answer to a broader cultural context.

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9 See Bitzer 1968, p. 5.
11 See Schapiro 1996.
12 See Lotman 2005.
14 See Coleman 1996; ‘sender’ is here intended as a joint concept for authors and scribes.
The Virgin Mary in Old Norse Texts and Images

The Virgin Mary is, first and foremost, the mother of God, theotokos, and a paragon for good moral behavior. However, new ideas concerning Mary were shaped in theological debates throughout the Middle Ages, but also emerged in a less formal manner from below, due to her appeal as a caring and blameless mother. The sources from Western Scandinavia make clear that her position was also strong there. Medieval sources attest to various feasts dedicated to Mary in Norway that coincide with feasts introduced elsewhere in Europe. Offices were arranged February 2nd, March 25th, August 15th, July 2nd, September 8th and December 8th. The number of offices witnesses a strong Marian cult in Old Norse medieval sources. It is particularly enlightening that Conceptio Immaculata Mariae, a celebration in memory of Mary’s complete purity, reached Scandinavia in the fourteenth century. The idea of Mary’s immaculate origin was spread through apocryphal gospels and legends in continental literature, not through the biblical gospels. The story of her immaculate origin was transmitted in the Old Norse Maríu saga. With regard to transmission history and the incentives for change within religious practice and devotion, the introduction of this feast into Old Norse liturgical calendars is telling of the impact of non-canonical literature on worship and belief. This addition to the liturgical calendar implies a particular interest in theological questions relating to Mary in parts, at least, of the Old Norse cultural context. Such specialization was common, and furthermore, immensely important in monastic societies. The Cistercians especially were considered to have been lovers of Mary, and in Norway, Cistercian presence was significant from an early period. In Norway, the first monasteries were Benedictine established in the early twelfth century, followed by Cistercian monasteries some decades later. Five Cistercian monasteries were established in medieval Norway, the first already in 1146 at Lyse near Bergen, a daughter monastery of Fountains, England. The influence from England is apparent in Old Norse sources. The liturgical calendar reveals a nuanced comprehension of Mary; it is therefore likely to suppose a growing devotion to Mary.

A common assumption is that the miracles were intended for lay consumption, and hence their function was to arouse interest in Christianity. Some of the manuscripts containing Marian miracles are, however, also filled with other sacred texts implying clerical use, such as biblical and apocryphal texts, exemplified by Maríu saga. In Mary Clayton’s analysis of the changes within the Marian cult on the British Isles, she describes a development from Mary as the Mother of God towards an eager and profound interest in Mary herself. Gradually, Mary figured more and more as a graceful mother of common people. The cult was changing under the impact of apocryphal stories about Mary, in addition to theoretical and theological debates concerning her nature. Because very little history about Mary is given in the gospels, there was an increasing need to develop Mary’s prehistory. The Old Norse miracles bear witness to similar developments in the North, as do the transmission of stories about Mary and Christ outside the gospels, such as Maríu saga, within an institutional framework. These changes in the conceptions of Mary illustrate a dynamic relationship between the cult and its cultural context.

A large number of Marian images present her as the Queen of Heaven, and the Mother of God (Fig. 1). Depictions like these may support the claim of a traditional and ritualised religion, as they are examples of church objects serving as miraculous talismans. There are 12 Norwegian altar frontals from the period 1250–1350 where the Virgin Mary occurs in the central panel and stories from her life are depicted on the side panels. Many of the frontals show depictions of Mary as the Mother of God, a dogmatic and tradi-

15 See Thunø 2003, p. 81.
16 See Dybdahl 1999, pp. 15–19.
18 See Gervin 2007, Lange 1856.
19 Clayton 1990, p. 23.
Conceptions of the Virgin Mary

The traditional way of depicting Mary not unlike that found in the sculptures. Four altar frontals, however, indicate a different projection of Mary, as they also depict stories both from the Old Norse Maríu saga and various miracles alongside the biblical narrative. In some cases the biblical subtext is abandoned altogether in favour of the legends. This is true also of many art historical objects from the same period elsewhere in Europe. As part of her doctoral thesis, Margrethe Stang has investigated these Marian altar frontals and interprets them as a ‘popularisation’ of the sacred. The purpose would have been to make the saints even more relevant for the people by presenting miracles of the saints. Artistic productions from all over Europe, however, show that these altar frontals are part of a broader development. When these Nordic examples are construed as indicative of lay culture, while European parallels and their probable contexts are left out, this is probably more revealing of the Nordic scholarly tradition than of the medieval cult.

The increase of Marian texts and imagery, and hence signs of Marian devotion, implies that people were becoming more personally concerned with their religion. The Old Norse legends participate in the European literary trends of the fourteenth century, but also serve as individual witnesses to religious conceptions. There are several aspects in the legends indicating that they do not exclusively belong to lay culture. Margrethe Stang notices that two of the altar frontals are unique in how they present the Virgin as co-redemptrix, rather than the more typical Mother of God and hence vehicle of God’s work. As co-redemptrix, Mary is more directly involved in people’s faith. The traditional distinction between lay and elite culture may thus be called into question, since the objects seem to tell another story. They do not indicate any clear distinction between lay and clerical conceptions.

Referring to the altar frontals containing legendary material, Stang notices that this new manner of presenting Mary was hardly symptomatic of a ritualised and disinterested religion as is usually claimed. I would like to take Margrethe Stang’s proposal a step further, and suggest that the altar frontals depicting legendary scenes may indicate a stronger and deeper interest in Marian devotion in the religious sphere, especially in the clerical milieu; they may point to mystical and sincere conceptions of Mary. If Mary is more involved with the people, could Mary then be a portal for people to involve themselves with the divine?

The Holy Virgin who Dripped Milk on a Monk

In the older collection of 51 Marian miracles translated into Old Norse, there was only one narrating the mystery of the Virgin Mary’s milk. In later collections a few more miracles retold the significance

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of her milk. One of them, the miracle about The Holy Virgin who Dripped Milk on a Monk, is of particular interest here. The miracle tells the story of a dutiful and patient monk. He served the Lord of Heaven and his mother. He prayed to the Virgin Mary and praised her several times a day. One day this monk fell extremely ill, and he could not do his service. He suffered both spiritually and physically and could not eat nor drink. After a little while, his body looked so diminished that some of the brothers at the convent thought he was going to die. They gathered in his room to offer him the final unction. They read the psalms and prayed as they used to, but they kept wondering why the spirit did not leave him. What the brothers did not see was that the Virgin Mary had appeared in the room. She was unbelievably beautiful, shining like the sun. She spoke to him and revealed her breasts and dripped her milk in wounds on his face. She told him that this was a reward for the service he faithfully had offered to her. Before she left, she promised him a life in eternity. The monk suddenly stood up, completely recovered, and told the brothers of his experience. The legend ends with the brothers’ worship of the holy Virgin Mary, soon after she takes the particular monk to heaven.

The idea of a deeper conception of Marian motifs must be understood in the light of medieval strategy of interpretation itself: Sensus quadruplex scripturae. The model of interpretation gives us an understanding of medieval man’s ability and knowledge of interpreting texts and images. There was a deeper meaning hidden behind each text. As a first level of interpretation, the miracle is a retelling of a supernatural experience. The miracle may also be a depiction of humanity, where Mary serves as a link between God and people. The miracle explains how faithful devotion will be rewarded; the monk’s prayers were not in vain. The Holy Virgin had heard them and she looked to him with mercy. The scene where Mary drips milk on the monk is the crucial point in the miracle.

To the monk, however, the Virgin Mary not only appears in her physical form, but also lets him take part of her physical attributes. The motif opens up for a sincere and personal understanding of the message of the legend, also involving the participant’s own feelings and experiences. Through the story of the monk we catch glimpse of a heavenly reconciliation, a depiction of the individual’s path to the afterlife and union with God. He was now immortal.

The Virgin’s sharing of her milk with the monk illustrates a physical relation between Mary and the monk, an agent and an actor within a spiritual sphere. The milk is a common religious symbol of absolute knowledge, and hence immortality. Motifs of milk and suckling are extant in different religions, both old and contemporary. For instance, Heracles was suckled by Hera. When Bernard of Clairvaux was suckled by the Virgin Mary, he became the adoptive brother of Christ. The milk was the channel of this initiation into the divine. In a mystical experience the milk would symbolize an experience of the divine, the initiation to the divine after eagerly hunting for knowledge. By experiencing the Virgin’s milk on his body, the monk is initiated and allowed to follow the Virgin Mary to eternity. Patience, praise, piety and dutifulness were rewarded with the milk, the symbol of absolute knowledge and immortality. Our story could also be compared to a passage in the Old Norse poem Lilja, composed in honour of Mary in the fourteenth century. In this poem, the mother is juxtaposed to her son, in such a manner as to imply that Mary shared her son’s pains when He hung on the cross. The poet asks the heavenly Mary to drip milk out of her breast to Christ as a child. Here, Mary’s milk seems to symbolise Christ’s achievement of immortality.

Let us return to the altar frontals, and the Arnafront (Vanylven) frontal especially (Fig. 2). According to Margrethe Stang the identification of this altar frontal is due to a confusion in the 1860s


25 Miri Rubin draws a connection between drops of Mary’s milk and the mystical experiences of Fulbert of Chartres and Bernard of Clairvaux. Rubin 2009, p. 184. The perceived power of the milk perhaps also explains the trend of keeping milk in precious vials as relics.
when altar frontals were brought to the museums for conservation. She explains that the Vanylven frontal originally is from Arnafjord, a rural place in Western Norway, close to Sognefjorden, and therefore should be identified as the Arnafjord frontal. The panel usually identified as Dale II is originally from Vanylven (Fig. 3). Both the panel from Arnafjord (Vanylven) and the panel from Vanylven (Dale II) portray the Virgin Mary in the central motif and depictions of Marian miracles on the flanks.

The church housing this Marian altar frontal in Vanylven (now known as Dale II) was dedicated to St. Jetmund (St. Edmund of East Anglia). Vanylven is located at the coast in the western Norway, not too far from the small island, Selja, a religious gathering place from the earliest time of Christianity. The place belonged to the Nidaros diocese, just above the border between Bjørgvin and Nidaros. Selja was the first Norwegian bishopric from about year 1070 and a Benedictine monastery was established here in the early twelfth century. The church of the monastery was dedicated to St. Alban. The female front figure and role model St. Sunniva had received a strong position at the island and her relics were kept at the island until they were moved to Bergen in 1170. The religious centre at Selja may have spread to the mainland, possibly inspiring other religious environments nearby. At the same time that the monastery at Selja expanded in the late thirteenth century, the Vanylven frontal (Dale II) was painted for the church of St. Jetmund at the mainland – an altar frontal with Mary and her child in the central motif, flanked by depictions of The Miracle of the Turk’s head and the Miracle of the Knight who sold his Wife to the Devil. The Marian altar frontal in Vanylven seems to have been produced by a certain group of craftsmen originally located in Trondheim, but which later moved to Bergen.

Fig. 2. Arnafjord (Vanylven) frontal (c. 1275–1300). Photo: Svein Skare, Bergen Museum.

26 Stang 2009, p. 34.

27 Hommedal 1997, p. 43.

The altar frontal from Arnafjord (Vanylven) depicts the Virgin Mary with her standing son on her lap in the central motif, framed by four narrative scenes, by Stang recognized as: the Death of the Virgin, St. Dominicus’ Miracle of Reginaldus and the Dominican Habit, the Vision of St. Gerardus and the Miracle of St. Gerardus, and the Miracle of the Jewish Boy. Both frontals illustrate Mary’s helping power by depicting miracles. The Arnafjord frontal (Vanylven) is however not related to the same group of craftsmen as the Vanylven frontal (Dale II). Rather, this panel stands out, a bit experimental in its style. It has therefore been suggested that this altar frontal could be the work of a non-skilled craftsman. Keeping this possibly emerging craftsman in mind, there is another interesting aspect with this panel. Art historians have found that the Arnafjord frontal (Vanylven) is however not related to the same group of craftsmen as the Vanylven frontal (Dale II). Rather, this panel stands out, a bit experimental in its style. It has therefore been suggested that this altar frontal could be the work of a non-skilled craftsman. Keeping this possibly emerging craftsman in mind, there is another interesting aspect with this panel. Art historians have found that the Arnafjord frontal originally was intended to have another depiction of Mary in the central motif (Fig. 4). The underdrawings of this altar frontal show a suckling Mary, Maria Lactans, with a nude child Jesus on her lap. For some reason this composition was changed when the frontal was painted. This is the only representation of Maria Lactans in the Old Norse art historical corpus. The breastfeeding Mary, however, is a common motif represented in numerous pictures elsewhere in medieval Europe and Scandinavia. In these representations, Mary’s breasts, filled with the milk of mercy, bring her close to people. That the Arnafjord frontal is the only surviving representation of this motif in Old Norse culture makes it unreliable for positing any common trends of the time, and its reworking further complicates the matter. The sparseness of the corpus of art historical objects and paintings from Norway and Iceland must, however, be remembered. While likely that every church was painted on the inside walls and roofs, very few of such paintings are preserved today. Each preserved artefact gives us insight into the comprehension of Mary at that time, and with this in mind we may note that the Maria Lactans motif could be both commissioned and abandoned.

Marthe Stang suggests that the change of composition at the Arnafjord frontal may point to a theological environment where orthodoxy was challenged by ‘popular’ piety. I am not sure that the change of composition points to a division between lay and orthodox piety. While the miracles are usually understood as intended for the laity, it is equally possible that the miracles served the monks and clerics in their service. As we have seen with the miracle of the Virgin who Dripped Milk on a Monk, the miracle also opens up for an intense and sincere devotion – a true experience of Divinity. Perhaps it is not the division between lay and orthodox culture that is most important, but rather contemporary assumptions for reception and interpretation.

The church of Arnafjord was situated in Bjørgvin diocese, by Sognefjorden. Stang remarks upon the depictions of Dominican monks on the panel, which leads her to assume that Dominicans were involved in the making of the frontal. She points to the establishments of Dominican monasteries in Trondheim between 1228

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29 See e.g. Johansen 2006, p. 20.
31 In her book Pro, Ora et Nobis (2008), Catherine Oakes offers a detailed insight into the suckling Mary on the British Isles.
and 1234 and in Bergen between 1243 and 1247.\textsuperscript{32} In her MA-thesis Anna Costance Johansen makes a point of the important role the Dominicans in Bergen had in translating miracles from Latin to Old Norse in the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{33} Even though the Cistercians are most known for their sincere Marian devotion, preaching monks as Dominicans and Franciscans were dedicated to the mediation of her manifold position.

A monastic inspiration may very well be the case in the production of the Arnafjord frontal. Several religious milieus could serve as inspirational sources; Arnafjord is located in a distance reachable from the religious centre at Selja and monastic or clerical milieus in either Trondheim or Bergen. The altar frontal is not part of a typical 'school', rather it might be a reflection of a milieu, or perhaps an individual, who sought to be in a close relationship with the divinity and the mysteries of Christianity. Regardless of monastic affiliation, the panel could represent the spiritual awareness of the innerlife by a monk, or another religiously engaged person. We do not now who ordered the \textit{Maria Lactans} motif, and we do not know who ordered the change. That the altar frontal was intended to present an even more intimate Marian motif suggests that there has been a certain struggle over how Mary was supposed to be presented.

\textit{Conclusions: Conceptions of Mary in the Old Norse Cultural Context}

The legend and the original drawing of the altar frontal may of course be evidence of shifting styles. A consciousness of the medieval fourfold strategy of interpretation helps to explain how Marian devotion could appear profound and sincere at the same time as it expressed more dogmatic ideas around the theology of her nature. The examples from the altar frontals and the legends, point toward a conception of Mary at different levels. Mary serves in the material in question as a portal for humans to experience divinity themselves. In this case I object to Bagge’s understanding of the Old Norse religious culture as exclusively ritualised and traditional. I find that the cult around Mary functioned in Norway and Iceland in a manner similar to that found elsewhere in Europe, where Mary was invoked as a saintly intercessor, but also approached as a theological mystery. The liturgical calendar, including the feast in honour of Mary’s immaculate origin, strengthens this argument, as do also the legends and poems which were widely spread in medieval manuscripts. The change of composition in the Arnafjord (Vanylven) frontal, however, may indicate that there were also conflicts regarding what aspects of Mary should be emphasized. As mentioned above, it is common to argue that the miracles propose a laicisation of religious culture, as also Margrethe Stang suggests regarding the change in the composition of the (Arnafjord) Vanylven frontal. However, such a clear dichotomy is untenable, since it construes a difference between the North and the rest of Europe that is not borne out from a comparative perspective. Rather, a more nuanced analysis, based on situational and cultural context, is required. When the sources are viewed through this lens, a complex picture emerges, with room for strong personal devotion, but also for negotiations, as indicated by the Arnafjord (Vanylven) frontal. The unknowns will remain many, but I hope at least to have shown that the hypothesis that Old Norse beliefs were superficial is too simplistic.

\textsuperscript{32} Stang 2009, pp. 88–89.
'A gentle doe from the best of the herd': the Virgin Mary as Intercessor in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Irish Tradition

Salvador Ryan

There is a story told of a small boy who wanted a bicycle for Christmas and prayed each night to God that his request might be granted, promising, in return, that he would be good for a specified length of time. He soon realised, however, that he might not have the fortitude to fulfil this promise and, as the length of time pledged became shorter each night, he tried a different approach. Spotting a statue of the Virgin Mary on the mantelpiece, he took it down, wrapped it in a towel and deposited it in a bottom drawer. Returning to his prayers he began 'Dear God, if you ever want to see your mother again...' This story is well-known and has been a staple of Catholic sermons for decades. Yet, like many such stories, it has a long history. A variation on this tale appears in the *Liber Exemplarum*, compiled between 1275 and 1279 by an English Franciscan working in Ireland, and the earliest Franciscan example of its type.1 In this version the woman's son has been taken prisoner and already hanged, and the persistent mother follows the same course of action when her prayers are not heard, stating 'You gave no help to one in need, so this will serve you right, won't it? ... if you do not restore my son to me I shall take your son from you'.2 In this case, however, she is not allowed to lay her hand on the statue of the Christ Child, for a tugging at her clothes reveals her own son to be standing behind her. Later still, we find another variation appearing in the sixteenth-century Irish bardic poem, ('Mary is the Field-Flower' [Blaith an Mhachaire Muire]). Here a woman petitions the Virgin for the release of her captive son and, as insurance, approaches a statue of the Virgin and Child and removes the Christ Child from the Virgin's lap, to be returned only when her son was safely freed.3 The Virgin acquiesces, calming the mother's wrath. So quick was the Virgin's response, the poem continues, 'that men judged she (the woman) had not broken God's commandment'. It is interesting to note that, in its modern incarnation, the boy initially approaches God for the favour whereas in the later Middle Ages Mary was usually the first to be invoked. The above vignettes have much to say about popular recourse to the Virgin Mary as intercessor in the late medieval period, not least in their appeal to Mary's humanity and her compassion for the plight of her devotees. That compassion was considered to have grown out of her own lived experience of life and loss. Therefore, were she to forget what that maternal bond felt like, her supplicant would very soon remind her, even if that entailed resorting to some drastic measures.

This essay examines the Virgin Mary's intercessory role as conceived of by a number of native Irish bardic poets whose oeuvre provides a unique insight into lay Marian devotion of the period. However, first of all, a brief survey of the evidence for veneration of the Virgin in the medieval Irish parish is warranted.

The study of the Virgin Mary in late medieval parish life in Ireland is beset by a number of difficulties, not least the paucity of Irish parish records surviving from this period. Sources for the medieval church in Ireland are fairly sparse, due in large part to the unsettled state of medieval Ireland and the dislocating effects of the dissolution of the monasteries and the Reformation period. It is difficult, therefore, to build up a picture of the devotional life of any one parish from what is extant. Indeed, only two collections of medieval parish records survive: St Werburgh's and St John's,

1 Jones 2011, pp. 9–11.
2 Ibid., p. 57.
3 McKenna 1930a, pp. 660–663.
both Dublin city churches.\textsuperscript{4} Much of the material culture of churches has also been lost; for instance, no medieval glass window has survived \textit{in situ} and what remain are largely fragments that have been excavated from archaeological sites; likewise, only a small number of wall paintings survive.\textsuperscript{5} We are more fortunate with examples of stone sculpture, however, which is the only form of imagery to have survived the upheaval of the centuries in its original location in any numbers.\textsuperscript{6}

Occasionally we are afforded glimpses of what was expected of the fabric of parish churches. The Provincial Synod of Cashel, held in Limerick in 1453, for instance, stipulated that every church should possess at the very least a statue of the Virgin Mary, a crucifix, and a statue of the patron of the church.\textsuperscript{7} There is also evidence of a number of images of the Virgin which were widely held to work miracles, the most famous of which was surely that found at the Augustinian abbey at Trim, County Meath, which the \textit{Annals of Ulster} claims to have ‘wrought great miracles’ in the year 1412.\textsuperscript{8} Moreover, in the late 1530s, King Henry VIII’s representative in Ireland, Lord Deputy Leonard Grey, heard ‘three or four masses’ before the same shrine.\textsuperscript{9} Owing to the influential role played by mendicants in medieval Ireland, we often obtain a clearer picture of Marian devotion from sources generated by the regular clergy than by their secular counterparts.\textsuperscript{10} In 1515 the compiler of a report on the ‘State of Ireland and a Plan for its Reformation’ identified the ‘poore fryers beggers’ as the only group in Ireland which was preaching the Word of God.\textsuperscript{11} Likewise, in 1534, Eustace Chapuys, the Savoyard Imperial Ambassador to England, remarked that the Friars Minor were ‘feared, obeyed and almost adored’ by peasants and lords alike in Ireland, ‘who held them in such reverence as to endure from them blows with a stick’.\textsuperscript{12} Franciscan preaching in medieval Ireland frequently alluded to the role of the Virgin Mary as intercessor and promoted a lively devotion to her. The thirteenth-century \textit{Liber Exemplorum}, discussed above, includes numerous tales of the Virgin’s intercession, ready-made for use by preachers. Furthermore, a Franciscan manuscript dating from 1455 (Trinity College Dublin MS. 667), containing Irish translations of continental works, also includes a section comprised of 54 \textit{exempla}, most of which concern the Virgin Mary’s intercessory role.\textsuperscript{13}

The Virgin Mary was not known to expect much from her devotees by way of devotion or fervour in exchange for her advocacy. The story of the lustful cleric of Chartres, found in the Irish \textit{Liber Exemplorum}, conveys this point and is fairly typical. After a life enslaved to lust, he was buried outside the cemetery until, 30 days later, the Virgin appeared to a clerk instructing that his body be properly buried for he had often served her by reciting the \textit{Ave Maria}.\textsuperscript{14} However, there were others who wished to make more substantial demonstrations of affection for the Virgin. This might involve the foundation of a Lady Chapel, for instance, in which the patron, man or woman, might be buried. We know, for instance, that Margaret Fitzgibbon (d. 1483) had built a Lady Chapel in the Franciscan church in Adare, County Limerick. Likewise, Joanna O’Kelly, who presented the Dominican friars at Athenry in Galway with a graduale and a gilded pyx (a small round container used to carry the Eucharist to the sick), was rewarded for her generosity by the promise of being remembered at all Masses celebrated in honour of Mary at the high altar of the church, a detail which surely indicates a lively devotion to the Virgin. This same Lady Chapel also received the substantial donation of a Flemish altarpiece depicting the death and burial of the Virgin Mary.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Refaussé 2006, pp. 17–18; for wider context, see Gillespie & Fitzpatrick 2006.
  \item Moss 2006, pp. 72–97.
  \item Begley 1906, p. 290.
  \item \textit{Annals of Ulster} iii, p. 63.
  \item Jeffries 2010, p. 84.
  \item See Ó Clabaigh 2012.
  \item Ó Clabaigh 2001, p. 81.
  \item Ó Clabaigh 2002, p. 157.
  \item Ó Clabaigh 2002, p. 139.
  \item Jones 2011, p. 50.
  \item Ó Clabaigh 2012, pp. 100, 253.
\end{itemize}
The expansion of mendicant houses more widely into areas of Gaelic Ireland in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries brought the friars into greater contact with the hereditary literary families of Gaelic Ireland, such as those of the bardic order. Their religious poems, composed from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries, and of which some 400 survive, are perhaps the richest source for devotional trends for this period. These poets were, in the main, laymen and professional versifiers; they composed specially commissioned poems for wealthy patrons, both secular and ecclesiastical, for public or semi-public performance. It was customary for these poets to dedicate a tithe or one-tenth of their art to God; however, predictably, the volume of devotional poems often increased towards the end of a poet's life when he might very well enter a monastery and receive bed and board in exchange for the fruits of his craft. In the evening of life it is no surprise that a poet's attention often turned to themes of death, judgment and the prospect of eternal punishment from which calamity the most powerful of intercessors was needed as the prospect of seeing his soul literally hanging in the celestial balance loomed ever nearer.

Mary's power as intercessor for humanity was regarded as stemming from a number of attributes that she alone could claim. Mary's humility, poverty, chastity, and obedience were specifically identified by Gaelic Irish poets as far surpassing that of the most virtuous of the saints. In fact, one fifteenth-century poet, Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn (d. 1448) claimed that Mary's virginity initially attracted the attention of God, who was somehow 'enticed' into a relationship with her at the Annunciation and thus became incarnate. In the poem 'May Christ follow his mother's counsel' [Déanadh Chríosd comhairle a mháthar], he states that 'God's son remained not in Heaven; in His love He could not resist sojourning in Mary's bosom; she enticed Heaven's heir to earth.' In the poem 'A stranger am I to God's mother' [Aoidhe meise ag máthair Dé], the same poet implies that the interest was not one-sided; Mary herself wished for this union to occur:

She asked not that the 'kernel from the nut' be not given her; she ceased not asking for him till by her entreaties she conceived Him in her bosom.\[18\]

The Incarnation was also seen as the moment when God took Mary as His spouse and is often coloured in the language of the consummation of marriage, yet with the reminder that Mary's virginity was left unaltered. In the poem 'A retinue should attend God's mother' [Dlighthear muinntear ag máthair Dé] sixteenth-century poet, Aodh, son of Conchonnacht Ó Ruanadha, states that 'God took Mary as spouse, yet without lying with her' (without consummation). In a poem on the Annunciation, the late sixteenth-century poet Aonghus Fionn Ó Dálaigh, from whom we have 17 poems dedicated to Mary, emphasises the exclusivity of the union, commenting that Mary vowed not to be with any other lover or spouse but God alone – 'a disposition for which she was glorified'.\[20\]

Other poets such as Fearghal Ó Cionga (fl. 1560) stressed Mary's humility as coaxing God into becoming incarnate, while, predictably perhaps, the friar-poet, Philip Bocht Ó hUiginn (d. 1487) stressed her poverty as having 'won from the Lord the world's salvation'.\[21\] In the poem 'A pact made with mankind was broken' [Do briseadh cumrath ar cach], found in an early seventeenth-century manuscript but almost certainly composed earlier than this, an anonymous poet states that Mary won her spouse through her humility and not by her purity. The poet may well be a friar, for he states in one stanza 'foul money she hated' attributing to the Virgin an aversion to money reminiscent of Il Poverello of Assisi and asking that 'with our dear sister we should walk the path of poverty that she trod'.\[22\]

\[16\] See Ryan 2004.
\[17\] McKenna 1922, p. 88.

\[18\] Ibid., p. 70.
\[19\] McKenna 1940, p. 311.
\[20\] McKenna 1919, p. 1.
\[21\] McKenna 1940, p. 129; McKenna 1931, p. 132.
\[22\] McKenna 1930b, p. 593.
The bardic verse of Aonghus Fionn Ó Dálaigh is particularly strong on the image of Mary as spouse of Christ. He sees the ‘marriage’ of Christ and Mary as restoring the peace between God and humanity that was sundered by the actions of Adam and Eve:

Nurse and mother, the world’s king at her breast, the wedding with Heaven’s king hastened our peace.23

But Mary would also be regarded by many as exerting greater power than her Son. As Christ’s spouse-mother, Mary took on something of the role of a queen-regent to her Son, with leave to make all the significant decisions during his minority. Two examples from Ó Dálaigh demonstrate how Mary was regarded as having been given ruling authority at her conception of Christ; in the poem ‘A good patron is a king’s wife’ [Maith an baránta bean riogh], he states ‘She it is who got her spouse’s authority and sacrificed her Son for me’,24 and again in the poem ‘A good guard ever against God’s ire’ [Maith m’anacal ar fheirg nDé], we find the line:

The Father sent in his stead his Son to our sister at her Annunciation. He gave over his rights to the maid. May she then have the exacting of God’s rights.25

In the same poem Aonghus calls Mary the ‘key to the King’s lips’ (moving them towards whichever pronouncement she desires).26 And that pronouncement was inevitably a merciful one. In the anonymous poem, ‘God’s death is the healing of the world’ [Leigheas an bheatha bás Dé], the poet points out that ‘the more of it is drunk the more plenteous it grows’ are ‘for he who gives it is the Lord of Heaven’.27 This is essentially ‘Cana’ language, reminiscent of Christ’s first miracle: while Mary requests Christ to act, the resulting abundance of wine is to be attributed to Christ’s actions albeit after Mary’s prompting. The first stanza of the unattributed poem ‘A bright moon is Mary’s grace’ [Éasga ar nglanadh grás Muire], which appears in a manuscript from 1631, but is likely of much earlier origin, speaks of Mary as follows: ‘when defending her folk, she consumes (i.e. gets from God and uses) each cup of favours more quickly than the wine in them can be re-plenished’.

Mary’s influence over her Son was not just as spouse and queen but, more crucially, as Mother – and it here that she is often portrayed as wielding power in excess of her Son’s. That she was believed to be in a position to overrule the justice of her Son is a frequent feature of the works the verse of bardic poets. Theologians before them, such as the twelfth-century Guibert of Nogent, had sometimes stretched the limits of Mary’s divine motherhood: Guibert once asserted that God was compelled to heed Mary on account of His own law, the fourth commandment.28 This argument also featured in the works of sixteenth-century Irish poets.

23 McKenna 1919, p. 28.
24 Ibid., p. 3.
25 Ibid., p. 8.
26 Ibid., p. 9.
27 McKenna 1940, p. 214.
28 Ibid., p. 146. For fuller discussion of this, see Ryan 2006.
29 McKenna 1940, p. 146.
30 Ibid., p. 209.
Fearghal Ó Cionga (fl. 1560) employs it when he states that ‘Mary must have her way; a child must obey its mother; when she has spent a little time talking to her son my debt will be suspended’, while Uaithne Ó Cobhc’thaigh (d. 1556) expresses similar sentiments when he addresses Mary: ‘If (O Mary!) I be rejected by thy Son, thou shalt afterwards get Heaven for me by thy prayer; I take no account of rejection by a mere child’.  

The fourth commandment argument was also employed in higher ecclesiastical circles in Ireland as is recorded in a disputation between Primate George Dowdall of Armagh and reformed bishop Edward Staples of Meath in 1550. 33 Reacting against an excessive emphasis on Mary’s maternal authority, the sixteenth-century reformer Hugh Latimer, in his biblical commentaries, launched a scathing attack on Mary for reprimanding Jesus ‘like a mother’ after finding him among the doctors of the Temple. He also complained that on another occasion (as found in Matthew 12:46), she demanded to speak to him, “interrupting his sermon, which was not good manners.” 34  

Bardic poets could approach Mary’s intercession on many fronts, therefore. As Mother of Christ, she could assert her maternal authority over her Son and bring a swift end to His divine anger. In an unattributed poem, ‘Glory inexhaustible is Mary’s’ [Clú nach ceacaitr chi Muire], one bardic poet declares that ‘she consents not to our rejection’ and, more forcefully still, ‘she lays waste God’s wrath’. 35 In many other examples, her suckling of Christ on Judgement Day appeases His anger: the fifteenth-century poet, Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn tells Mary to recall to her Son how he drank at her breast and lay sleeping in her lap. 36 His near contemporary friar-poet, Philip Bocht Ó hUiginn, in the poem ‘His mother’s blessing be on God’s Son’ [Beannacht a mháthar ar mac nDé], states that ‘turned aside from exacting justice, the Son in her arms drank at her bosom, white milky bosom by which was dissolved his wrath’. 37 Likewise, the fifteenth or sixteenth-century unattributed poem ‘May Christ requite his mother’s service’ [Iocadh Chríost cumaoin a mháthar] contains the line: ‘Her suckling of God’s Son atoned for our share in Eve’s sin; his mother’s milk stops his rage when it is fiercest against us’. 38 According to the poem ‘Teach me to praise thee, O Mary’ [Múin damh do mhóladh, a Muire], Mary’s breast and the milk, which nourished Jesus, signifies humanity’s pardon, and the poet ask that it be taken as a down-payment for the world’s debt. 39 Yet the power of the nursing image of the Virgin was such that she did not even have to suckle Christ to talk him down from a mass condemnation of sinners. In another powerful gesture, which I have discussed more fully elsewhere, the interceding Virgin bares her breast to her Son as a reminder of her suckling him as a baby, a theme which was quite popular in medieval religious art from the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries and appears in bardic religious verse from the fifteenth century. 40

However, Christ’s anger on Judgement Day could also be calmed in other ways. Thinking of Mary also as ‘Spouse of Christ’, Aonghus Fionn Ó Dálaigh, in the poem ‘The Mother of Christ is a spouse to her Son’ [Bean dá mac máthair Íosa], which addresses this paradox, has the following to say: ‘when her lover has been with her, the fury of God’s angry blood is short-lived’ and a later verse is left deliberately ambiguous as to which identity of Mary – mother or spouse – the poet is referring to: ‘Full moon of our maidenhood! Glorious the sight of thy sun-bright hair! God spent a while on thy lime-white breast’. 41 Ó Dálaigh’s treatment of Mary’s spousal relationship with God could certainly display sexual overtones. In the second stanza of his poem ‘A vase of balsam is Mary’s womb’ [Soidheach balsaim brú Mhiuire], he exclaims:

32 McKenna 1940, pp. 130, 158.
33 Gogarty 1913, p. 250.
34 Waller 2011, p. 18; MacCulloch 2004, p. 204.
35 McKenna 1940, p. 200.
36 McKenna 1922, p. 76.
37 McKenna 1931, p. 132.
38 McKenna 1930c, p. 471.
39 McKenna 1940, p. 220.
41 McKenna 1919, p. 25.
Vessel sweeter than honey! In it was placed Heaven’s King! Vase worthy to fill with his wine is the vessel that bore the High-King.42

Elsewhere in the poem he speaks of drinking from this ‘vase of graces pure to quaff’. Indeed, for the poet, Mary’s womb is:

Red-gold vessel of sweet taste! Hence shall I quaff the heavenly draught! Fair goblet of sweet wine! This vessel is the pledge of our Creator.43

Just as martyrs were often depicted as offering their sufferings and the instruments of their execution as bargaining chips with which they might plead with the Christ of Judgment on behalf of their clients, so too was Mary understood to present her earthly sufferings to offset the outstanding debt (of sin) of her devotees. The suffering of Mary that was considered to be the most efficacious was that of her participation in the events surrounding Christ’s passion and death. In the later Middle Ages, Mary was increasingly understood to have shared in Christ’s passion by means of her ‘Compassion’. Mary’s suffering was thus considered to have played a significant part in the plan of redemption and, for many, she attained the status of ‘Co-Redemptrix’. Indeed, in the fifteenth-century poem ‘Seven feet of earth are my native land’ [Seacht dtroighe mo thír dúthaigh], Philip Bocht Ó hUiginn states that (Christ) ‘felt Mary’s pain more than the weight of his own wounds; it oppressed him to watch it; (to escape it) he ran to his own pain’.44 This idea is also found in the Irish translation of Meditationes vitae Christi around the same time.45

What compounded Mary’s suffering and thus what increased her ‘share’ in Christ’s passion was her supposed foreknowledge of it.

42 Ibid., p. 9.
43 Ibid., p. 9.
44 McKenna 1931, p. 185. Richard of St Laurent (d. after 1245), dean of the Metropolitan Chapter of Rouen, once claimed that ‘Mary received in her heart all the wounds that Christ received on His body, sharing intimately in His saving work on the cross’; Graef 1963, p. 267.
45 Ó Maonaigh 1944.
Mary’s intercession. Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird, in his poem ‘Woe to him who sheds not tears’ [*Máirg nach doirteann a dhéara*], employing the Pauline language of putting on the ‘armour of God’, most frequently associated with Christ and the medieval *arma Christi*, asks ‘maiden Mary’ to be ‘as a coat of mail for me; may her love be a cuirass on me’ … ‘I shall not be lost if she objects; may her love be my armour’.\(^50\) Aonghus Fionn Ó Dálaigh likewise speaks of sheltering ‘beneath her merciful shield’.\(^51\) In another example, the same poet asks that she go behind him and before him in *lúireach* or *lorica* (breastplate) style.\(^52\) Here we have Mary attaining almost Christ-like status: she has suffered as much as the Passion, or perhaps more grievously, given her foreknowledge of her Son’s fate, and has been accorded authority over the eternal destination of her human devotees.

By the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, then, at the same time as a backlash against excessive Marianism raged in Reformation Europe, the religious bardic verse of Aonghus Fionn Ó Dálaigh and others had espoused what could be called a very high Mariology indeed. This ‘gentle doe from the best of the herd’, as the poem ‘Glory inexhaustible is Mary’s’ [*Clú nach caithtear clú Muire*] describes Mary, may have been gentle in her treatment of her sinner-devotees but she was certainly far from doe-like in exercising her powers of advocacy on those same sinners’ behalf. While the Reformation ultimately failed to take root in Ireland, the endurance of the figure of Mary and her perceived powers of intercession cannot simply be attributed to this fact alone. Scholars such as Gary Waller have drawn attention to the quite resilient “after-lives” of the Virgin in Elizabethan England and beyond.\(^53\) Irish devotion to Mary would also endure, both at home and among the increasing number of Irish émigrés to the Continent through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

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\(^{50}\) McKenna 1928b, p. 440.

\(^{51}\) McKenna 1919, p. 13.

\(^{52}\) McKenna 1919, p. 6.

\(^{53}\) Waller 2011.
This article examines some perspectives and issues occasioned by the use of tools recently developed by the cognitive sciences. I choose to focus on the question of transmission of Marian themes, a topic which I believe could greatly benefit from a multidisciplinary approach. The domains in which the study of cultural phenomena by the cognitive sciences bring significantly new perspectives are: the study of rituals and their effects on the human mind, as well as the mechanisms of cultural transmission, and therefore, religious ideas. In order to present a case study of the application of some tools to medieval history, I will focus on a specific devotional practice commonly considered typical of the growth of the devotion to the Virgin Mary in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: the rosary.1 My commentary will mostly draw from sources from the archbishopric of Uppsala (Sweden). Two questions occurred to me when I surveyed them: how can the tools of Cognitive Anthro-

1 Jean-Pierre Albert (2005), used some tools from Cognitive Anthropology, but the publication of this article in an anthropology journal is suggestive of the current suspicion among French historians of ‘discipline-foreign’ tools. Yet, as early as 1994, Thomas Lawson outlined basics theories about religion developed by Cognitive Sciences in a history journal, see Lawson 1994. No significant historical work using those tools had been published prior to the publication of Theory of the Modes of Religiosity by Harvey Whitehouse, in the early 2000s. After this, Anne L. Clark’s study 2004 is one of the few medievalists to have taken an interest in the field.

Cognitive Sciences, the Use of Sources, and the Transmission of Marian Themes in Late Medieval Sweden

Camille Bataille

A Limitation in the Analysis of the Success of the Rosary

The devotion to the rosary is a para-liturgical form of devotion that experienced extraordinary growth in the last centuries of the Middle Ages. I would like to examine why it was so.

Among Swedish studies on the rosary, an important article by Sven-Erik Pernler in the Acta of the conference Maria i Sverige examines the developments of the Swedish brotherhoods of the rosary.2 The article starts with a general overview on the expansion of the rosary in continental Europe, and especially the role of the Cologne brotherhood (1475) and the role of Alanus de Rupe, a Dominican friar who wrote treaties to foster the recitation of the rosary. As the article’s title suggests, Pernler focuses on the brotherhoods, but he never addresses, even briefly, the question of why the rosary, or the rosary brotherhoods, succeeded so quickly. This is problematic, since some of Pernler’s argumentation concerning the diffusion of confraternities is based on the supposedly inherent qualities of the rosary.3

2 See Pernler 1996, passim.
3 Ibid., p. 559: ‘Försatsättningen för en bred, folklig andaktsform var härvid uppfyllt: några böcker var inte nödvändiga, och andakten kunde praktiseras enskilt likaväl som gemensamt.’
This absence of focus on the transmission and developments of the rosary owes partly to an analysis bias: one supposes that the rosary quickly spread because it is attractive per se. It is this attractiveness that has, in previous studies, been presupposed, but never demonstrated. Anne Winston, in a seminal article on the roots of vernacular texts of the rosary, wrote for example:

Why this text [the rosary] … succeeded so dramatically has to do with the form of the text itself and with developments in popular religious piety.4

Anne Winston does not explain why the laity demanded this devotion so eagerly, nor does she explain what she means by ‘popular religious piety’. One can imagine that ‘popular piety’ is an actual set of collective representations that forms a type, in opposition to other types, such as ‘elitist piety’ for instance. As a type, it predetermines the content and the expectations of the historians in their study of the devotion.

Further in the article, Anne Winston suggests the attractiveness of the rosary is due to a formal transformation of devotion, which makes it more ‘challenging and engrossing’.

I believe it to be a brilliant intuition, but nevertheless, it does not explain why the rosary is more challenging: what Anne Winston does is simply make a statement, rather than setting out arguments to defend this ‘challenging’ character. Some other studies suggest more concrete causes for the success of the transmission. Jean-Claude Schmitt, when examining the brotherhood of Colmar, gives four causes for the success of the rosary: the absence of a registration fee, the desire to include the largest possible number of people, the use of vernacular exempla such as those by Alanus de Rupe, and the indulgences attached to the devotion.6 All those causes are valid, but still, they do not answer the essential question: why was the rosary considered to be interesting enough to be promoted? In her book on the cult of Saint Anne, Virginia Nixon follows numerous other studies in insisting that the promoters wished to include everybody in the brotherhood of the rosary. She quotes Johannes von Lambsheym: Hec fraternitas omnes recipit excludit neminem.7 She suggests two more reasons for the success of the rosary: a favourable context, with a concern for salvation that would be stronger in the Germanic world than elsewhere in Europe,8 and a ‘heartfelt devotion’.9 I argue that this is an empty argument, because it rests on an arbitrary attribution of a psychological state which is impossible to prove.

In Sweden, five scholars in particular have considered the evolution of the rosary devotion in the province of Uppsala in the later Middle Ages: Isaak Collijn, Gottfrid Carlsson, Sven-Erik Pernler, Alf Härdelin, and Ingela Hedström. Collijn, the Swedish philologist, stated that the book attributed to Alanus de Rupe, De dignitate et utilitate psalterii BMV, was printed for the first time in Lübeck in 1480, in Latin, then shortly afterwards in German. It was translated into Danish in 1492, shortly before the Swedish print of Mariefred in 1498.10 In an article on Mariefred, the only Carthusian house of Sweden, Collijn also mentioned as proof of the book’s success that it was reprinted in 1506.11 As an historian, Carlsson did not comment on the attractiveness of the practice in his 1947 article on the rosary confraternities. He just stated that the rosary is ‘very practical’ [mycket praktfulla].12 The theologian Alf Härdelin is more concerned with the action of important men, such as the archbishop Jacob Ulfsson.13 The study of Sven-Erik Pernler, also a theologian, which I already mentioned, also focused on the brother-

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5 See ibid., p. 631.
7 Johannes von Lambsheym, Libellus perutilis de fraternitate sanctissima Rosarii et psalterij beate Marie virginis, Mainz, Peter von Friedberg, 1495 (GW M14218), from Nixon 1999, p. 68.
8 See Nixon 1999, p. 69.
9 See ibid., p. 69.
10 See Collijn 1934, p. 168.
13 See Härdelin 2001, passim.
hoods. Finally, the philologist Ingela Hedström’s stimulating study of the Swedish prayer books contains an important development on the rosaries found in this material, and quotes Anne Winston to explain the propagation of the devotion.\textsuperscript{14}

None of those studies specifically address the issue of the transmission of the rosary by itself, nor have I found any dealing with other areas of Europe. Therefore, this absence gives me some ground to consider the Swedish literature as representative of the logical biases in the analysis of the source material, which strengthens the improbability of answering the question of attractiveness of the rosary. I believe that those biases can be corrected by a different approach.

An example illustrates those biases. Among the promoters of the rosary in Sweden Clemens Martini (d. 1527) is a prominent name. This Birgittine monk entered Vadstena in 1495, after having studied at the University of Uppsala.\textsuperscript{15} Gottfrid Carlsson declares, without referring to any source, that Clemens Martini soon became the main promoter of the rosary. A letter from Clemens has survived. Dated from 1504, this document is addressed to a monastery of nuns from Östergötland, probably the cistercian nunnery of Vreta.\textsuperscript{16} Clemens Martini explains in this letter that another Cistercian nun, the abbess of Askeby, asked him to register the name of all the nuns under her supervision in the brotherhood he just established. Clemens also writes that in order to facilitate the practice of the rosary, he send them a ‘psalter of Our Lady in Swedish’.

Gottfrid Carlsson thinks that this translation of the ‘psalter of Our Lady’ mentioned by Clemens Martini is in fact a translation in old Swedish of the \textit{De dignitate et utilitate psalterii BMV} of Alanus de Rupe.\textsuperscript{17} Kept in Stockholm, the large codex of 200 pages was copied in 1534 after an exemplar written either by the General Confessor of the Birgittine order, Johannes Mathei (d. 1524), or by Clemens Martini.\textsuperscript{18} Gottfrid Carlsson does not comment much on the attribution of this codex to Clemens Martini, suggesting only that both men could have written the book.

Several decades later, Sven-Erik Pernler draws largely on Carlsson’s article and argues for Clemens Martini as the main promoter of the rosary. His main support is the supposed attribution of Cod. Holm. A 2 to Clemens Martini.\textsuperscript{19} In other words, Sven-Erik Pernler uses the translation of Alanus de Rupe’s \textit{De dignitate et utilitate psalterii} to characterize the type of devotion to the rosary that Clemens Martini might have had.\textsuperscript{20}

Another source mentioned by Sven-Erik Pernler is a small book of Marian content with an emphasis on the Seven Joys and the Seven Pains of the Virgin, which also contains a list of the members of the rosary brotherhood of Vadstena.\textsuperscript{21} This register was written in the hand of Clemens Martini in 1522.

Three documents, according to Sven-Erik Pernler, are supposed to come from Clemens Martini. His name being linked to several sources related to the rosary, it seems only logical to think him a zealous devotee of the rosary. But when reading the sources in such a way, however, one attempts only to express the conformity of Clemens Martini’s Marian devotion to a presupposed devotional ideal. The source becomes a tautology: why did a devotee of the rosary produce this text? – Because he was motivated by his devotion.

\textsuperscript{14} See Hedström 2009, pp. 300–308.
\textsuperscript{15} Carlsson 1947, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Stockholm, KB A 2, in-folio, 40x27 cm. This manuscript has been edited by Geete 1923–1925. Alanus de Rupe’s text is registered under the reference GW M39205. The Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke also gives as related texts: M398420 (\textit{De psalterio B.M.V.}), and M3983 (Sixtus IV: \textit{Bulla confirmationis et indulgentiarum psalterii virginis Mariae}). These texts are included in the 1498 edition.
\textsuperscript{18} On the attribution of authority of SKB A 2, see Geete 1923–1925, p. XXVII–XXXI and Härdelin 2001, p. 293.
\textsuperscript{19} Other researchers think that Johannes Mathei could be in fact the real author of this codex. See for example Härdelin 2001, p. 293.
\textsuperscript{20} Pernler 1996, p. 561.
\textsuperscript{21} Uppsala, UB C 449. The list of the members of the rosary brotherhood is edited in the appendix of Carlsson 1947.
tion to the rosary. And why was he devout? – He produced some texts, so obviously he was. As we can see, the reasoning is biased.

With such an analysis, we miss the actions and choices of the individuals. Sven-Erik Pernler (and I restate, I took his study as representative of a general trend) introduces us to an individual who is not an agent, in the sense that what Clemens Martini only does is to conform himself to the idea that we have of a devotee to Mary. There is space only for the illustration of what Jean Bazin terms ‘customary characteristic behaviour’ [comportement coutumier caractéristique], which is arbitrarily attributed.22 This can lead to a false essentialisation of the studied object, with the impossibility of explaining why certain practices are more successful than others. In this respect, it is not necessary to address the issue of attractiveness of the rosary, because it is normal for a devotee of Mary to be attracted by Marian devotion.

Thus far, two elements have been identified:

1. A question to which the actual use of the sources cannot properly answer: ‘Why is the rosary attractive?’ The authors do not address the question (Pernler, Carlsson), or the reasons given are tautological propositions (Nixon, Härdelin), or there is the possibility of a deeper cause (Schmitt, Winston).
2. Studying the sources with the archetype “a devotee of Mary from the end of the Middle Ages” only furthers the impossibility of answering the question.

**Applying Cognitive Sciences as a Solution to This Limitation**

How can we solve those questions? A formal examination of the practice of the rosary may help. Anne Winston has shown that a rosary is a psalter enriched by meditations on the life of Christ.23

The manuscript of the Arnamagneana Collection of Copenhagen, AM 422, 4°, is an example of this development. It is a Swedish book of prayers which contains clausulae after each rosary stanza.24 These are invitations to meditate, as Alf Härdelin reminds us.25 The addition of life-of-Christ meditations to a psalter distinguishes the rosary from older forms of prayer recitation. However, there are several formal characteristics of a rosary.

The first formal characteristic of a rosary is its iterative character. Alanus de Rupe proposed six different manners to pray the rosary, all including the repetition of Ave Marias.26 In AM 422, 4°, a tale relates the apparition of the Virgin who commands a specific number of Ave Marias and Pater Nosters:

Read my psalter three times fifty Ave Maria and one Pater Noster for each tenth Ave Maria and one Credo with each fifty Ave Maria, that is in all three Credo [Läs min psaltare trem sinnom fåmitighi Ave Maria oc ena Pater noster widh hwaria tionda Ave Maria oc ena Credo widh hwaria fåmitionde Ave Maria thät är alz tre Credo]27

The second formal characteristic of a rosary is the importance of the practice lies in its performance. Jean-Claude Schmitt, for example, cites the Determinatio of Michael Francisci, a text from 1476. Michael Francisci is one of the champions of the rosary in Cologne. He insists on the communicatio orationum,28 the necessity of saying the rosary each week in order to really belong to the brotherhood. The inscription on the roll of the brotherhood is not in itself enough to belong to the community of the rosary. There must be a performance, too.

I would add two more formal characteristics of the rosary. The third is that the actions composing the recitation of the rosary do not explicitly relate to the professed goal of its performers. How can repeating a discourse in a rigid order and meditating on the life of an agent help to preserve the reciter from danger?

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22 See Bazin 2008, p. 42.
26 See Winston 1993, p. 630.
27 See Geete 1907–1909, nr 121 p. 240.
The fourth formal characteristic is that even if the performers do have the choice between several different types of rosary, they must conform themselves to a single sequence of actions. Performers cannot pray two rosaries at the same time. For example, one does not begin a set of 150 Ave Marias divided into thirds and change in the middle to 33 Aves divided into thirds.

Those four formal characteristics: Redundancy, Obligation of performance, Disjunction between the actions and the professed goal, and Rigidity are constitutive of a ritual, according to the characteristics of rituals put forward by two cognitive anthropologists, Pascal Boyer and Pierre Liénard. The choice of this definition of ‘ritual’ among others is motivated by the authors’ caution with the use of this concept, allowing us to avoid the methodological problems brought to light by Philippe Buc. Indeed, none of our three manuscript examples (Stockholm, KB A 2; Uppsala, UB C 449; Copenhagen, KB AM 422, 4”) describe the performance of praying the rosary, nor do they call it a ‘ritual’. But I believe that the definition of ritual given by Boyer and Liénard, in its synthetic aspect, makes it applicable outside a specific model. I also believe that refusing to apply the concept of ‘ritual’ in the study of the medieval practice of the rosary for methodological reasons is too restrictive. Indeed, the medieval producers of the rosary documents did not think they were producing ‘rituals’. But not using the concept for this reason means that a cultural object, the rosary, cannot be understood by historians because our own concepts were not thought of by medieval practitioners.

By choosing to use the concept of ‘ritual’ in the study of the rosary, we ‘insist not on the substantial characteristics [of the concepts] but on the constructed and purely relational [characteristics] of the referent of those concepts (social relations).’ Bearing this limit in mind, the concept of ritual according to the definition of Boyer and Liénard will be the one used in the rest of this study.

The cognitive study of religion has much interest in the rituals, and especially, in the manner in which the religious rituals are transmitted. According to Robert N. McCauley and E. Thomas Lawson’s Ritual Form Hypothesis, the form of the ritual is the dominant variable of its transmission.

Lawson and McCauley have proposed several categories of rituals, which have been tested and validated empirically by at least one study. Without going into too much detail, they have shown that some rituals have definitive effects and therefore, do not require repetition. Their effects are not permanent. Such rituals are referenced as ‘Category 1’ rituals in Lawson and McCauley’s typology.

The ‘Category 2’ rituals that they describe have temporary effects. They must be re-enacted. Their effects lack a reversing ritual because they are temporary and can be held concurrently. Their emotional stimulus is generally weak.

The rosary belongs to Lawson and McCauley’s Category 2 ritual. It is indeed a practice with temporary effects: the prayers addressed to Christ or the Virgin Mary are instantly communicated. Their effects lack a reversing ritual because they are temporary and can be held concurrently. Their emotional stimulus is generally weak.

Therosary belongs to Lawson and McCauley’s Category 2 ritual. It is indeed a practice with temporary effects: the prayers addressed to Christ or the Virgin Mary are instantly communicated. Their effects lack a reversing ritual and can be held concurrently. Finally, the performance of the rosary generally does not tend to arouse high emotional response. The psalter cannot be considered as a ritual, because although it shares most of the characteristics of the rosary, it has no obligation of performance to be effective. A

30 See Buc 2003, passim. Buc suggested that only a certain type of sources seems to have affinities with a given social theory of ritual, and not a certain type of ritual. Bypassing this limitation means using a definition of ritual that overcomes the particular uses of the concept by the different theories, which I believe can be found in the Boyer and Liénard’s definition of ritual. It also means using different types of sources in studying the same ritual, which is one reason I chose Stockholm, KB A 2 (a ‘propaganda’ text), Uppsala, UB C 449 (a list of confraternity members), and Copenhagen, KB AM 422, 4” (a prayer book).
31 See Morsel 2012.
33 See Barett and Malley 2003.
psalter is a set of prayers, in which the semantic content matters to make the prayers efficient. A rosary is a set of prayers performed in a specific way, in which the semantic content matters less than the material form of its utterance to make it efficient. The evolution of the psalter toward the rosary can therefore be seen as an evolution from prayer towards a ritual. The ritualisation of the devotion starts in the thirteenth century, according to Anne Winston, who explains the transition as motivated simply by the piety of the promoters of the rosary: the 'heartfelt devotion' for the rosary.

Nevertheless, we can see two other reasons in the process of ritualisation of the rosary that explain the success and the attractiveness of this practice. First, Harvey Whitehouse, as well as Lawson and McCauley, have shown that some ideas are better transmitted with a cultural support, such as a ritual. The form is then important in the transmission of religious ideas. Since the fundamental goal of the promotion of the rosary is to nourish the piety of the laity, as Anne Winston explains, the ritualisation expresses a will for a more efficient transmission. In insisting upon a ritual enactment technique (i.e. the communicatio orationum), Michael Francisci transmitted the idea of the necessity of a constant re-enactment of the rosary as a way to actualise the link between the community of the living confratres and the deceased. Performance is necessary in the ritual construction. In this regard, ritualisation occurs because it pertains to the process of actualisation of a community, drawn on the model of the whole Ecclesia.

Third, it is by the way of this communication that the confraternity exceeds all the brothers... and thus in this confraternity there is a daily communication of certain benefits between the brothers...

Secondly, another important development in cognitive science has been to show the role of the content of information in cultural transmission. Pascal Boyer has built a central theory, which states that the best transmitted representations are those that violate our intuitive expectations. They are therefore called 'counter-intuitive'.

There are different degrees of counter-intuitiveness, depending on whether the violation is superficial or more profound. Boyer and some other scholars, such as Justin Barrett, argue that the most efficiently transmitted representations are those that are minimally counter-intuitive, that is, those that violate our expectations only slightly.

To put it broadly, our intuition, in the presence of a new object such as a previously unknown human being, will infer some characteristics just by labeling this object as human: it is self-propelled, needs to eat, does not fall apart, has desires and its actions are motivated by goals. A new object like the Virgin Mary is counter-intuitive: our intuition is violated by a human who does not reproduce according to our intuitive biological expectations: a virgin cannot normally be a mother. The concept of a virgin mother has therefore more chances to be transmitted.

I must confess: I could not find any counter-intuitive elements in the text of the Ave Maria, which might suggest that no cognitive advantage explains the attractiveness of the rosary. However, the meditations on the life-of-Christ attached to the repetitions of the Ave Maria are, indeed, counter-intuitive. I already mentioned the clausulae of AM 422, 4° as an illustration of this fact for the

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35 On the significance of content for the ritual participants, see for example Lawson and McCauley 1990, chap. 3; Lawson 1994, p. 491; Barrett and Lawson 2001, pp. 198–199.
36 See Winston 1993, p. 69.
38 See Winston 1993, p. 632.
39 Tertio ex operum communicatione quoad confratres haec fraternitas ceteras excedit... et sic in illa fraternitate est quotidiania bonus quorum communicatio inter confratres... ut saltem semel in hebdomada pie et secure institut ad instar ecclesiae catholicae... See Scheeben 1951, p. 101.
40 See Boyer 2001, passim.
41 See Boyer 1998, passim; Barrett 2008, passim.
To each word of the Ave Maria is set a meditation: Ave helps to keep out sin; Maria makes the performer spiritually aware; Plena underlines the desire of the one praying to be full of good things, etc. Each of these propositions starts with uti skulom ffaa..., which means ‘[In saying this word] We shall obtain...’ Each word bears a theme of meditation, and some of them are counter-intuitive. In the volume 36 of Analecta Hymnica, the Psalter of the Virgin number II, in its first stanza, reads: ‘Hail the glory of the most excellent tree (...) whose leaf never faded, the son born of a virgin’. Two propositions are counter-intuitive: a tree whose leaves do not fall violates our intuitive biology, and a virgin cannot normally be a mother. Another example taken from the same volume of AH is the rosary number 6. In its first stanza, we read: ‘Which the Virgin without fault conceived from a breath’. A breath that conceives violates our intuition. Henceforth, we see that the meditations contain some counter-intuitive elements. The effect is to foster the transmission of the rosary. I then argue that adding to the form (ritualisation), the counter-intuitive content (the meditations) contributes to make the transmission of the rosary more efficient. And here are two reasons that make the rosary an attractive practice.

Let us go back to the ritualisation aspect for a moment. Previously I cited, without further elaboration, that scholars have shown that ritual is a cultural support for the transmission of some ideas. They were actually speaking of extremely counter-intuitive ideas. I also said that minimally counter-intuitive ideas are better transmitted. Conversely, the most counter-intuitive ideas are less likely to be transmitted. Amongst the meditation themes of the rosary, at least one is strongly counter-intuitive, according to the encoding method submitted by Justin Barrett: the Assumption of the Virgin. Such an event describes the change of state of an object: the Virgin or at least, her body. It is the body of a virgin mother (first violation), which moves towards the sky (second violation), and becomes invisible (third violation) but also omnipresent (breach of this violation). I will not go into too much detail; it is sufficient to say that it is extremely counter-intuitive. A hypothesis emerging from that observation is that the ritualisation of the rosary happened in order to overcome the failure of the transmission potential.

Before concluding, I would like to call attention to a final point identified at the end of the first part of this essay. The analysis bias, or the impossibility to determine the choice of agents, was caused by a traditional use of the sources. We can suggest new potential answers by using the tools I have discussed in the second part. They are built on evolved cognitive capacities, and thus, have a panhuman character. They can, therefore, be applied without ethnocentrism or anachronism to the agents of the Middle Ages. From there, one can see that there is no such thing as a ‘type’ of devotee to Mary, but only choices made by individual agents. Those choices are partly due to cognitive processes that are universal and not conscious. More than a typical ‘devotee to Mary of the Late Middle Ages’, we should prefer to see an individual that has been in contact with ideas that are particularly attractive by themselves. What still needs to be determined is the form of this contact, a question that a more traditionally historical or sociological approach can answer.

43 Ave lignum excelsum glorie / Secus aqua plantatum grattia / Cuius numquam defluxit folium / Quia virgo geniti filium. See Analecta Hymnica (1901), 36: II.
45 See Barrett 2008, passim.
46 After encoding, the Assumption becomes: HUMAN b+u+(p)s. That is, a human being that does not fulfill our expectations in terms of intuitive biology, of general consistency, and of intuitive physics. Moreover, the violation of intuitive physics is in itself breached by a violation of spacialisation. The counter-intuitiveness score is four points, which makes the concept of the Assumption an extremely counter-intuitive one.
In this essay, I identified two limits in the historical approach to the transmission of the rosary. First, we cannot answer comprehensively or satisfactorily the question: Why is the rosary so attractive? The adaptation of tools taken from the cognitive study of religion offers answers to this question: the rosary is attractive due to a formal transformation, which can be described as a process of ritualisation. This ritualisation is facilitated by appending meditations with counter-intuitive content that make the rosary more attractive, that is, more prone to being transmitted and unconsciously fostering the attention of those praying. Second, some dogmas present in the meditation are too counter-intuitive to be easily transmitted, thus the transformation of the prayer into a ritual reduces the influence of these hindrances to transmission. The attraction of the devotion is strengthened. This does not mean that other causes, traditionally explaining the success of the rosary are obsolete; it just means that some arguments for these traditional causes contain a bias that needs to be corrected. The biased use of the sources prevents us from answering the question of the attraction of the rosary, because there is no point in addressing an issue considered obvious. The identification of a universal and unconscious process can provide a new insight on choices that are otherwise difficult to explain. As this example of the devotion to the rosary at the end of the Middle Ages hopefully shows, the cognitive study of religion offers useful tools for historians.

‘As a Kinde Modur Schulde’: Mary and Natural Maternity in the Middle Ages

Virginia Langum

A late Middle English sermon describes Mary’s complaint at the Cross:

My beloved child, what have you done, that the Jews have killed you on the cross? What has become of that joy that I had, when I rocked you in your cradle, when I fed you with my breasts, cuddled you on my knee and kissed your lips and your mouth as a natural mother [kinde modur] should? All this is gone and I am left alone as a woeful woman and a forsaken mother.

Here Mary, in her sadness, recalls her joy performing earlier maternal acts – rocking, feeding, cradling, kissing – as a kinde modur. This essay examines what it means to be a kinde modur in the context of late medieval England and the implications of kinde maternity for Mary's maternity. Kinde is a polysemous word and complex concept in Middle English as work on Piers Plowman, Gower and Chaucer has underlined. The Middle English Dictionary lists many possibilities for the adjective kinde, including 'natural', 'normal', 'legitimate', 'affectionate', and 'noble'.

1 Mi derworth child, what hast tu doon, pat tus pe Iuwes ha killed pe o pe cros? 3e alas... where is pat ilke ioye bi-come pat i hadde, whanne i lullid pe in bi cradil, whanne i fedde pe with mi pappis hoclid pe on mi kne & kissed bi lippus & ti mouth as a kinde modur schulde? Al bis is a-goone & i am laft alone as a woful woman & a modur forsakyn. Three Middle English Sermons (1939), p. 12.
3 MED kinde 1a, 3a, 5a, 6a.
The definitions of kinde as ‘natural’ and ‘affectionate’ intersect in medieval writing about maternity, because being a ‘natural’ mother and an ‘affectionate’ mother are bound up in the same physiological and emotional processes. In what follows, I will briefly develop what it means to be a kinde modur according to medieval medical and theological writing before turning to representations of Mary’s kinde maternity which is at once the most natural and most unnatural by affective and medical norms. Placed within the context of kinde maternity, representations of Mary’s physiological maternity speak to deep anxieties and concerns of the ordinary faithful: those who would have read, witnessed, or listened to the vernacular poetry, sermons, and drama cited in this essay. The medical and religious texts cited to delineate the image of the natural mother include major encyclopaedias of the later Middle Ages, a popular confessional manual, and several sermons. In the second part, I consider descriptions of Mary’s maternity found in a wider range of texts produced in late medieval England. These include mystery plays, poetry, sermons, and devotional literature. All texts cited in this essay were in circulation in late medieval England.

What does it mean to be a kinde modur in medieval religious and medical writing? The title of this collection of essays, Words and Matter plays upon the medieval association of matter with mater or the mother. Widely cited in technical texts of the later Middle Ages, Isidore of Seville’s (d. 636) Etymologies states that ‘a mother is so named because something is made from her, for the term ‘mother’ (mater) is as if the word were ‘matter’ (material) but the father is the cause.’ Isidore’s etymology derives from Aristotelian theories of conception; however, other passages and texts correlate the matter of being a mater with other emotional and biological experiences after conception.

Both medical and religious writing describes the suffering shared by mother and child as intrinsic to maternity and childbirth. Religious writers exploit this suffering as both a positive and negative example. As motivation not to curse their parents, a fifteenth-century sermon reminds lay listeners and readers how their mothers suffered in labour, arguing that it is miraculous that either baby or mother survived. Other religious writers employ the dangers of labour and the sufferings of childbirth that result from Eve’s sinful legacy as symbols for the miseries and dangers of life. In the extremely popular religious treatise De Miseria Conditionis Humane [The Misery of the Human Condition], for example, Pope Innocent III (d. 1216) writes that all infants are born crying in order to express the misery of nature. For the newly born male says "Ah", the female "E". All are born of Eve saying “E” or “Ah”. Likewise, medical and technical writers also allude to this legacy in the trajectory from sin to suffering. For example, in the late medieval English translation of the popular encyclopedia by Bartholomaeus Anglicus (d. 1272): ‘the mother conceives with lust and labours and brings forth the child with sorrow and woe.’

Of the infant’s suffering, Bartholomaeus writes that the child emerging from the womb is cast in ‘wretchedness and woe’, as evident by his ‘crying and weeping’, if the air is too hot or too cold. A Late Fifteenth-Century Dominical Sermon Cycle [2012], I, p. 34. There are at least seven known manuscripts of this cycle in medieval England; in the introduction to the edition to the text’s editor provides some evidence that the sermons were actually preached in their current form (ii–lii).

Lotario de Segni 1978, p. 102. Several hundred manuscripts are extant of this text, 45 of which are of an English provenance, as well as several early printed editions. The text also served as a source for secular poetry such as Chaucer’s Man of Law’s Tale and Pardoner’s Tale, lay religious texts such as Prickes of Conscience and pastoral manuals such as Speculum Christiani. Chaucer is thought to have authored an entire Middle English translation ‘Of the Wreched Engendryinge of Mankynde’, which is now lost.

pe modir conseuie wip likyng, and trauaile[p] and bringh forþ hir child wip sorwe and wip woo. On the Properties of Things (1957–1988), I, p. 362. The Latin encyclopaedia was extremely popular in manuscript and early printed book form. Translated into several vernacular languages, the text was rendered into English by John Trevisa in 1398. There are at least eight manuscripts extant of this translation. Edwards 2003, p. 85.

Physicians and medical writers describe the fragile condition of the newborn, emphasizing that the conditions of the womb should be recreated as closely as possible, in a dark and warm room, to make a less traumatic birth.\(^9\) Children were thought to be extremely vulnerable once emerging from the womb: they needed to be kept warm to preserve their natural heat, to be swaddled to protect their soft and moist limbs, to be rocked in their cradle to facilitate digestion, and so on.\(^9\) The vulnerability of infants manifests in their crying. Their eyes were thought to be particularly weak, thus the gynecological manual *Trotula* advises in caring for an infant, ‘right after birth its eyes ought to be covered, and especially it ought to be protected from strong light’.\(^11\)

Beyond the pains of birth, maternity is also deeply connected to the act of breastfeeding. Bartholomaeus identifies the mother as the one who breastfeeds. He writes, ‘the mother is called *mater* for she proffers and puts forth the breast to feed the child and is eager to nourish and care for the child’.\(^12\) Both medical and religious writers recommend that the mother feed her own child as it more *kindeliche* or natural. In the womb, the child was thought to have been nourished by the mother’s menstrual blood but when the child was born this blood became milk. Therefore, ‘the child is better and more naturally [*kindeliche*] fed with his own mother’s milk than with another’s milk’.\(^13\)

Church authorities also recognized the significance of breastfeeding for the physical and emotional life of the child. In a section on matricide to his thirteenth-century *Summa Confessorum*, the English theologian Thomas of Chobham writes that mothers who deny their infants their breasts are sinful. He does not distinguish those who hire wet nurses because they do not wish to do it themselves as any less sinful than those who willfully starve their children. If, however, on account of physical weakness or deficiency of milk, a mother employs a wet nurse, then she ought to ‘nurse and bathe her infant at least when she is able, and thus will not be like one who acts unnaturally and never goes near her child.’ Here, the text is in Latin – *ne videatur naturam evertere* – and the word *naturam* does not carry the explicit sense of *kynde* as in ‘affectionate’ but certainly this is implicit in a passage on matricide.\(^14\)

In instances where a wet nurse is used, the transfer of physical mothering constitutes a transfer of emotional mothering. As Bartholomaeus writes,

> A nurse has the name of nourishment for she is charged with nourishing and feeding the child. Isidore says in the feeding and nourishing of the child the nurse is in the mother’s stead. And therefore, just as the mother, so the nurse is glad if the child is glad and sorry if the child is sorry, and picks him up if he falls and gives him suck if he weeps and kisses him if he is quiet.\(^15\)

As the passage suggests, biological or physiological maternity is also correlated to emotional maternity or the relationship between mother and child. As the child suffers affectively, so the mother suffers affectively. Furthermore, physical suffering expands the mother’s emotional attachment to her child. Bartholomaeus writes that the greater the suffering in childbirth, the greater the love and care: ‘the more woe and sorrow a woman has in child labour, the

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\(^9\) Demaitre 1977, p. 470.

\(^10\) Demaitre 1977, pp. 471–472.

\(^11\) See the edition of *Trotula* in Green 2002, p. 83. The *Trotula* is found in both Latin and Middle English translations in medieval England.


\(^13\) *pe childe is bettir and more kindeliche ifedde wip his owne modir melk thanne wip opir melke* Ibid., I, p. 303.

\(^14\) Thomas of Chobham 2012, pp. 464–465. More than 100 manuscripts survive of this text as well as at least two printed editions from the 1480s.

\(^15\) A *norse hath be name of norischinge for sche is t-ordonyme to norische and to fele pe childe. Isidir seth in pefeedinge and norischinge of pe childe pe norse is in stede of pe modir. And perfere ri[t] as pe modir, so pe norse is glad if pe childe is glad and sory 3if pe childe is sory, and takep hym up 3if he falle, and 3euep him souke 3if he wepii, and kissep him 3if he is stille…* On the Properties of Things (1975–1988), I, p. 304.
more she loves that child when he is born, and keeps him and feeds him and nourishes, fosters and cherishes him the more eagerly'.

On its face, such ideas aligning physical suffering and physical mothering with love seems to jar with medieval doctrine concerning Mary’s maternity. Does it mean that she who suffered no pain in labour, loved her child the less? And does it mean that she who was exempt from Eve’s curse, could not nourish her child? I would like to examine these ideas through the lens of vernacular representations of Mary’s labour and suckling within the context of writing on natural maternity. As we shall see, narratives of Mary’s labour, maternal acts, and suffering both normalize and detach Mary’s maternity from kinde.

The moment of Christ’s birth as conveyed in sermons, poems, mystery plays, and various devotional texts is often as brief as the biblical version, which occupies mere sentences. After tremendous detail about Mary’s preparations for labour, for example, Bridget of Sweden’s Liber celestis, which was translated into Middle English, offers disappointingly little as far as the birth. This is both because the event itself is so sudden and because Bridget’s vision is blinded by a miraculous light. In other vernacular narratives, the birth is signaled by a simple change of tense – from the future to the perfect – and with the word ‘suddenly’. The only English mystery play to display the moment of birth itself occurs in the York cycle. While there is no stage direction to

16 *pe more woo and sorwe a womman hath in travaile of childe, pe more heo loue* pat childe whom he is ibore, and kep hyn, and fedil and norischip and strecchip pe more busiliche, and cherischip. On the Properties of Things (1957–1988), I, p. 363.
17 I am indebted to Linda Bates’s comprehensive account of Middle English narratives of Christ’s birth and infancy found in her dissertation. The Liber Celestis (1987), p. 486. There are two independent translations of this text into Middle English and numerous excerpts in the vernacular. On Birgitta’s influence, see Cleve 1992, pp. 163–178.
18 Bates 2011, p. 44.

hint at what the audience might have seen, the text only signals the birth with a change of tense. Mary states that Jesus ‘will be borne of my body’ and a few lines later ‘nowe borne is he’. Rather than try to grapple with this miracle explicitly, other vernacular accounts, particularly those found in cycle drama, choose to focus on events that occur parallel to the birth. In the plays, the action is moved to the shepherds or Joseph’s search for the midwives so that when the focus is back on Mary, the child has already been born.

Both Joseph and the midwives play an important role in this process, verifying, testing and witnessing what is natural and what is miraculous, or supernatural, about Mary’s maternity. In many versions of the nativity story, Joseph leaves Mary to find midwives. Suffering in childbirth was an unavoidable consequence of Eve’s Fall, and the midwives themselves are a necessity of this legacy. Although not in the biblical account, Mary’s engagement with the midwives becomes a conceit in the mystery plays and vernacular presentations through which the playwrights and poets question and examine doubts surrounding her maternity.

As Mary was free from Eve’s curse and thus the suffering of childbirth, midwives are superfluous. Thus, Joseph’s search often demonstrates that he does not quite believe in her miraculous purity. However, this doubt is often presented in his conflicting words about her birth, a potential mirror to the belief but incomplete understanding of the medieval parishioner. For example, in the Chester cycle, Joseph leaves Mary ‘to fetch two midwives if he can’. However, in the next two lines, he also notes that she carries ‘true God’ [God verey] and that the birth ‘proceeds against nature’ [commen agaynst kinde]. This contradictory sense is enhanced in his exclamation that he ‘nowe’ believes the angel’s word and that she is a ‘pure maiden’ [cleane maye] after seeing the miraculous star after Christ’s birth when he returns with the midwives.
In the N-Town plays, Joseph does not fully understand how Mary’s pregnancy differs from normal birth. The stanza he delivers in parting from her in search of the midwives reveals the inconsistency of his understanding. He says:

I will hence get out of your way
And seek midwives to comfort you
When you labour with child this day.
Farewell, true wife and also pure maiden,
God be your comfort in the Trinity.\(^\text{24}\)

He seeks midwives for her comfort in labour yet also acknowledges that she is a clean maiden and that her comfort will be in the Trinity. Once alone on his search, he continues to worry for Mary’s sake on account of her youth and that she is alone, begging God to spare her from pain before he has returned with the midwives. He prays:

Women in labour are bound in care
With great contractions they do groan
God help my wife so she does not swoon
I am very sorry that she is alone!\(^\text{25}\)

While sympathetic, this speech demonstrates his incomprehension. His specific worry that she not ‘swoon’ [\(\text{souwonde}\)] also potentially foreshadows her swoon at the crucifixion, where according to one theological tradition, she experiences her labour pains as I will discuss later.

Typically in the mystery plays, Joseph and the midwives are greeted by a bright light, signifying the birth has happened in their absence. Vernacular accounts exploit the light of the nativity found in the New Testament apocrypha.\(^\text{26}\) In the N-Town play, the bright light paralyzes the midwives and they are afraid to enter the stable. The poet John Lydgate’s \textit{Life of Our Lady} explicitly states the reason for this fear as the light is ‘against nature’ [\(\text{azen kynde}\)], both referring to the brightness of the light for that ‘time of the night’ [\(\text{tyme of the nyght}\)] as well as capitalizing upon the fact that \(\text{kynde}\) births were usually characterized by darkness owing to the newborn’s sensitivity to light.\(^\text{27}\)

Through the reactions of the midwives, the plays demonstrate what was expected of a natural birth and the doubt that persisted despite the apparent miracle of Mary’s maternity. The midwives express the need to touch and feel for themselves and they perform a host of examinations that range in the level of their invasiveness.

In the Chester plays, the first midwife Tebell is convinced of Mary’s status as ‘clean mayden’ in her reaction. She cites labour without ‘pain’ [\(\text{teene}\)] or ‘labour’ [\(\text{travaylinge}\)] and with ‘bliss’ which Mary explicitly proclaims and implicitly proves by not having needed the midwives.\(^\text{28}\) The second midwife, Salome, however, proves a harder sell, reminding her companion that a woman with a child could not be a pure maiden. She refers to her knowledge of midwifery and maternity, and states the need to physically examine Mary herself: ‘to learn whether she is a virgin’ [\(\text{Whether shee bee cleane maye, / And knowe yt if I cann}\)].\(^\text{29}\) Thus follows the explicit stage direction that Salome touches Mary in \(\text{sexu secreto}\), or her genitals. The midwife is punished for her ‘trespass’ by the withering of her arm. This punishment provides an opportunity for evangelism and, paradoxically, physical proof of what cannot be physically proven: Mary’s maternity.

Other accounts handle the examination differently. The N-Town play, for example, offers a more sympathetic if equally misguided basis for Mary’s initial examination. The first midwife Zelomye immediately refutes that there has been a birth because of the absence of Joseph.

\(^\text{24}\) Wyl go hens out of youre way/ And seke sum mydwyys sow for to ese/ Whan jet se travayle of childe his day/ Fare well, trewe woff and also cleene may/ God be youre conforte in Trinyte. The N-Town Play (1991), 15.118–125.

\(^\text{25}\) Travelynge women in care be bounde/ With grete throwys whan jeti do grone; God help me my woff jet sche not suownde./ I am ful sory sche is alone! The N-Town Play (1991), 15.129–133.

\(^\text{26}\) Bates 2011, p. 35.


\(^\text{29}\) Ibid., VI.535–539.
sence of pain. Although Mary does not explicitly state that she has not been in pain, the midwife infers it from her reaction to Joseph. When he brings in the midwives, she evidently laughs, because he immediately chides her not to laugh so as not to offend the midwives. Owing to the presumed absence of pain, Zelomye doubts whether Mary is a mother at all: 'she needs to have been in labour, otherwise no child has been born of her' [in byrth traewyle muste sche nedys haue, / Or elly no chylde of here is born]. Nevertheless, she proceeds to ask to examine Mary on the grounds that she might need medicine:

Let me now touch and feel with my hand
Whether you need medicine
I shall comfort you and help you
Like other women if you have pain.

Such manual physical examinations were, of course, part of standard practice for medieval midwives. Midwives anointed the mothers' womb with special balms to ease their sores. The comparison to 'other women' who have pain hints at the possibility of Mary's difference, however.

Despite assuring the midwife that she feels no 'pain or injury' [peyne nere grevynge], Mary permits her to 'tast with [her] hand,' where tast can mean 'to examine' or 'touch' in both a medical and general sense and to 'test'. The precise nature of the examination is unstated, but we can assume that it is gynaecological because immediately after Zelomye proclaims that it was a virgin birth. She says: 'here I clearly feel and see/ A fair child is born of a maiden' [here opynly I fel and se: / A fayr chylde of a maydon is born]. Her proof of virginity is intriguing as medieval handbooks on women's medicine do not typically mention gynaecological examinations as ways of testing for virginity.

Zelomye's observations also attest to more external miraculous conditions of Mary's body. She comments on the cleanliness of the birth, for example. Not only would this have been miraculous to witness after the many natural childbirths attended by the midwife, but rather, to cleanse the child and the mother were part of her duties. She references the cleanliness in terms of her own responsibilities as midwife. The child

Needs no washing as others do
He is completely clean and pure
Without spot or any pollution,
His mother not deprived of virginity!

Many vernacular accounts reference the cleanliness of the stable, of Mary, and of the baby. Bridget of Sweden even goes so far as to describe the cleanliness of the placenta. Further, Zelomye witnesses another proof of maternity that was noted earlier: the ability and decision to breastfeed. The midwife notes that Mary's breasts are full of milk.

Nevertheless, like her counterpart in the Chester play, the N-Town Salome is unconvinced by testimony from her colleague's gynaecological exam, Mary's testimony of a pain-free birth, the visible proof of milk, and absence of filth. So Mary invites her also to touch and examine for herself,

To put yourself completely out of doubt
Touch with your hand and investigate.
Skillfully examine [ransake] and discover the truth
Whether I am unchaste or a pure virgin.

31 With honde lete me now touch and fele/ Yf 3e haue need of medycyn./ I xal 3ou conforte and helpe right wele/ As other women yf 3e haue pyn. Ibid., 15.218–221.
34 Ibid., 15.238–239.
36 And nedeth no waschynge as oth dr: Ful clene and pure forsath is he/ Without spott or ony polucyon [pollution] / His modyr nott hurt of virgynite! The N-Town Play (1991), 15.230–233.
38 3ow for to putt clene out of douth,/ Touche with 3oure hand and wele assay:/ Wysely ransake and trye be trenoth outh/ Whethyr I be fowlyd or a clene may. The N-Town Play (1991), 15.250–253.
The midwives are punished for transgressing the boundaries of the sacred body so that the faithful do not have to do so. Wherever vernacular accounts describe the midwives before Christ’s birth, their skill and renown is emphasized. As Denise Ryan has argued in her article on the role of midwives in medieval legal culture, a good reputation was crucial to the professional standing of midwives as they often served as witnesses in trials, for example those related to adultery. Thus, it is appropriate that Mary’s midwives perform their job according to convention so that they can serve as respectable witness to the miraculous.

In Lydgate’s Life of Our Lady, the midwives perform less invasive, or at least less explicit tests. They find the mother and child clean ‘without any blemish on any part despite all the examinations that they made’ [withoutyn wem on eny party founde / For all the preves that they make coude]. Furthermore, they also see that her breasts are full of milk. To this proof, one midwife cannot help proclaiming that ‘a virgin has delivered a child’ [a mayde hath a chylde borne]. Mary’s ability to produce breast milk raised knotty theological issues if, as we have seen in medical literature, milk is understood as related to menstrual blood. Lydgate evades the issue by having Mary’s breasts ‘full of heavenly milk sent from above the clouds’ [abounde / With hevenly mylke sent from above the cloude]. Theologians also avoided the issue; however, the nursing virgin was a popular image in both art and text. In an extraordinary image, Nicholas Love has Mary warm her newborn by washing him in her own breastmilk.

Nicholas Love’s choice demonstrates one way of establishing Mary’s maternity without resorting to physiological precision, by turning to the activities surrounding the infant’s care in the early hours after birth. In Love’s rendering, after she bathes him, she proceeds to wrap him in the kerchief on her head and lay him in the manger. As seen in the previous section, infants were thought to be incredibly vulnerable after exiting the womb. Vernacular writers present the infant Jesus as no different in this regard. In the Coventry Pagaent of the Shearman and Taylors, for example, Mary worries that her child grows cold and they have no fire to warm him.

Arguably, it is Mary’s suffering that makes her maternity most kindeliche. Mary’s maternal pain is both symbolic and material in relation to labour. An example of the former is found in a late medieval sermon that details four types of love, one of which is that of mother and child. The homilist writes that while bearing the child in her womb, the mother ‘suffers many great discomforts patiently’. However, the physical pain is soon replaced by emotional pain ‘for love, she suffers many woeful days and difficult nights so that the child can be brought up to help himself’. In this context, Mary’s ‘great heaviness’ is invoked as exemplary of the emotional pain suffered by mothers for their children. However, as Amy Neff’s study of Mary in late medieval crucifixion scenes demonstrates, the idea that Mary had physical labour pains at the crucifixion became current in late medieval theology, art, and literature. This labour was depicted with varying degrees of literalism in relation to natural childbirth. Albertus Magnus writes of her suffering, ‘and then she knew through the pain in her heart, what it is to be a mother’.

If we return to the opening sermon of the essay, we can see a preoccupation with Mary’s maternity and suffering in all three complete English sermons of the manuscript Worcester Cathedral

42 Ibid., p. 455.
44 Love 2005, p. 38.
46 sufferyth patientely many grete dyseses; but most of all in tymne of his byrthe...but after the byrthe be grete peyne is forgetyn...for luffe sche sufferith many wofull daie and disesy nyȝties or the chylde may be brownte vp to helpe lyff. A Late Fifteenth-Century Dominical Sermon Cycle (2012), I, p. 55.
48 Quoted in ibid., p. 257.
F. 10. The description of Mary’s suffering as a *kinde modur* derives from a sermon attributed to a monk of St. Albans, Hugh Legat.40

The description of Mary’s suffering at the cross in Hugh Legat’s sermon is preceded by a humoral semiology of love which is attributed to Aristotle: when the loved object is in the presence of a melancholic man, he quakes; in the presence of phlegmatic man, he turns pale; in the presence of a choleric man, he sweats; and in the presence of a sanguine man, he turns red. These various signs of love are then correlated to the signs of the Passion before turning to Mary’s own suffering. This Aristotelian physiology of love is evoked again in another English sermon in the collection:

Aristotle says that it is every woman’s nature [kynde] to love the child more specially than the father, and if she sees him in any discomfort, she is more sorrowful than anyone else. But this blessed lady had both natural sorrow as other women [kyndeliche as oper wammen] have and also sorrow above nature [above kyndle] that surpasses the sorrow of other women, in as much as her child who suffered was lord and king and above all natural things [above al kyndliche pytngis] in this world.50

Mary’s suffering is thus as *kyndeliche as oper wumen* and yet is also *above kyndle* due to the nature of the loved object as *above al kyndliche pytngis*. Mary and her son occupy this singular status as both natural and above nature. The status of natural and unnatu-

The sermon’s manuscript is a jumble of at least 18 separate booklets and a dozen hands which name several monks. Most sermons are in Latin, but four are in English, including the Passion sermon of Hugh Legat. Three of these have been edited but one cannot be deciphered. Although Hugh was a monk and many of the Latin sermons appear to have been intended for clerical and monastic occasions, others seem deliberately intended for a lay or mixed audience. In addition to the Latin sermons, the other two edited English sermons, in particular, contain internal evidence for a lay audience. Wenzel 2005, pp. 153, 155–156.

The association of Mary’s suffering at her son’s death with her maternity is also made in dramatic and poetic accounts. The labour swows that Joseph worries about in the N-Town’s nativity play are delayed until the Crucifixion play. Despite earlier physical proofs, the emotional intensity of her experience ‘now’ startles her and she understands more fully that she is ‘maiden and mother’.51 In a Middle English lyric ‘Mary at the Foot of the Cross’ [Stond wel, Molder under rode], Mary laments to her son on the cross that ‘your suffering pains me to death’ [thi pine pined me to dede]. Her son instructs her:

Mother, now you might learn
What pain they who bear children suffer
What sorrow they have to lose that child
Mother, pity a mother’s care,
Now that you know of the mother’s experience,
Although you are a virgin.53

50 *seith Arestotel euery wumman hath it o kynde to loue more specialiche pe child pan doth pe vaide & 3if sche se it in any disease to make mor sorwe sor it pan any oper bodi. But tis blessed ladi had bop sorwe kyndeliche as oper wumen haue & also sorwe above kynde pat passed oper wumann sorwe, in as miche as hir child pat sche was tus dised for was lord & kyng above al kyndliche pytngis pat ben e pis world. Three Middle English Sermons (1939), p. 69

51 *ich am a dedliche man, sethe Salamon. ich al oper o pe kynde of him pat first was formed o pe erthe, & e my modres wombe was a woul lumpe of fles, nyne monpes congealed togeder e my modres blod. & be norscyng of slep ate last was brooth forth into pe wretchted wold & sorliche wepte, as al oper do. Ihbl., p. 63.

52 *The N-Town Play, 32.92–98.

53 *Molder, mitarst thi mith leren/ Wat pine thoden that childre beren,/ Wat sorwe hav en that child forgon... Molder, reu of moder kare./ Nu thu wost of moder fare,/ Thou thu be blene mayden man. Stond wel moder vnder rode,’ Saupe 1998, lines 37–39, 43–45.*
Reflection upon this leads Mary to ask her son to 'help all in need/
All those who cry out to me/ Maiden, wife and unchaste woman'.
Here simply and effectively, Mary’s co-passion with Christ extends
to compassion for all mothers and all women. She is the universal
mother who suffers and loves her child the more for the intensity
of that suffering, as we saw in the medical writing, just as a kinde
modur schulde.

The Child Before the Mother:
Mary and the Excremental in
*The Prickyng of Love*

**Katie L. Walter**

ne were þat þi loue helde þe þou
woldest fleen þe filpe of me¹

*The Prickyng of Love*

The *Stimulus amoris*, a Latin, and originally monastic, treatise on
contemplation, composed by the Franciscan James of Milan perhaps
in the last decades of the thirteenth century, circulated widely in
the Latin West.² In England, the influence of the *Stimulus* on devo-
tional literature and on lay piety is most clearly witnessed by a
Middle English translation, *The Prickyng of Love*, made in the late
fourteenth century and extant in 16 manuscripts.³ In translation,
the milieu of the *Stimulus* extends from the monastery to the par-
ish: thus, in Jennifer Bryan’s words, the *Prickyng* is ‘a much more
concise and practical English treatise, emphasizing not ascetic dis-
cipline or religious obedience or mystical fusion with the godhead,

² See Eisermann 2001 for the widespread influence of *Stimulus amoris*.
³ On the Middle English manuscripts, see Kane (ed.) 1983, pp. iii–xxii. Evidence
for ownership does not fully answer the question of the text’s place in the parish,
but it is clear that in Middle English it continues also to circulate in a monastic
milieu – several manuscripts are associated with the Priory of Dominican nuns
in Dartford, Kent – though there is also evidence for lay ownership. On the
question of the translation’s authorship: five manuscripts of the *Prickyng*
ascribe the text to Walter Hilton, and Kirchberger (1952) supports Hilton’s
authorship, as do a number of other scholars, although Westphall has recently
argued against this. For the scholarly debate around the authorship, see West-
phall 2010.

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⁵⁴ *help alle at node! Alle tho that to me greden –/ Mayden, wyf, and fol wyman.
Ibid., 46–48.*
but what English parishioners wanted and what those in charge of their pastoral care were concerned to provide: a Passion meditation for the mixed life. Defined thus as a ‘Passion meditation’ for a lay readership, most discussion of the Prickynge has concerned itself with its Christological aspects, with how the life and wounds of Christ generate meditational structures, and how these structures are adapted and circumscribed in the process of vernacularisation.

The Stimulus’s focus on the Passion is, however, in part a deliberately cultivated effect of insertions made to it by later redactors; the version referred to as ‘maior I’, which is the basis of the Prickynge and which expands the Stimulus from 23 to around 53 chapters, has up to 15 chapters devoted to the Passion where the original only has two. A particular set of insertions made in ‘maior I’ also significantly increases the Stimulus’s Marian material: the lengthy expositions of the Ave Maria and the Salve regina appended to the treatise provide by far its most sustained focus on Mary. Whether in their Latin or Middle English form, these particular expositions have hardly registered in scholarship on the Stimulus

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5 See, for example: Beckwith 1996, in particular pp. 55–63; Bryan 2008, chapter 3; and Barnes 2011, e.g. pp. 149, 157. For arguments about the efforts to limit lay meditation in this and other translations of monastic texts, see Barnes 2011, e.g. p. 207.
6 Barnes 2011, p. 149. The open structure of James’s treatise allowed it easily to house additional material and a number of distinct traditions develop. That referred to by Eisermann (2001), in his thorough examination of the Stimulus tradition, as ‘maior I’ (but which is also referred to more generally as the ‘long text’) is already established by the first quarter of the fourteenth century. For a description of ‘maior I’, see Eisermann 2001, pp. 241–246. Barnes 2011 notes ‘the expanded fourteenth-century version […] [maior I] exists in complete form in a stunning 221 manuscripts and partially in another 147’ (p. 146); see also Table 1, pp. 147–149, which gives the correspondence between James’s original (the short text), ‘maior I’ (or the long text) and The Prickynge of Love.

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It is worth noting that these appended texts may, in fact, be English additions, since it has been suggested that the ‘maior I’ redaction itself has an English origin. See Eisermann 2001, pp. 242–243.
8 On Mary as the mater omnium, see Rubin 2009, p. 154. On the Prickynge-translator’s treatment of these passages, Kirchberger 1952, asserting Walter Hilton’s authorship, assesses: ‘It is the Passion which evokes his [Hilton’s] most tender mood, but the meditations on Our Lady are even more abundant in lyrical outpourings of love and devotion. In the meditation on the Ave Maria there are passages of such beauty of literary expression as to merit inclusion in any anthology of English medieval prose’ (p. 28).
9 For the relationship between Mary, the female body and its functions (such as menstruation, the pain and mess of childbirth), as well as her increasing elevation in the medieval period, see: Cuffel 2007, p. 109 (European Christians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries […] focused their attention on creating a theology of Mary’s body that set her flesh above the corruptible impurity characterizing most human existence”), pp. 110–111 (on the theology behind the view of Mary’s body as uncorrupted after death), and p. 112 (tales of Mary interceding ‘distance her from the rest of humankind’), etc. Reed 2003 summarises late medieval theological thinking on maternity in relation to Mary and to salvation,
representation of the Virgin Mary is one which challenges our understanding of her relation to matter, it is also one which requires us to reconsider the meanings of and possible responses to the excremental in late medieval devotional culture. What I will argue is that these appended, Marian texts provide a powerful model in which the excremental elicits, against the grain of abasement and abjection the Prickynge elsewhere promotes, not disgust but rather love and compassion. They do so through the lens of the mother-child relationship and of Mary as mother in particular.

Abjection and the Mixed Life

In typical Franciscan vein, a key technique for meditation set out in the Prickynge requires the meditant to focus on the lowliness and filthiness of man and the highness and holiness of God in order to provoke greater wonder at the Incarnation and compassion for the suffering Christ endured on man’s behalf. The human, unreformed by salvation, unwashed by Christ’s blood, is thus repeatedly described as a dead body, as diseased or filthy, or as excremental: that is, in a word, as abject. In its vernacular, laicised form,

Bryan thus contends, ‘the Prickynge […] makes] abjection a central practice of the mixed life’. What, however, are the implications for ‘mixed life’ if abjection is its central practice? And where does Mary figure in this? Within the Franciscan schema of the Prickynge, man’s natural condition – as abject – predominately provokes feelings of disgust; moreover, the reversal made possible by Christ’s Incarnation requires both a complicated casting out of the abject by the Christian and an embrace of it as a means to spiritual transcendence. The abject here, as it is in Julia Kristeva’s still influential reading of it, is rippled through with desire and the potential for jouissance (unbearable joy). But for those trying to do well while living in the world, the binary of disgust/jouissance the Prickynge advances constructs a frame for understanding everyday human experience – excretion, defecation, sickness, and death – that is in some ways problematic. Indeed, while the hegemony of disgust in scholarly explorations of the excremental in the medieval period remains largely unchallenged, a number of recent scholars have conceded the possibility, even desirability, of interpreting and responding to excrement differently. Susan Signe Morrison, for example, concludes her book Excrement in the Late Middle Ages by observing that ‘currently, we see the excremental body as immoral, unethical, horrifying, unhealthful and distasteful’, but excrement is, in fact, a way ‘to acknowledge the body, and with it comes an awareness of the interconnectedness of one’s own body with those of others, enabling compassion for others’. What is also suggested by Morrison, but which is absent from much other scholarship on the excremental

14 On abjection see Kristeva 1982; Kristeva 1985 has also written on the Virgin Mary’s role in bringing the threat from the maternal under control.
15 Recent scholarship on medieval disgust, much of which focuses on excrement, largely draws upon the work of Mikhail Bakhtin on the grotesque, Mary Douglas on purity and danger, Julia Kristeva on the abject, and Paul Roizin on the psychology of disgust, see, for example: Cuffel 2007; Bayless 2012; Morrison 2008, and Larrington 2006.
body, is a consideration of excrement’s meanings in the context of the mother-child relationship.\(^\text{17}\) It is this somewhat overlooked category of the maternal, however, which I argue provides the most powerful lens for understanding how the excremental enables compassion for others in the *Prickynge*.

This claim might seem contradictory, since, according to Kristeva’s theory, the polluting power of excrement – its ability to provoke disgust – itself stems from the maternal: it is maternal authority (prior to paternal law and entry into language), exercised as ‘sphincteral training’, which first maps the ‘clean and proper body’ of the child.\(^\text{18}\) In a Christian context, Kristeva argues, the threat of the excremental, reinforced by our mothers’ teaching, becomes interiorised and established as ‘sin’, with words and thoughts, rather than the material body itself, becoming the real source of defilement, and speech (confession) the means of its purgation.\(^\text{19}\) Such a model resonates strongly with the *Prickynge*’s own figuration of sin as excrement and of the abject state it provokes.\(^\text{20}\) Indeed, Mary as mother here likewise performs this sphincteral training for sinners. Logically, then, within this frame, excrement should elicit horror or disgust. Yet this provides only one perspective on the excremental; that is, disgust is one possible response that one might have to viewing what is abjected from one’s own body. A further perspective is offered by viewing the filth of others, which, as the *Prickynge* demonstrates, provokes a variety of responses, but in the instance of a mother viewing her own child moves beyond, or perhaps is entirely devoid of, disgust. Indeed, as the *Prickynge*’s appended texts demonstrate, it is Mary’s maternal affects of love and compassion which disrupt the binary of disgust/jouissance otherwise elicited by the excremental body. Thus, if the *Prickynge* makes abjection a central practice of mixed life, Mary as mother recalibrates it, offering medieval readers the means to recuperate the everyday experiences of the natural and the bodily for doing well while living in the world.

**The Prickynge’s Mothers**

Maternity operates on both the level of the human and the divine in the *Prickynge*. Most strikingly, in the tradition still best outlined by Caroline Walker Bynum, Jesus is figured as mother in the *Prickynge*.\(^\text{21}\) His wounds, while sometimes facilitating the imagining of an eroticised access to the body of Christ, are more often uterine, to be crawled into by His Christian child, or suckled as breasts. So too, when the Christian child is tempted and close to falling or failing, does the *Prickynge* relate how God behaves towards us as a ‘louande [loving] modir do þ to hir ðonge childe’. When she ‘seeth þ at he loyneth a-wey [wanders away] fro hir on his playenge. and for ðete þ her’, the mother suddenly makes a great cry which startles the child, who ‘for drede he þ mynket on his modir and rennyth [runs] to hire als faste as he may and she spreddi þenne out hir armes and resseyuyth hir child wi kyndeli gladnesse’.\(^\text{22}\) In the same way, God receives the wayward Christian when consciousness of sin and contrition bring about his or her turn back to Him. God’s motherly care of His children also extends to the excremental, since the Christian, like an incontinent child, soils (both metaphorically and literally figuring sin) his clothes and is helpless to clean away the filth. Thus the work of salvation, just as that of motherhood, requires that God keep us clean ‘as a wite [white] cloop’, while the Christian child, ‘as a vile wrecche [wretch] sparcest nouȝte for to foulen hem daye by daye wiþ stynkyng droppyn-

\(^\text{17}\) Ibid., p. 154.
\(^\text{19}\) Ibid., pp. 71, 113–118.
\(^\text{20}\) In several instances it is very much implied in the *Prickynge* that sinning is a form of defecating before God’s face, see, for example, Kane 1983 (ed.), p. 53. Cf. Chaucer 1987, ‘The Parson’s Tale’, for another medieval example that resonates with Kristeva’s argument: a child’s loathing for milk ‘medled with oother mete’ parallels the loathing for sin that comes with love for God, X.120–125.

\(^\text{21}\) Bynum 1982; on Jesus as Mother in the *Prickynge*, see Kane (ed.) 1983, for example, pp. 9–10.
\(^\text{22}\) Ibid., p. 163.
ges of synne.'23 This model of a natural mother, taking up her wayward child in her arms and changing her child’s soiled clothes, however, is problematic in a divine context: how is it that a holy God serves man in his abject, excremental condition? Touches between the human and the divine, while imagined in the Prickynge, are also taboo: we are invited to touch God, but the Prickynge-author also asserts that it is a great villainy to God when ‘wip oure foule hands we fonderen [try] ofte for to touche hym.’24

Since touching the divine when we are unclean is deeply transgressive yet, at the same time, our remedy, the Prickynge-author ponders the possibility that Jesus will prove an unnatural mother, close up His wounds and refuse access to His mercy in response to human sin and filth. In the face of Christ’s rejection, the Christian should turn to Mary: ‘hie […] to blessed mari his modir. pat is hope and refuyt [refuge] of all synneful wrecches, & falle doun bi-fore hire wip reuerence as to goddis modir, & with plente of teris. aske her helpe.’25 Notably, however, the turn here is not to Mary as our mother, but as God’s: we fall at her feet, not into her arms; we are to reverence her, not force our way back into her womb. She is not, in this instance, an alternative mother figure, but rather, through her position as God’s mother, a privileged intercessor.26 If the Prickynge imagines Jesus as mother cleaning His children’s excremental bodies, Mary, as Christ’s mother, seems untouchable in comparison, more removed from matter and out of human reach.

The same pattern occurs elsewhere, for example, in a chapter on predestination and the difficulty of knowing whether one is or is not, in fact, saved: in the face of such uncertainty, the meditant resolves to obtain God’s mercy through violence if need be, ‘or ellis i shal falle doun at pe feet of pe virgine marie his blessed modir. and I shal rehersen [repeat] hire pat sheo was ordeyned to be goddis modir for synneris […] but] I hope pat sheo wol not lere [teach] now a new lesoun for me.’27 Repeating back to Mary the lessons he has learned about (or, indeed, from) her, Mary here, again, is God’s mother but not ours, and is to be revered as a figure of authority and instruction, not handled familiarly as a mother.28

If the Prickynge largely refrains from figuring Mary’s relationship with the Christian as that between mother and child, the appended chapters on the Ave Maria and Salve regina do not.29 The exposition of the Ave Maria starts out by encouraging the meditant to marvel that Christ deigned to allow us, ‘heathen hounds’, not only to know that he has a mother, but also to greet her. While the polarity between Mary’s purity and human filth is constantly stressed, as the exposition develops we are drawn closer to the possibility that Mary’s motherhood might extend out to Christians. Thus, the Prickynge speculates that if the meditant would but love Mary completely, he could ‘more sikerli [surely] wip witnesse of conscience callen hir [his] modir.’30 Better grounds for approaching Mary as mother, however, are given in the exposition’s

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23 Ibid., p. 184.
24 Ibid., p. 102.
26 Rubin 2009 thus describes how, when self-loathing and self-abjection might lead to despair, ‘the supplicant turns to Mary’, p. 132. Of the Prickynge, Karnes 2011 notes, ‘Overall, meditation in the Prickynge is less confident. The Stimulus writes that Christ’s love “makes God man and men God.” […] Nouns become adverbs in order to deny commutability between man and God. In the Stimulus, Mary approaches Jesus with the meditant to ask for forgiveness; in the Prickynge, Mary approaches Jesus alone’, p. 234.
move to considering how the Incarnation establishes kinship between Christ and Christians: ‘pourse [through] whiche knyttynge [of God and man in the Virgin’s womb] we are orderyned heyres [heirs] and breperen in þe kyngdome of heuene’.31 Having established the familiar ties between Christ and humans, the exposition – at least in the version preserved in Harley MS 2254 – makes its boldest representation of Mary’s active motherhood in service of her Christian children:

soþli [truly] lady i stynke foule in þy nose-þrilles [nostrils]. 3e so foule. þat ne were þat þi loue helde þe pou woldest fleen þe filpe of me as i wolde don þe stynke of a caroyun [rotting corpse]. but þou farist [deal] with vs as a modir wip hir owne childe þat kisseth hym with her mouthe. & with hir handis makip clene his taylende [anus].32

This passage of the Prickynge offers the reader two perspectives on the excremental body. The first renders it abject: figuring the polluting powers of excrement – stinking ‘foule’ in her nostrils, the Christian’s sin-as-excrement threatens the very integrity of Mary’s bodily boundaries – this passage simultaneously demonstrates the central role defilement plays in creating the sacred.33 Mary, then, as mother of God, should flee this ‘filthe’, just as we would the stench of a rotted corpse (‘caroyun’).34 But she does not. Thus, in the second perspective offered by the passage, Mary’s proper aver-

31 Ibid., pp. 189–190.
32 Ibid., pp. 190–191. Harley MS 2254 is the base text for Kane’s edition. This passage is on f. 65v of the manuscript. See Bryan 2008, p. 154 on this image and her comparison of it with a striking passage on defecation in Julian of Norwich’s Showings.
33 The anthropological work of Mary Douglas (1966) has long been influential here and is important to Kristeva’s argument. See Kristeva 1982, pp. 65–67. Recent scholarship on both excrement and disgust continues to cite Douglas; see Morisson 2008, p. 73; Cuffel 2007, e.g. pp. 5–6.
34 Trinity College MS 305, Bodley MS 480, Cosin MS V. III. 8, Harley MS 2415, and CUL MS Hh.1.12, all have ‘fuyt’ or ‘fute’ for ‘filpe’ which can be glossed as ‘spoor’, which retains a focus on the transgressive stench that reaches Mary’s nostrils. The ‘filpe’ of Harley MS 2254, the base text for the edition, rather emphasises excrement itself. On smell, see Allen 2007, e.g. pp. 3, 49.

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cation not just in the process of cleaning, but in the purging or defecation of sin as excrement itself.\textsuperscript{38}

The variants found in Bodley MS 480 and CUL MS Hh.1.12 may suggest a certain scribal anxiety in figuring Mary touching excremental bottoms: they might also suggest that the reading represented in Harley MS 2254 does not follow word-for-word its source. Indeed, the Latin ‘maior I’ as represented in the Peltier edition does not seem to contain such explicit language or actions.\textsuperscript{39} The manuscript tradition for the \textit{Stimulus amoris} is a complex one, but the differences discernible in the \textit{Prickynge}'s handling of the excremental in comparison with the Latin suggest that it may be a particular development by the Middle English redactor. If this is so, it situates the \textit{Prickynge} within a late medieval, Middle English strain of devotional thinking, where the natural and the bodily are recuperable, where human vulnerability and neediness, both physical and spiritual, bring their own benefit, as the grounds for divine, as well as human, compassion.\textsuperscript{40}

Care of the excremental body is also performed by Mary in the chapter on the \textit{Salve regina}. The exposition of the line \textit{Ad te clama-mus} explicitly figures Mary, as she imitates Christ’s own mothering of Christian children, cleaning away human faeces: ‘For what þi sone dop. þou dost,’ the meditant observes, ‘þere-fore we crieþe [cry] to

\textsuperscript{38} Other English texts that represent Mary’s treatment of our foul, abject bodies, include Henry of Lancaster’s Anglo-Norman, \textit{Le Livre des Seyntz Medicines}, though this is not explicitly excremental: ‘My most sweet lady Saint Mary; I recommend myself to you, and now beseech you piteously, for the love of your blessed Son, that it would please you to look upon me with a kind eye. Most sweet lady, I pray that you see my great need of your help in wrapping my sores with your lovely, clean white cloths’, trans. in Rubin 2009, p. 279.


\textsuperscript{40} Middle English texts that participate in this include Julian’s \textit{Showings} and William Langland’s \textit{Piers Plowman}. See, for example, the comments of Morrison (2009) on the place of filth in Julian of Norwich’s theology: ‘Rather than representing defecation as abjection, Julian endorses the necessity of our bodily elimination, thereby transcending the abject’, p. 154. On the valuation of the natural, or ‘kynde’, in the late medieval period, see, for example, Zeeman 2000.

rhe ooure modir þat washeste vs fro filpe of synnes. and conuorrest vs wepande in þe cradle of oure freel [frail] flesh.\textsuperscript{41} What these two excremental moments make clear is that Mary’s accommodation of human filth is a result of her maternal affects: ‘þat ne were þat þi loue helde þe þou woldest fleen þe filpe of me’; ‘þou farist with vs as a modir. wiþ hir owne childe þat kissë hym with her mowpe’; ‘what þi son dop. þou dost; we crieþe to þe ooure modir’.\textsuperscript{42}

The affective process that Mary as mother here participates in is close to, but is in one important respect different from the other modes the \textit{Prickynge} describes, and, indeed, from medieval devotional practices where the abject is embraced. Wherein this difference lies is made clear in the \textit{Prickynge}’s injunction in chapter sixteen that the Christian seek to love Christ in the sick man, through which process ‘a seek [sick] man or a man in miseese [misery]’ will no longer seem to him to be ‘wlatsom [vomit-inducing] ne shameful […] but al swete and loveli’.\textsuperscript{43} To achieve this, the Christian is instructed to go to the infirmary and find a sick man, and then make as though to kiss Christ’s mouth but kiss instead the sick man’s mouth: ‘kysse [Christ] first foule. þat þou mayyte [might] afterward kisse hym faire’.\textsuperscript{44} What this devotional mode (one that notably, in combining contemplation with charitable action, aims to foster the ‘mixed life’) requires, as the \textit{Prickynge} goes on to explain, is that the Christian turn the ‘face’ of his soul to Christ and set before him, in the place where the sick or sinful man is, Christ Himself. He should not look at the outer man, which is ‘a seeck [sack] ful of mucke’, but turn his ‘inner man’ towards the ‘inner man’ of his fellow Christian to behold the image of God that is within, which has now been marred by the filth of sin.\textsuperscript{45}

Here we see played out something akin to Kristeva’s description of the New Testament interiorization of filth as sin. ‘Christian sin,’
Kristeva writes, ‘tying its spiritual knot between flesh and law, does not cut off the abject’: rather, sin is absorbed in and through speech. In this way the abject becomes ‘the most propitious place for communication’. Referring to Francis of Assisi and Angela of Foligna – those expert practitioners of abject embraces and of the double-vision required to see beauty (Christ) in the place where filth (a sick man) is – Kristeva comments: ‘The mystic’s familiarity with abjection is a fount of infinite jouissance’. Abjection here is displaced ‘onto communication with the Other and with others’, disgust becomes the source of unbearable joy.

But this does not seem to fit precisely what is at work when filth is viewed through the eyes of a mother, as the Prickynge’s mothers exemplify. So, for example, in those instances when the Christian is instructed how to respond to the sickness (spiritual or physical) of others, he is told that he should ‘despise no man in his herte. be he neuere so vile ne so mykel [much] a wrecch’, but stir his affections, so that ‘wenne he seeth hit or herith [hears] hit’ he has compassion ‘as a modir hath compassion of hir owne childe’ (my emphasis). Just as Mary ‘farist with vs as a modir wip hir owne childe’, so too should we with others, in response to their excremental filth. In other words, before the mother there is no shame or disgust – nor even unbearable joy – at the diseased body, only love. The category of the maternal disrupts the circuits of meaning and affects evoked by the abject.

Seeing Christ in the place of a sick man – where in fact a sick man is – is a process of double vision, reversing the linings of inner and outer, overcoding filth with beauty. In contrast, seeing a man who is marred by the excrement of sin and sickness as a mother sees her child is simply being in the presence of a sick man and loving him. The affective ripples and circuits elicited by the incontinent child before the mother running through the Prickynge therefore offer us means of finding more compassionate readings of excrement. The Prickynge’s appended texts articulate this alternative reading of the abject through Mary, whose response to the stinking hearts of men does not overcode filth with purity or transform abjection to jouissance, but remains on the material, mundane level of the condition of being human. Loving like a mother in the Prickynge requires that we see the excremental body and be moved by it, the sick, sinful man and love him.

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IV. Mary and the Reformed Parish
Weaving Vernacular Garlands: Devotion to the Virgin in English, 1525–1537

Stephen Bates

There have been significant changes in the historiography of the English Reformation in recent decades. The teleological narrative of A. G. Dickens characterised changes to lay piety as part of the progress away from saints and superstitious ‘old-fashioned pieties’ toward rational modernity.¹ Dickens assumed this transition was popular. Revisionist scholarship has presented these events as more process than progress; Christopher Haigh, for example, persuasively argued that there was no clear objective in the Tudor reformations.² However, devotional transformations relied on familiar signposts for orientation, not least of all the Bible. Certainly some elements of traditional religion suffered ‘a deep and traumatic cultural hiatus’ as Eamon Duffy has consistently argued, but important continuities survived the changes.³ Duffy’s thesis seems most obviously relevant to the fabric of lay piety, including its texts. An examination of the short-lived genre of English vernacular rosary primers suggests some insights into the processes shaping the first phase of Henrician reform. There was an attempt to reinforce spiritual integrity in lay piety, which represented late medieval concerns as much as those of burgeoning English evangelicalism.

By the fifteenth century the rosary devotion was being fashioned around a foundation legend concerning the Virgin Mary herself. John Mirk recorded a version of it in his Festyuall, fancifully ascribing it to ‘holy wrytte’. A rent-gathering bailiff had the habit of praying the Ave Maria. One day his business caused him to pass through a wood. Aware of this, some thieves planned to rob him. When he saw them approach, the bailiff fell to his knees and began rehearsing his Marian devotions. The thieves witnessed a beautiful maiden appear, ‘so bryyt that all the wood shone therof’ who from time to time took a rose from the bailiff’s mouth and added it to a garland she was weaving. When completed, she placed the chaplet on the bailiff’s head and disappeared. The thieves approached and asked him who the mysterious woman was and he replied that he was only reciting his Aves, whereupon they all realised that she was the Virgin. Then, for her loue, goo thy waye’, said the Master Thief, ‘and praye to her for vs; and so he went his way sauf and sounde by helpe and socoure of our lady’.⁴

The practice of the rosary reached its zenith at the end of the fifteenth century with the rise of confraternities dedicated to the Psalter of Our Lady.⁵ Their establishment turned rosary devotions into an international network of indulgenced prayer, from Scotland to Italy and Portugal to Denmark. These confraternies have been called ‘corporate chantries’ and ‘poor men’s chantries’.⁶ They existed on a notion of shared piety contributing to a common pot of spiritual merits, rather than structured membership.⁷ They promoted religious interiorisation by the laity and the appropriation of monastic devotions, bringing them into a domestic setting. Bridget Heal has reminded us that in this, rosary confraternities were the same as other brotherhoods founded by the clergy.⁸ However, rosary fraternities cost nothing to join, had no required meetings and accepted both men and women; features which largely distinguished them from other brotherhoods.

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¹ Dickens 1989, p. 244.
² Haigh 1993, p. 12.
³ Duffy 2012, p. 6.
Consequently, 100,000 members enrolled within the first seven years of the establishment of the Confraternity of the Psalter of the Glorious Virgin Mary, by the Dominican Alan de Rupe, in Douai around 1470.9 Another Dominican-led rosary fraternity followed, founded at Cologne in 1474, which received the approval of Pope Sixtus IV two years later.10 We have a glimpse of this burgeoning trans-European prayer community in a letter dated 1486. The priest Thomas Betanson wrote to Sir Robert Plumpton including ‘a pauper of the rosary of our Lady of Coylen’, advising that he had ‘registered your name with both my ladys names, as þe paper expresses, & ye be acoupled as brethren & sisters’.11 The Plumptons would have found tremendous reassurance in knowing that they were tapping into a network which ‘acoupled’ them not only with the Dominican friars but also with pious laity. They would have expected to benefit from the prayer lives of thousands of faithful souls ranged across the length and breadth of Christendom.

Religious practices which focussed on lay association and private exercise undoubtedly met an increasing demand for a more subjective spiritual encounter and one that transcended the largely voyeuristic liturgical experience of the Mass. However, the Psalter of Our Lady also carried indulgences. Mirk recorded that ‘pope Vrban and pope Iohan to all beynge in clene lyfe that in thende of the Aue maria saye these wordes Hhesus amen as oft as they say it, they haue granted of pardon lxxxiiii days, and as ofte as thou sayst our ladyes psalter, so oft thou hast of pardon xxxiiiij yere and xxx wekes’.12 Moreover, as Anne Winston-Allen has highlighted, joining a confraternity promised not only such spiritual rewards but temporal benefits including the Virgin’s protection from arson, lightning, thieves and murderers, as well as an increase in the hardships.13 This supports Ronald Finucane’s thesis that increased emphasis by the late medieval Church on Christ and His mother complemented old-style popular devotion to thaumaturgic saints, rather than replacing it.14 However, it also meant that fraternities might gather nominal members who hoped to benefit from prayers while engaging in what Francis Oakley terms ‘arithmetical piety’.15 The tactile nature of beads invited their treatment as amulets; the words of the Ave Maria could be reduced to an apotropaic charm.16 The rising popularity of the rosary highlighted the pastoral problem of religious integrity: were devotees simply going through the motions of counting over their beads, or were they engaged heart and soul in pious, Christian meditation? Such an anxiety was evident, for example, in the writings of those humanists who were concerned with devotional authenticity. To the Coventry friar who affirmed ‘that whoever said the Psalter of the Blessed Virgin every day could never be damned’, Thomas More responded:

while you might easily find a prince who would sometimes pardon even his enemies at his mother’s entreaty, no prince anywhere is foolish enough to promulgate a law which would encourage his own subjects to defy him by promising immunity to every traitor who propitiated his mother with a set form of flattery.17

One potential solution to this problem was the rosary book: abbreviated primers with contemplative prayers to accompany each recitation of the Ave Maria and the periodic Pater nosters which made up the Lady Psalter. The idea was simple, but effective: engage the reader with the narrative of the redemption. While rehearsing the prayers, the devotee was supposed to focus meditatively on a particular aspect of salvation history, from creation to judgement. These primers were available in Latin from 1490, but in

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10 Other confraternities quickly spawned at Lisbon (1478), Schleswig (1481), Ulm (1483) and Frankfurt (1486): Carroll 1987, p. 489.
12 Mirk 1508, fol. 160v.
15 Oakley 1979, p. 118.
1525 Willem Vorsternan of Antwerp produced a vernacular text for the English market. The change in language could be a double-edged sword. Moving away from Latin divested ritual of its ancient and mystical symbolism, transforming (in the words of Anne Winston-Allen) ‘the quality of the spiritual reality that is enacted’. Moreover, Latin was the lingua ecclesiae and therefore prayers in English were conspicuously extra ecclesiam. Latin rosary texts continued to be produced; for example, the Rosarium beate marie included in Francis Regnault’s 1531 Sarum Primer. However, in the home, devotions rendered into the vernacular removed a layer of mediation that pious laity were likely to regard as superfluous. The books gave devotees direction in the place of a priest and empowered them to take responsibility for their own spiritual authenticity.

Vorsternan’s Rosarye of our lady in englysshe with many goodly petycions dyrect to her comprised 55 meditative prayers organised around a schema of 10 Ave Marias followed by a Pater noster. The schema was repeated five times to complete the book. Far from being Mariocentric, the meditations accompanying the Aves were almost exclusively scriptural. The first set focused on the Nativity; the second on Christ’s maturity and ministry; the third recalled His arrest and degradation; the fourth His crucifixion and death; and the last set encompassed His Resurrection and Ascension, Pentecost and the Last Judgement. The Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin were included, however, and each Our Father was essentially a panegyric of the Mother of God:

moost deuoyt mayden and moder of our sauyour doughter of the eternall fader and preelect spouse of the holy goost; the well of grace; the conduyte of mercy, the quene of heuen; the empreasse of the vnyuersall worlde; example of all virtue, the flour of solace, the fruyte of ioye; the lyght of heuen; the porte of paradyse, the sepulchre of our saluacion, exalted aboue the seraphis moost nygh, the trone of the gloryous trynyte.

Each of the Ave prayers in the Vorsternan primer was formulated along the lines of ‘dear mother of Jesus who’, using the Virgin only as a point of literary mediation into her son’s narrative. Even with Mary’s Assumption, the text focused on Christ’s activity in sending down angels from heaven to receive His mother. Vorsternan’s book therefore invited the reader to think on the Son while praying the Ave, and on the Virgin while praying the Pater noster. This seems a deliberate endeavour to situate Marian devotion within a context of latria: that worship which was due only to the persons of the Godhead. Devotees could legitimately offer the Virgin dulia, a form of veneration fitting for creatures, as distinct from their Creator. They had to avoid idolatry (idol latria), however, a specific sin named in the Decalogue. Situating Marian adoration alongside meditations on Christ meant that Mary was never an independent religious focus. As Miri Rubin has suggested, this ‘benign combination’ offered balance to ‘those who worried about the “marianization” of devotional life’. Veneration of Mary in isolation was heterodox and inappropriate.

Vorsternan’s rosary book made innovative use of woodcuts as an aid to meditation. It is not unreasonable to construe this as an attempt to engage unlettered devotees of the Lady Psalter. However, given the contemplative and imaginative context in which these books were used, the images had obvious value to the literate in helping them picture the Biblical scene. The close relationship of text and image offered a multimedia route toward a more intense spiritual experience and clearly drew on the tradition established by illustrated Books of Hours. Paintings of the period, such as Hans Holbein’s 1527 portrait of Lady Mary Guildford, occasionally show the subject holding what is usually assumed to be a Book of Hours, together with a set of rosary beads. The presence of the beads suggests that the text might, in fact, be Vorsternan’s Rosarye of Our Lady in Englysshe. Similarly in Holbein’s drawing of the More

19 Prymer of Salysbury use (1531), fols 140v–142r.
20 The Rosarye of Our Lady in Englysshe (1525), p. 23.
21 Ibid., p. 53.
family, produced in the same year, it is probable that they are preparing to rehearse the Hours of the Virgin together, as Eamon Duffy has suggested.\footnote{Duffy 2006, pp. 56–58.} It is possible, however, that the household was about to engage in corporate rosary meditations; this speculation receives support from the observation that Sir Thomas’ youngest daughter, Cecily Heron, is fingering a set of beads.\footnote{The beads in Holbein’s drawing do not appear in Rowland Lockey’s reproduction of the final painting, which shows Heron counting her fingers.} As we have seen, More clearly had doubts about the integrity of rosary devotion.\footnote{Above, p. 167.} Nevertheless, his willingness to approve of their use in family prayer makes it tempting to see in these images a combination of rosary book and rosary beads that was the height of fashionable piety in the late 1520s.

In 1531, the printer Robert Copland reprinted Vorsterman’s rosary book from London.\footnote{The Rosarye of our Lady in Englysshe with many goodly peticyons dyrect to her (1531).} In the same year, Wynkyn de Worde produced an expanded edition of The Pylgrimage of perfection by the recently deceased William Bonde, a monk from the Birgittine house at Syon Abbey. Bonde’s Pylgrimage was in the tradition of England’s fourteenth-century mystics, a Neoplatonic spiritual progression that took the reader from the active to the contemplative life. De Worde’s addendum was The Rosary of our sauyour Jesu, a series of simple meditations, one for each day of the week.\footnote{Bonde 1531, fols 298r–308r.} Each day’s reflection culminated in a Pater noster, an Ave Maria, and the Creed. De Worde’s Pylgrimage had three, richly illustrated pull-out woodcuts, but the appended Rosary of our sauyour Jesu lacked illustrations. Of greater interest is the peripheral presence of the Virgin in the text, which not only focussed on the details of Christ’s life but directed its prayers at him. Mary was referenced only in the third person, ‘the glorious virgyn thy mother’, and was never pressed upon as a mediator. Whether it was the seven daily Aves of this devotion that rendered it a rosary, or whether the author expected Christ to weave a garland himself, is unclear. What it does suggest is the malleability of the trope and its popularity, such that a devotional treatise ostensibly removed from fashionable Marian veneration had attempted to include it.

In 1533, the Antwerp printer Martyn Emprowers produced another, very different rosary book. The mystik sweet rosary of the faythful soule described itself as ‘garnished rownde aboute, as it were with fresshe fragraunt flowers, according to the truthe of the Gospel’, a description which appears to blend the garland-weaving image of freshly picked roses with the evangelical spirit of both Renaissance humanism and nascent Protestantism.\footnote{The mystik sweet rosary of the faythful soule (1533), sig. A1r.} The Emprowers text incorporated the five wounds of Christ into its schema, beginning each cycle of Aves with an Our Father meditating on one of them. Although the Mystik sweet Rosary claimed to focus on ‘the hole lyfe and passion of our lorde Jesu Cryst’ and ‘certayn placis of the holy scripture’, the Ave meditations promptly led their reader into the extra-Biblical narratives of the birth of the Virgin and her residence in the temple.\footnote{Ibid., sig. A1r.} As with the earlier Vorsterman book, there are five cycles of ten Aves, the first set culminating in the Nativity, the second covering Christ’s childhood and adult ministry, the third focussing on His arrest and the fourth His Crucifixion. Emprowers’ final section recalled Christ’s death, the Harrowing of Hell, His Resurrection and Ascension, and Pentecost; but it concluded with the mystical marriage between the Church and God, and the prophecy of Christ’s second coming. There were no contemplations on the Assumption or Coronation of the Virgin, although the woodcut of Pentecost gave Mary centre stage, and there was an image of her Coronation, unaccompanied by text, on the reverse of the final page.

Emprowers’ text was longer than that of Vorsterman, with each meditation receiving two pages rather just one; illustrations once
again complemented the text. On the frontispiece the objectives of the *Mystik sweet Rosary* were clearly stated: ‘vnto euerie saynge or facte of Cryst, ther is correspondent a fayer picture: that the inwarde mynde might favoure the thinge that the utwarde eye beholde’.\(^{30}\) This affirms the objective of the genre as encouraging integrity among rosary devotees and fostering a genuine spiritual experience for those in prayer. As with the *Rosary of our sauyour Jesu*, the *Mystik sweet Rosary* directed its prayers to Christ, or occasionally God, but never to the Virgin Mary. There was no place for her mediation here and the text consistently referenced her in the third person: that ‘moste swe, pure and beautifull mayde and virgyn Mary thy mother’.\(^{31}\) The woodcuts in the Emprowers text were of a markedly higher quality than Vorsterman’s but they also demonstrated a new capacity for provocation. For example, in his illustration of Christ being tempted in the wilderness, in which the Devil offers a stone to turn into bread, Satan had the guise of an old man. The Devil’s deception was incomplete, however, and he gave himself away by having reptilian feet; nevertheless, he made a controversial attempt to conceal his profanity by holding a set of rosary beads.\(^{32}\) Emprowers may have intended to suggest that beads were capable of rendering the most degenerate sinner into a worthy saint, but given the Devil’s immutable character this seems more likely to be a subtle reproach aimed at spiritual inauthenticity. By contrast, Vorsterman’s imagery of a creature with bat-wings and chicken-legs is far less sophisticated.\(^{33}\)

Vorsterman’s rosary book was given one last outing in 1537, when the London printer John Skot published a new edition. Anne Dillon has suggested that Skot heavily revised his version ‘to reflect the Henrician reforms then taking place, and its title was altered accordingly’.\(^{34}\) While it is true that Skot renamed the book there is little support for Dillon’s assertion. He tidied up some of the English, but he retained the original schema and the direct appeals to the Virgin. In particular, the gushing panegyrics to Mary found in Vorsterman’s *paternosters* remained unaltered.\(^{35}\) Skot did remove the accompanying images, though we can only conjecture as to his motivation for doing so. It may have been an exercise in producing a smaller or more economical edition; it seems unlikely that the cause was religious. The Ten Articles of the previous year had affirmed that it was ‘meet’ that images should stand in the churches though there was silence on their place in domestic literature.\(^{36}\) The Articles had also described appeals to the saints as ‘very laudable’ so long as they sought only intercession and ‘not with that confidence and honour, whiche are onely dewe vnto god’.\(^{37}\) There was nothing here to suggest to Skot that the Vorsterman text compromised government policy and it is only with hindsight that the text’s vulnerabilities to subsequent changes in that policy become apparent. As for the title, *contra* Dillon, *The Rosary with the articles of the lyfe & deth of Iesu Chryst and petitions directe to our lady* retained the only phrase that could possibly have offended Henrician sensibilities: in contrast to the Emprowers text, Skot’s rosary book reverted to prayers to the saints.

The 1536 Articles and the injunctions which followed them later that summer were, in the words of Margaret Aston, ‘a qualified acceptance of church imagery’, but they did denounce Purgatory.\(^{38}\) The focus on ‘laudable ceremonies’ included pilgrimages, images in the round, and ‘abusues’ (an ill-defined term) that had occurred in relation to statues and relics.\(^{39}\) Consequently, there was an emphasis on bishops and preachers instructing the people in legitimate

\(^{30}\) Ibid., sig. A1r.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., sig. A5r.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., sig. C2v.

\(^{33}\) *The Rosarye of Our Lady in Englysshe* (1525), p. 18.

\(^{34}\) Dillon 2003, p. 460 n.

\(^{35}\) *The Rosary with the articles of the lyfe & deth of Iesu Chryst and petitions directe to our lady* (1537), sigs B2r–B2v.

\(^{36}\) *Articles devised by the kynges highnes maiestie* (1536), sig. C4v.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., sig. D1r–v.

\(^{38}\) Aston 1988, p. 223; *Articles devised by the kynges highnes maiestie* (1536), sig. D3r–v.

\(^{39}\) Eire 1986, p. 281.
devotional practices. Texts may have slipped below the radar, but publishers must have considered their rosary books as complementing this agenda, since it had been an existing concern and one which had catalysed the genre. In 1537 the government published *The Institution of a Cristen Man*, known as the 'Bishop's Book', which again laid great store on instruction. It included an exposition of the *Ave Maria*, 'which is not propely a prayer as the Pater noster is' but rather 'an himme, laude, and prayse partly of our lorde & sauiour Jesu Christ for our redemption, and partly of the blessed virgin, for her humble consent gyuen'.

Since rosary books contextualised recitation of *Aves* within a broader framework of petitions, the relevance of this assertion may not have appeared obvious. Nevertheless it represented the disempowerment of the *Ave* as an effective prayer-charm. The Bishop's Book also repeated the statement in the Ten Articles that practices advanced under the name of Purgatory were abuses. The scope of Marian intercession was narrowing rapidly.

There is little doubting that the rosary devotion was undermined by the peculiar reforms being undertaken in England during the 1530s. The demolition of Purgatory denigrated the function of confraternities and the value of prayers to the saints. In applying reformed theology, preachers directed their congregations to pray to the Son rather than the Mother. Marian piety all but went down with the monasteries. In these circumstances, there was no place for the rosary primer and Skot's book represented the end of the genre as legitimate literature. There was, however, something else at work here and it is deeply revealing of the motivations at work during this phase of the Reformation in England. At the end of September 1538, a year after Skot's *Rosary*, Henry and Cromwell sent a set of Royal Injunctions to the Archbishop of Canterbury for execution. At least every three months, parish priests were to have a sermon declaring that the Gospel of Christ resided in the Script-

ture, and exhorting parishioners not to put their trust in 'men's phantasies'. Such proscribed superstitions not only included pilgrimages and offerings to images and relics, but 'saying over a number of beads, not understood or minded on' for which 'ye not only have no promise of reward in Scripture, but contrariwise, great threats and maledictions of God'.

There is an obvious and, one is inclined to think, intentional loop-hole here in the implication that rosary beads that were 'minded on' remained a valid practice.

By contrast, the 1547 Visitation Articles of Edward VI and the Duke of Somerset inquired whether priests had counselled their parishioners 'to pray in a tongue not known than English', presumably the *Ave Maria* was the target here, 'or to put their trust in any prescribed set of prayers, as in saying over a number of beads, or other like'. It was the same year in which the Chantries Acts swept away fraternities. An injunction drafted in the summer of 1549 ordered clergy to refuse communion to any of the laity who persisted in using beads, an approach which redefined the community of the parish to include only the reformed.

It would be inaccurate to say that the rosary book had no future in England after Edward's regime, although Mary and Cardinal Pole did not reintroduce it alongside their printed Primers. Instead it became a tome representative of Elizabethan recusancy. William Carter and John Lyon set up a clandestine Catholic press in London and produced *A breefe directory and playne way to say the rosary of our blessed Lady with meditations for such as are not exercised therein* in 1576. Subsequently convicted of treason, Carter was hung, drawn and quartered in 1584. The Jesuit Henry Garnett produced two editions of his *Societie of the Rosary* in the 1590s. Unlike Carter and Lyon's rosary book, Garnet's text was illustrated; but like Carter, Garnet was subsequently convicted of treason (for his part in the Gunpowder plot) and executed in May 1606.

Commenting on these later texts, Anne Dillon has argued that

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40 *The institution of a Christen man* (1537), fol. 118r–v.
41 Ibid., fols 119v–120r.
42 Swanson 1989, p. 356.
44 Ibid., pp. 106–107.
Rosary devotion by recusants in this period was not a ‘spiritual remnant’ of late medieval piety, but a Jesuit revision. Long before then, it seems, publishers abandoned the genre: the turning point came in 1538 and it is possible that Skot’s text contributed to its demise. The Christocentric focus of the *Rosary of our sauyour Jesu*, and Emprowers’ *Mystik sweet Rosary* was far more acceptable to the critique of both Renaissance humanists and Protestant reformers, while Skot’s primer coincided with the dissolution of shrines. It is even possible that the authorities were concerned that users of rosary books considered them imbribed with apotropaic power and that the primers themselves had become amulets, though there is no direct evidence for this. Almost inevitably, the English authorities considered the vernacular rosary book, which I have argued was intended to promote spiritual authenticity in saying the Lady Psalter, a failed experiment. Traditional Marian piety was irrecoverable as a practice and destabilised theologically by official hostility to Purgatory and the saints.

Mary and the Dead: Intercession for Departed Souls in Counter-Reformation France

Elizabeth Tingle

By 1500, the Virgin Mary had long been the most important saintly intercessor for Christian souls, living, dying, and departed. The prayers and anthems of the *Ave*, *Salve Regina*, and *Stabat Mater*, implored her aid in this life and the next. The depiction of Mary of Mercy with souls protected by her mantle was widespread in paintings and murals throughout Europe and the rosary, the material presencing of the Virgin, was ubiquitous. But her position came under attack in the early sixteenth century. Protestant Reformers denied Mary’s intercessory role in salvation and redefined the geography of the afterlife, repudiating Purgatory. For reformers, Christ alone could intercede for souls, while faith not works and God’s grace alone determined whether an individual would spend eternity in heaven or hell. Marian devotions were eliminated from Protestant liturgies and her spiritual capital diminished. But the resurgent Catholic reform movement from the mid-sixteenth century restored Mary to her position as pre-eminent intercessor, for the living and the dead. It is the Virgin’s relationship to the latter group, departed souls, which is the subject of this essay.

Mary’s close relationship to the souls in Purgatory has been a subject of some debate. Historians of the Counter Reformation have argued that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were marked by changes in religious practice, from an emphasis on collective actions

1 See for example Oakes 2008; Boss 2000.
to individual devotions. Also, there was a change in attitudes to
dying, from an emphasis on the deathbed as the fundamental site
of salvation to a belief in the primacy of lifetime actions in soteri-
ology. While this summary simplifies the sophistication of these
models, their influence on historians’ understanding of the after-
life and the management of souls there, is important. In this essay,
it will be argued that Mary’s pre-eminence as intercessor was main-
etained in early modern Catholicism because she catered for depart-
ed souls as well as the living, and because devotions to the Virgin
accommodated collective as well as personal religiosity. The role of
Mary in beliefs and customs related to Purgatory – both communal
and individual – will be examined through a study of three post-
mortem practices in France across the late sixteenth and seven-
teenth centuries: the foundation of post-mortem masses, confrat-
ternity membership, and the acquisition and use of indulgences.

*The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Counter
Reformation in Europe: Change and Continuity
in Marian Devotions*

The relationship of the Virgin Mary to the souls of the departed was
fundamentally shaped by the changes that occurred in Catholicism
in the century after Luther, an understanding of which is vital to
explaining changes in practice. Of primal importance was the rein-
forcement of the cult of Mary at the Council of Trent in the mid-
sixteenth century, against Protestant criticism. In Session 4 in
1546, Scriptures and the unwritten traditions of the Church were
accorded equal validity as sources of truth, thus granting authority
to the life stories and miracles surrounding the figure of Mary.
Mary was held exempt in the decree concerning original sin and
her cult was validated by implication in the 25th session of 1563,
which upheld the invocation and veneration of saints.\(^2\) By these
means, the Virgin’s propitiatory role for the dead as well as the living

was confirmed. After, in the Tridentine Profession of Faith promul-
gated by Pius IV in 1564, Mary and departed souls were specifical-
ly linked in the article which defined Purgatory, intercession, saints,
images, and indulgences, in which the Virgin played a pre-eminent
role.\(^3\)

Across the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries throughout
Europe, the cult of the Virgin evolved in four broad ways, all of
which influenced the perception and treatment of the souls in
Purgatory. Firstly, in many places, Mary displaced other saints from
the hierarchy of intercession, while secondly, her invocations became
increasingly varied. Part of this displacement occurred because of
Mary’s inherent authority as mother of God, but it also came about
because the Church increasingly controlled saint making and saintly
reputations. While the attraction of some local saints waned, the
void was filled by Mary. Philip Hoffman shows that in the diocese
of Lyon in the seventeenth century, new altars erected in parish
churches sometimes displaced old cults. For example, in the north-
east of the Lyonnais, the most popular patron of new altars and
chapels was Mary through the rosary while altars to Saints Anthony,
Blaise, Sebastian and Catherine, tended to be abandoned or to dis-
appear.\(^4\) In Spain, in village chapels in Cuenca diocese, internation-
ally or regionally known devotions replaced more local ones; of the
84 communities recorded in a visitation of 1584, one-third of the
saintly patrons venerated at this time had been dropped by 1654.\(^5\)
Again, the Virgin frequently gained this ground. Further, when
shrines were created or refurbished, local invocations of Mary
dominated, such as the famous examples of Our Lady at Altötting
in Bavaria and Our Lady at Scherpenheuvel in Brabant. As David
Gentilcore writes, ‘like no other saint, Mary was universal ... Yet
at the same time she was continually being ‘localised’, each appari-
tion and image having its own origin and assuming its own reality.’\(^6\)

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\(^2\) See Haskins 2008, p. 35.

\(^3\) Translation of the Tridentine Profession of Faith in O’Malley 2013, pp. 283–285.


\(^6\) Gentilcore 1999, p. 193.
Catholic apologists began to move away from emphasising Mary's shared flesh with her son, hitherto stressed as the mystical link which enabled her to participate actively in Christ's life and work ... and of his glorified body received in the host. Instead, Catholic writers increasingly preferred to stress the Virgin's identity as Christ's spiritual mother, united to him much more closely by shared will and affection than by flesh, and portrayed her as silent, distant and obedient.  

Sara Nalle observes for the diocese of Cuenca that in villages which placed enormous emphasis on Mary as the protector of humankind, the Church promoted cults that stressed Mary's suffering for the loss of her son in order to underline that redemption came through Christ's sacrifice. The impact of these theological shifts, which cast Mary's experiences entirely in the light of Christ, upon 'popular' perceptions of the Virgin are more difficult to ascertain. Certainly, they refocused intercessory power on Christ and the Host, whose importance increased enormously in the Counter Reformation. But the presence of Mary made the eucharist more efficacious, so she remained an essential protector of departed souls.  

Fourthly, Mary was used as a weapon in the battle for orthodoxy, against Protestants and also against popular heterodoxy in Catholic communities. A major weapon in the Church's campaign to reaffirm traditional Catholic beliefs and practices, Mary was accorded a maternally aggressive role. Her intercession, it was believed, caused the Venetian fleet to win the battle of Lepanto against the Muslim Ottomans in 1571, prompted by the rosaries recited that day. At the highest political levels, Mary was the patroness and protector of the Austrian Hapsburgs in their wars against Protestants and her intercession was held responsible for the Imperial victory at White Mountain in 1620. In 1638, Louis XIII dedicated the kingdom of France to the Virgin Mary, and John IV of Portugal followed suit in 1646, pledging his realm to the

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10 See Ellington 2000, p. 155 onwards.  
11 Ibid., pp. 172–175.  
Virgin of the Immaculate Conception. Mary’s cult ‘provided … an antidote to Protestantism, an opportunity to strengthen Catholic identity. Mary was … a key symbol of the universal post-Tridentine church’. In Catholic regions, such as Spain, invocations of Mary as Mater dolorosa, Consolation, Immaculate Conception and the Incarnation, replaced medieval depictions of Mary in attractive natural settings within the localities, tainted with paganism. The new Marian devotions expressed a standardised, sober and orthodox piety adapted to Tridentine Christology with less emphasis on her curative and consoling powers. Her continuing promotion as intercessor for the departed was part of this ‘campaign’.

The result of these changes is that Marian devotions evolved across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in their relationship with departed souls. It has been argued by historians such as John Bossy that piety in the Counter Reformation moved away from collective to individual reflection; John McManners has also observed that good living, charity, and pious works, rather than dying a good death, were increasingly stressed in soteriology by the end of the seventeenth century, both authors downplaying the role of post-mortem saintly intercession. Further, Mary as intercessor for the souls in Purgatory was simultaneously muted as the Holy Sacrament grew even more important across the period. Jean Delumeau’s study of artistic depictions of the mantle of Mary, shielding the souls in Purgatory, a common image in Italy, France, and Germany before the sixteenth century, shows that they became rare after 1600, with the exception of churches in Lorraine and a few examples among religious orders in Spain. But recent work on Purgatory and post-mortem intercession does not support the view of declining saintly post-mortem intercession. From an examination of religious life in France, it is clear that from the later sixteenth century, the role of Mary both in lifetime and post-mortem devotions grew greatly and simultaneously. Her significance grew alongside Christological devotions but while the Mass remained the most efficacious means of aiding souls living and dead, it is argued here that the most important intercessor and mediator for souls was Mary. Even the Mass itself became more efficacious when Mary pleaded for its patrons. Further, the means of accessing that intercession changed over time, from private to more clerically-controlled forms. As exemplars of this development, three French case studies of post-mortem devotional forms will be discussed, across the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The Virgin Mary and Intercession for Departed Souls in Purgatory

Writers and preachers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were clear that the Virgin played a vital role for departed souls. Robert Bellarmine wrote a chapter in his ‘Art of Dying Well’ on the patronage of the Virgin in the hour of our death. Alexis de Salo in his handbook on purgatory of 1621 wrote that the best prayers for souls were ‘The pater noster … seven psalms … and the rosary of the dead’.

For the Jesuit Etienne Binet, ‘a soul who is perfectly devoted to the very holy mother of God, will not go to Purgatory or certainly will not remain there for long’. Similarly, the Jesuit Marc de Bonners wrote that ‘the Saviour accorded to his Holy Mother three mercies in favour of a departed soul who had been faithful to her in life, sight, that he would no longer see...’

As further examples, ‘The Bavarian Wittelsbach dynasty embraced new shrines and revived old ones. The favourite Bavarian Mary shrine at Altötting was revived and Mary was entitled patrona Bavariae ... Threatened by invasion in 1655, King Jan II Casimir (1609–1672) dedicated Poland-Lithuania to Mary as Our Lady of Grace’. Rubin 2009, p. 403.


15 As further examples, ‘The Bavarian Wittelsbach dynasty embraced new shrines and revived old ones. The favourite Bavarian Mary shrine at Altötting was revived and Mary was entitled patrona Bavariae ... Threatened by invasion in 1655, King Jan II Casimir (1609–1672) dedicated Poland-Lithuania to Mary as Our Lady of Grace’. Rubin 2009, p. 403.
19 Bellarmine 1620.
20 De Salo 1621, p. 235.
21 Binet 1635, p. 462.
devils, hearing, that he would no longer hear the reproach of his past lives and touch, that he would escape from the ice in which he had been cast’. Examination of religious practice in Counter-Reformation France shows that the views of such writers and preachers were widely shared by Catholics of all social groups. In the foundation of anniversaries and masses, confraternity membership and the acquisition of indulgences, we can see that the role of Mary declined in the mid-sixteenth century then strengthened and augmented after 1580. At the same time, dedication to the Virgin took on a more sacramental and individual flavour, in post-mortem intercessions and lifetime devotions.

One of the commonest forms of post-mortem intercession across the late Middle Ages and Counter-Reformation centuries was the foundation of perpetual chantry and anniversaries masses as supplications for the souls of individual donors. Across the period 1500–1700, a notable percentage of donors tied their foundations to the celebration of a particular cult. This was achieved in three main ways: requests for masses on a particular feast day, at a specified altar, or with a specific office, or a combination of these three. In a case study of Brittany in western France, in the city of Nantes in the east and the rural diocese of Saint-Pol-de-Léon in the west of the province, the least frequent of these intercessory forms was the choice of office. Most founders simply wanted low or high masses, usually requiems or the office of the day. In Nantes, 117 out of 730 foundations studied across this period – 16 per cent – stipulated specific offices. The largest single favourite was that of Notre Dame, followed closely by those of the Holy Sacrament and the Holy Spirit. If all Christological offices – Passion, Holy Cross, Holy Name of Jesus, Five Wounds – are combined, almost 50 per cent of offices requested were for Christ’s cults and if all the different invocations of Mary are totalled, these numbered around 30 per cent. Offices of 25 other saints were requested, most in only one foundation. In Saint-Pol, specific offices were rarely requested: only 35 were founded. The Holy Sacrament was again the most popular individual request, while total Christological masses amounted to almost two-thirds of the total. Five masses of Notre Dame were requested as were offices of eight different saints. In comparison, in neighbouring Anjou in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, around 39 per cent of anniversaries and annual masses were founded for a particular saint’s day. The feast chosen was most frequently that of the patron of the founder or the founder’s parents, followed by days dedicated to the Virgin (Marian feasts and Saturdays), then days consecrated to Christ.

Liturgy extended beyond offices of the mass in this period and an example of the importance of Marian intercession for departed souls occurs with the foundation of sung Salves in parish and collegiate churches in the seventeenth century. Increased popularity of Marian and Holy Sacrament cults led to investment in their liturgies at parish and collegiate church level, with the sponsorship of processions and sung litanies in addition to and sometimes instead of, masses. In some communities we see consciously-targeted campaigns to encourage post-mortem foundations to augment the quantity and quality of musical liturgy to honour the Virgin. There were medieval precedents for this, with Lady chapels and polyphony in cathedrals and larger churches. But in the Counter Reformation, the musical honouring of the Virgin spread down into local churches. Between 1647 and 1680 in the parish church of St Patern in the suburbs of Vannes, different donors founded litanies to the Virgin for the first, third and fourth Wednesdays of each month, the third and fourth Tuesdays of each month and the

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22 De Bonniers 1640, p. 81.
23 For details, see Tingle 2012, chapter 5. The results are based on statistical analysis of post-mortem foundation documents in archival series G and H in the Archives Départementales de la Loire-Atlantique (ADLA) and Finistère (ADF).
24 Tingle 2012, p. 147.
26 The worship of confraternities offered occasions for a heightened musical experience in the singing of psalms, hymns and laude, all of which were primarily Marian. See for example, Rubin 2009, p. 406.
Nantes, in the sixteenth century, the apostles and Latin saints such as Cyr and Julitte, Eustace, Maurice, Gilles and Claude occur. In the seventeenth century, Saints Anne and Joseph stand out, linked with the growth in popularity of the Holy Family. In the sixteenth century, 53 per cent of foundations were tied to specific altars although in Saint-Pol diocese, only 11 per cent. These were most commonly low, weekly masses, because anniversaries usually took place at the high altar – and there was a general trend over time for masses of all sorts to be said there, a result of changes in worship in the Counter Reformation. In Nantes, there are references to 95 separate side altars in the foundation documents studied. The most popular altar in the city across the period as a whole was that of Notre Dame in the Carmelite church, which received 34 foundations, three-quarters of these after 1611. The most important change over time was a reduction in the number of saints patronised, to the benefit of Mary. For example, in the first half of the sixteenth century, in Saint-Saturnin parish church in Nantes the most frequently patronised altar was that of Notre-Dame-de-la-Cité, which attracted 14 foundations 1500–1560, but foundations were also made for the altars of Saints Sebastian, Anthony, James, Matthew, Fiacre, Adrian, Mary Magdelaine, and Anne. In the seventeenth century, foundations in Saint-Saturnin were predominantly made for the high altar and to that of Notre-Dame-de-Pitié. In the parish church of Sainte-Croix a similar pattern emerges. In the first half of the sixteenth century, in Saint-Saturnin parish church in Nantes the most frequently patronised altar was that of Notre-Dame-de-la-Cité, which attracted 14 foundations 1500–1560, but foundations were also made for the altars of Saints Sebastian, Anthony, James, Matthew, Fiacre, Adrian, Mary Magdelaine, and Anne. In the seventeenth century, foundations in Saint-Saturnin were predominantly made for the high altar and for Notre-Dame-de-la-Cité. In the parish church of Sainte-Croix a similar pattern emerges. In the first half of the sixteenth century, Notre-Dame-de-la-Consolation received 12 foundations and there were also requests for the altars of the Trinity, Saints Gacien, John the Baptist, Anne, Mary Magdelaine, and Barbara. In the seventeenth century, there was again a move to the high altar and to that of Notre-Dame-de-Pitié. There was a concentration of intercessory power; after Christ this lay in the hands of the Virgin.
Further, in the seventeenth century, religious houses became more popular as sites of post-mortem foundations than parish churches, at least in Nantes. This was because of the popularity of their confraternities and their altars, many of which were again Marian. After the Carmelite altar of Notre Dame, next in popularity was the high altar of Notre Dame collegiate church. The Dominican church also had two popular Marian altars, Notre-Dame-de-Pitié and the Rosary altar, while Notre Dame was also a popular altar in the Franciscan and the Minim churches. In Saint-Pol diocese, similar trends appear. The Cathedral high altar remained the most frequently requested altar across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, reflecting the importance of clergy as founders and of the dominance of obits in perpetual intercession in this diocese. Otherwise, the same pattern of use of a wide variety of sixteenth-century altars and the reduction to fewer, principally Marian altars, in the seventeenth century, is clear: the Cathedral's Rosary altar and the Notre Dame altar of the Carmelites of Saint-Pol stand out. After 1650, no specified altars appear in Léon foundation documents, perhaps indicating a 'normative' use of either Marian or high altars for intercessory services.\footnote{ADLA G 463. Sainte-Croix de Nantes. Fondations.}

If we consider, then, changes in favoured intercessors over time, the first observation is the increase in importance in Christological cults, continuing from the late Middle Ages. In the example of Nantes, in the early sixteenth century one-third of special devotions detailed in foundations were for Christological cults, particularly the Passion and the Holy Sacrament. Devotion to Christ rose to more than 40 per cent of special devotions between 1550 and 1600, coinciding with the struggles against Protestantism in France. This overlapped with the introduction of new devotions in the city, a result of Tridentine influences, such as the oratoire.\footnote{See Dompnier 1981, pp. 5–31.} In seventeenth-century Nantes, Christological cults fell slightly as a proportion of foundations, to around 30 per cent of special devotions. They remained roughly at this level across the century. Parallel to the rise in sacramental devotions was the rise in importance of Marian cults, at the expense of all other saints. In Nantes, the Virgin even overtook the Holy Sacrament as the most important object of foundations. For example, in 1637 the brothers Pierre and Jean Coupperie, priest and royal judge respectively, founded seven annual masses to celebrate the seven feasts of the Virgin, to be said at the altar of Notre-Dame-de-la-Consolation in Sainte-Croix, for their late father and Jean's late wife. While the mass was the means by which salvation was achieved, living and dead souls were strengthened in their search for grace by Mary.\footnote{Ibid., p. 149.}

One of the central reasons for the shift in location and dedications of post-mortem masses was the changing setting and nature of confraternity membership. Marian confraternities were central to developing beliefs and practices around intercession for departed souls across the Counter Reformation. For the Middle Ages, historians have stressed the role of confraternities of all types and dedications in burial provision and perpetual intercession for dead members. Jacques Chiffoleau, in his work on Avignon, comments that their essential function was funerary, with devotional and charitable functions having secondary importance.\footnote{Chiffoleau 1980, p. 267.} The statutes of medieval confraternities specify in detail the obligations which members owed to deceased brothers and sisters. They organised funeral processions and masses with mortuary sheets, charitable doles and other works, lights and prayers, and perpetual intercessions, to enforce living members' solidarity between themselves and with the dead. Many guilds accepted the registration of members already deceased. In sum, to use Bossy's words, 'the fraternity practiced the rituals of togetherness in this world and procured the salvation of its members in the next'.\footnote{Bossy 1977, p. 121.}

A hallmark of the Catholic and Counter Reformations was the creation of new confraternities. Some historians have seen these
new groups as both having a different spirit and flavour to those of the medieval guilds and serving as a means by which innovative devotions and mentalities were spread, traditional confraternities being replaced by confraternities with solely religious aims, which sought to reform the spiritual lives not only of their members but also of the whole community.\textsuperscript{39} In his work on Jesuit Marian sodalities (religious guilds), Louis Châtellier argues that whereas medieval confraternities had been concerned with the salvation of their members, the new groups were intended to transform Christian society in its entirety. Members were expected to strive for personal holiness and to spread the Word, to regulate their lives, undertake spiritual exercises, have an intensely personal bond with the Virgin and publicly demonstrate their faith.\textsuperscript{40} It is argued by some historians that the new movements which replaced older confraternities in many communities saw reduced communal and mortuary functions. For example, Bruno Restif argues that rather than a concern with intercession, the new groups were devotional fraternities where multiple exercises of collective piety were practised and individual pious behaviour was formed and encouraged.\textsuperscript{41} Their hallmarks were sombre exercises of piety, with masses and sermons instead of feasts. They had chapels inside the parish church; their services were subordinate to those of the parish and their spiritual director was usually the parish priest.\textsuperscript{42} In this model, Marian piety and relations with the dead, diminished.

There was certainly a tremendous growth in new-style confraternities across all regions of France, especially Holy Sacrament and Rosary dedications. For example, Hoffman shows that in the Lyonnais, old parish guilds such as Holy Spirit fraternities declined, displaced by Holy Sacrament and rosary confraternities. The new confraternities had not existed in 1610, but by the mid-eighteenth century there were 42 holy sacrament and 28 rosary confraternity

\textsuperscript{39} Heal 2007, p. 251.
\textsuperscript{40} Châtellier 1993 in Heal 2007, p. 161.
\textsuperscript{41} Restif 2006, pp. 179–180.
\textsuperscript{42} Hoffman 1984, pp. 110–111.
The continued success of confraternities came in large part from their insistence on the solidarity between living members, and between the quick and the dead. Indeed, confraternities and their sponsoring churches and religious orders continued to attract members by offering distinctive cycles of post-mortem masses for the dead.

A third activity of post-mortem intercession, linked closely to confraternity membership, was the acquisition of indulgences to shorten a soul’s sojourn in Purgatory. Based on the theology of the treasury of merits of Christ and the saints, an indulgence is a remission of the temporal penance due for a sin already forgiven. Indulgences could be obtained for oneself or for others, alive or dead. After a decline in popularity following Protestantism’s searing criticisms in the mid-sixteenth century, indulgences again became popular and widespread in France after 1600 and particularly following Pope Gregory XIII’s large scale issuing of pardons. Later in the seventeenth century, as the foundation of perpetual masses waned in France, indulgences actually increased in popularity. The main sites of indulgence acquisition had a strongly Marian context, confraternities, privileged altars, and shrines.

Confraternities worked hard to provide indulgences for their members. In many confraternities, such as that founded in the parish church of Notre Dame de Creon in the diocese of Bordeaux under the invocation of Mary, plenary indulgences could be obtained for the dead; the Jesuit Marc de Bonnyers recommended a cycle where the large beads could be used for an Ave or a Pater Noster and the small beads, to pray ‘Pie Jesus, sweet Jesus, give them eternal rest’ or Requiescant in pace, amen’. If a person did not have enough time to say a whole rosary, then a ‘dizaine’ would be sufficient. Confraternity membership continued to be a guar-

51 ADM G 1143. Arradon. Fondations.
52 De Bonnyers 1640, p. 83.
54 Johnson 2009, p. 192.
Conclusions

The position of Mary in the economy of post-mortem intercession was enormous. Mary and souls were inextricably linked. The Virgin continued to play a vital role in intercession for the dead in the Counter Reformation, through collective and individual devotions. Michel Vovelle’s work on the iconography of retables in Provençal churches in France, especially those of Rosary confraternities, many of which depict Mary with the souls in purgatory, has led him to conclude that the seventeenth century was dominated by ‘Mariolatry… for her maternal presence came to have a more prominent place than reminders of the Passion’, at least in some communities. 61 The work of Froeschlé-Chopard on Marian imagery in church art and cheap print, particularly in confraternity pamphlets, has given a flavor of the extent of such devotions in southern and eastern France. 62 But Mary in parish art is something which merits wider investigation, within Catholic Europe and also comparatively, in regions where Lutheranism came to predominate.

It could be argued that the importance of Marian devotions in post-mortem intercession simply reflects general trends in the wider church, which it certainly does. But it did more than reflect, indeed it contributed greatly, to that change. The influence of popular post-mortem practices on the material and physical economy of the counter-reformation Church was immense, whether it was the foundation of liturgy and para-liturgical rituals, the attraction of members to confraternities, and the huge volume of indulgence transactions. Thus the interests of departed souls promoted increased Marian devotions, they were not merely a reflection of them. The Virgin remained the intercessor par excellence of the spiritual as well as the material world.

In Catholic Europe, therefore, Mary retained and augmented her role as protectress of the living and the dead. When, in his Catechism of 1689, the Sieur Mesnard asked ‘How should we honour

57 ADM G 1061.
59 Officium Beatae Mariae Virginis (1640).
60 Un Père Capuchin de Saint-Quentin (1660).
61 Vovelle 1983, pp. 311–312.
The Marian Feasts Across the Lutheran Reformation in Denmark: Continuity and Change

Nils Holger Petersen

Introduction

It is well known that although the attitudes of the reformers, including Martin Luther, toward saints and especially toward the Virgin Mary were not negative, they radically transformed traditional Marian theology by rejecting traditional intercessory roles. Around the time of the breakthrough of Luther’s Reformation theology, he publicly criticised the abundance of Marian cults and indulgences for participating in them. However, a couple years later, in his *Sermon von der bereytung zum sterben* (Sermon on Preparing to Die, 1519) Mary and the saints are positively mentioned more than once in the course of Luther’s discussion of how the dying should find comfort. Luther’s main point in this devotional and instructional text is to revise the late medieval focus (for instance in books of the *ars moriendi*) on death, sin, and hell. During one’s life one needs to focus on death and one’s sins, Luther maintains, but as death comes near, the important thing is to cling to the image of Christ who died for the sinner, and also for the dying, this is kept in mind not least through the pledge received in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. However, within this Christ-centred preaching, Luther also mentions God’s mother and the saints in relation to Christ. Thus, toward the end of the sermon when he exhorts the

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63 Mesnard 1689, p. 77.
64 Ibid., pp. 485–486.

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1 Rubin 2009, pp. 368–369.
2 Cf. also Reins 2007, pp. 47–82.
reader to remember that everything depends not on himself but on God and thus to give God honour, he continues: 'For this, he must implore all the holy angels, especially his [own] angels, the Mother of God, all apostles and beloved saints ...'³ At an earlier point in the same sermon, Luther also uses Mary’s humble and faithful attitude from Luke’s narrative of the Annunciation as a model when exhorting the reader to honour the sacraments:

The honour is that I believe that what the sacraments mean and all God says and shows in them is true and will happen to me; that one speaks with Mary, the Mother of God, in a firm faith: let it be with me according to your words and signs.⁴

Also later, for instance in a sermon held in 1529, while criticising what he considered idolatrous cults of Mary, Luther did not turn this against the figure of Mary herself:

Mary, the beloved holy Virgin and Mother of God has also become the most outrageous idol, she has also had to be merciful toward us and help us in the deepest distress.⁵

Questions concerning Protestant reformers’ attitudes to saints and to the Virgin Mary have been dealt with by a number of scholars, not least concerning Luther and Lutheran reformers. In a recent monograph, Reforming Mary: Changing Images of the Virgin Mary in Lutheran Sermons of the Sixteenth Century, Beth Kreitzer discusses how Lutheran sermons by Luther and Lutheran clergymen from the period between 1520 and 1580 deal with the figure of the Virgin Mary. Kreitzer attempts to consult every printed Lutheran sermon collection published during the mentioned period, but also underlines that there will ‘certainly be extant texts that have been missed’.⁶ Kreitzer focuses – reasonably enough – on German and Latin sermon collections and while this gives her occasion to include one Danish theologian among her sources, Niels Hemmingsen’s collection of German sermons, his German postil (Wittenberg 1571), her account does not include postils in the Scandinavian languages. Niels Hemmingsen (1513–1600) may also not be the most typical representative of – at least early – Danish Lutheran theology; he was in particular, as Kreitzer also mentions, influenced by Melanchthon which eventually caused him problems in his office as professor of theology (since 1547) and vice-chancellor of the university in Copenhagen.⁷

In this article I shall primarily look at a sermon collection of model sermons, written in Danish by one of the leading Danish reformers, Hans Tausen (1494–1561) with respect to the question of the place of Mary and Marian Feasts in the Danish liturgical year as this was structured and understood in the early era of the Danish church after its Lutheran Reformation in 1536. Tausen belonged to the early generation of Danish theologians who studied in Wittenberg and brought home to Denmark their impressions from Luther and the Lutheran milieu of the 1520s, from the time Luther came back to Wittenberg after his Wartburg exile. Tausen was among the major influential theologians in establishing the Danish Reformation. He appeared as an evangelical preacher supported by King Frederik I already in the 1520s; he was also one of the men behind the composition of the Church Ordinance [Kirkeordinansen], ending his life as superintendent in Ribe.⁸

In a general study of the reformers and saints, Carol Piper Hemming summarises Luther’s attitude in the following way, ‘a shift oc-

³ My translation (as always in this article when nothing else is stated). Original German text in Luther 2003a, p. 696: Darzu soll er alle heyligen Engell, bßonder seynen Engell, die Mutter gottis, Alle Aposteln unnd leben heyligen anruffen ...

⁴ German text in Luther 2003a, p. 686: Die eehre ist, das ich glaub, es sey war und gescheck mir, was die sacrament bedeuten, und alles, was gott darynn sagt und anzeigt, das man mit Marien, der mutter gottis, yn festem glauben sprech: Mir gescheck nach deynen worten und zeychen.

⁵ German text in Luther 2005, p. 616: Maria die liebe Heilige Jungfrau und Mutter Gottes ist auch die schendlichste Abgoettin worden, die hat uns auch sollen gnedig sein und in hochsten noeten auhellfen. Cf. Luther’s 1521 treatise on the Magnificat, Luther 2003b, and see further below.


curred in the sixteenth century which demoted the Queen of Heaven to Humble Handmaid’, however, pointing out also that whereas Luther in his exposition of the Magnificat does not dismiss the title Queen of Heaven out of hand, it is perhaps of greater significance that his lengthiest section in this work deals with Mary’s humility.\(^9\)

Marian Feasts, to the extent they were based on biblical narrative, were preserved in the calendar of Luther’s Wittenberg and a number of sermons preached by Luther himself on such days have been preserved just as he (in his Deutsche Messe 1525/26) makes it clear that the Magnificat is to be sung every afternoon in all churches.\(^{10}\) Luther’s attitudes were, of course, of immediate significance for the Lutheran churches in Northern Europe generally speaking, and certainly so in Denmark. Thus some of what I will discuss in this article will not be surprising to readers familiar with Luther and the Lutheran Reformation. The point, however, is not so much to depict the historical picture in itself, but rather to examine the way this Lutheran thinking was appropriated in a local Danish context. Owing to the special political context in which the staunchly Lutheran Danish Reformation took place, what is exemplified here is not only a theologically but also politically normative attempt to revise a deeply ingrained cultural memory. This attempt, as I shall argue, was caught up in a difficult, almost impossible, balance in its Marian theology between two ideological extremes.

The Danish Lutheran Reformation may be described as a top-down reformation, since it was imposed in 1536 by King Christian III after he had won the civil war which followed upon the death of his father King Frederik I in 1533. However, it may also to some extent be described as a bottom-up reformation since during the preceding decade, during the 1520s, Evangelical Lutheran preachers had begun to appear. These were strangely protected by King Frederik, although he officially was obliged (by his Council and through his coronation charter) to protect the Church in Denmark as a part of the Roman Church. Indeed, he did not take away their privileges, neither the spiritual nor the political. However, he accepted and instituted the right of the mentioned Evangelical preachers to preach, as long as they preached ‘the true Gospel’, however difficult it would have been at the time to define such a notion. By 1526, however, King Frederik actually committed a \textit{de facto} break with Rome by deciding that the Danish Archbishop, the Archbishop of Lund, then part of the Danish realm, no longer needed to receive the pallium from the Pope. In other words, he nationalized the Church, but still maintained the very same episcopal institutional framework and the prerogatives and privileges of the clergy. It was only after his death that things could change more radically, or more consistently, as they would undoubtedly have done regardless of who would have won the civil war of the mid 1530s which basically was a war between the nobility and the peasants, but mixed in with various alliances with foreign princes.\(^{11}\)

I shall go no further into the complex historical events just prior to the Danish Reformation except to mention the printing of evangelical pamphlets and books in Denmark. These texts reveal how masses were held based on the new evangelical teaching from the late 1520s onwards. The so-called \textit{Malmø-book} printed in 1530, for example, reflects contemporary masses in the then Danish Malmø, very close to Lund, the seat of the Archbishop (both cities have been part of Sweden since the mid-seventeenth century).\(^{12}\)

The official new Danish liturgical order was established through the church law of King Christian III, the so-called Church Ordi-
nance, Kirkeordinaansen or Den rette Ordinantz. After a process of a few years, the Ordinance was finalised, first in Latin in 1537 then in Danish and officially instituted in 1539. For the reorganisation of the church in Denmark, the king had assembled church men in Denmark, but he also wanted a major figure from Luther’s circles to oversee the work. Luther was – unsurprisingly – not available to come to Denmark, neither was Philipp Melanchton, despite the king’s initial hopes. However, Luther’s colleague and friend, the Lutheran reformer, pastor and professor at the University of Wittenberg, Johannes Bugenhagen came to Denmark in 1537. He helped build up the new Lutheran Danish church, crowned the king and queen, and ordained the new ‘bishops’ which were – at this early point of the Danish Lutheran church – called ‘superintendents’ to distinguish them from the former bishops. The previously mentioned Church Ordinance [Den Danske Kirkeordinans] was the outcome of Bugenhagen’s stay in Copenhagen. After several drafts, the first of which was read and approved by Luther even before Bugenhagen had arrived in Denmark, the Ordinance regulated church affairs of all kinds giving instructions about liturgy and holidays, as well as about church organisation and life more generally. The final Danish version of 1539 was printed in 1542 and remained officially in force as the Church Law of Denmark and Norway until 1683.

In 1569, an official Danish Lutheran hymnal was published. It was not the first Lutheran hymnal in Danish; the printed hymnal Malmö-Psalmebogen has been preserved from 1533. Another important hymnal is Hans Tausen’s Hymnal, originally printed in 1544, but only preserved in its second edition from 1553, to which I shall return later. However, the most important was the official hymnal of 1569, Hans Thomisson’s Hymnal, designed specifically to fit the Church Ordinance of 1537/39 together with a new Gradual, The Gradual of Niels Jespersson, which – after a delay of a few years – came out in 1573, containing the music for all Sundays and holidays in the church year in accordance with the mass regulations of the Church Ordinance. Unsurprisingly, the tone of these publications was quite polemical against the Roman Church. I shall limit myself here to quote from the foreword of Niels Jespersson’s Gradual:

And we must confess that the previous song of the old Christian Church in many ways and for a long time remained in the blinded Papacy with all kinds of false and ungodly doctrines and ideas, with invocations of saints and other idolatry. In addition, it was abused in the church to the great anger of God, upsetting many Christians in their faith for the sake of their salvation. Still God through his grace has awakened other God-fearing and righteous teachers to bring together and read out these good and Christian songs and poems which can be used helpfully and to the honour of God in the Christian assembly to open the hearts of those who read or sing them as a true confession to God’s and Jesus Christ’s salvific deeds and to bring other godly and holy emotions.

The three Marian Feast Days which were preserved (also) in the Danish calendar were: the Purification or Candlemass on 2 February, the Annunciation on 25 March, and the Visitation on 2 July. Other medieval and late medieval Marian Feasts were not preserved, as they lacked a directly foundational biblical narrative.

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These three feasts, however, are documented in all relevant Lutheran liturgical books around the time of the Reformation. The medieval Marian liturgy, also in Denmark, of course, had been much broader with many more feasts, especially in the Late Middle Ages, as is well known and is discussed in Anne Mette Hansen’s essay in this volume. In Denmark, printed missals and breviaries, mainly from the early sixteenth century, document this, among these prominently the Missale Lundense (1514) and the Breviarium Lundense (1517). Also, Marian offices would be sung outside of the specific Marian feasts, for instance Marian masses on Saturdays, often held in special Marian chapels. In Lund, the importance of Marian songs is attested to by the preserved, albeit fragmented Liber scola virginis bound together of manuscript pages from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries containing Marian songs, probably used in connection with a particular choir of singers endowed for Marian liturgy in the Lund Cathedral. Also the huge donation which one of the last archbishops in Lund, Birger Gunnerson instituted in 1518 (for an eternal Marian liturgy at his grave in the crypt of the cathedral) attests to the huge importance Marian liturgy had in Lund during the final decades before the Reformation, and even beyond, as it seems that Birger Gunnerson’s memorial services went on after the Reformation and into the 1580s.

A completely different kind of Marian liturgy and celebration from a borderline Danish context is the Bordesholmer Marienklage (1476) from Holstein in what is now Germany but then belonged to the duchies at the German-Danish borders connected to both realms. The Marienklage may be described as a dramatic planctus mariae, but as its own preface points out, it was not considered to be drama or entertainment, but the complaint of the Virgin Mary and her helpers performed to engage the faithful to weep and feel compassion together with the Virgin during Holy Week. Of such devotions there are no traces in post-Reformation Denmark, again in agreement with the Post-Reformation areas on the Continent.

Looking in general at attitudes toward the Virgin Mary in Lutheran contexts in the sixteenth century one may clearly speak of change as well as of continuity, as is true for many other aspects of the Lutheran Reformation. Luther’s attitude to Mary has not traditionally been a main point in Lutheran scholarship, but a recent article by Anna Vind on Luther’s treatise on the Magnificat from 1521 gives a clear analysis of this important treatise which, as she points out, in one way highlights – and thus praises – Mary as a true saint, in this respect different from the ordinary Christian. Her saintliness, however, consists in her ‘nothingness’ and in her acknowledgment that she is nothing (nichtig), giving all honour to God not claiming any merit for herself; all this in contrast to what Luther describes as the ordinary Christian who cannot acknowledge his or her nothingness, insisting on his or her merits.

As we shall see, the same doubleness is characteristic also for attitudes to the veneration of Mary in the Danish Reformation.

Hans Tausen and his Marian Sermons

Hans Tausen belonged to the early generation of Lutheran pastors who studied in Wittenberg and brought home to Denmark impressions from Luther and the Lutheran milieu in the 1520s, from the period when Luther had come back to Wittenberg after his Wart-

18 See Kirkeordinansen 1537/39, pp. 106–108 (Latin text) and 177–180 (Danish text), also the saints days of John the Baptist and Saint Michael as well as All Saints’ Day were preserved (ibid). See also Niels Jesperssøns Graduale, pp. 110–118 (Paa Marie renselis dag, i.e. For the Day of the Purification of Mary), pp. 158–163 (Marie Bebudelss dag, i.e. For the Day of the Annunciation of Mary), and pp. 313–317 (Paa Marie besøgelsis Dag, i.e. For the Day of the Visitation of Mary).

19 See also Rubin 2009, pp. 191–196 and 332–351.


22 Petersen 2008.

23 Vind 2014. I thank Anna Vind for letting me read her manuscript prior to its publication. The word ‘nichtig’ is used several times in Luther’s Magnificat treatise, both concerning Mary and all Christians; see Luther 2003b.
sin. After raising the question why Mary, the pure, would need to carry out the requirements for purification, Tausen answers:

Mary keeps to this, according to such a symbolic law, and even though she was blessed and pure above all women; she still wants to seem to be like other women out of love and to take upon her the reputation of being unclean from giving birth just like anyone else.\(^{27}\)

In the sermon for the Feast of the Annunciation, Tausen goes into more detail with his understanding of Mary. He discusses her election in the following way, emphasizing how different she is from other women:

When God wants a person and wishes him well he tends to be with this person. Thus the Lord God is with her. Because He wishes Her so well. Something which He also shows with certain signs: that He endows Her with presents and blesses Her above all women. Who from an ordinary blessing of God will become pregnant by the natural joining with a man and give birth to the children of Adam. But She conceived by the Holy Spirit and gave birth to one natural son of God; in this blessed fruit of life She and everyone were to get the eternal blessing which God promised Abraham, Gen. xxii.\(^{28}\)

Tausen highlights the divine election of Mary; at the same time no mention is made of any particular reason within Mary herself for

\(^{24}\) Fosdal 1963, pp. 20–21.
\(^{25}\) Kornerup 1934, pp. 11–12.
\(^{26}\) Fosdal 1963, p. 124.

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\(^{27}\) Danish text in Tausen 1934, l. f. cxxxii v: Dette holder nu Maria efter saadanen almindelig figurlig Low oc endog hun wor benedided oc reen offuer alle quinde da wil hun ligewel aff kiærlighed siunes att were andre quinde lig oc bere det retche att hun er vreens af sin barnefødsel saa wel som nogen anden. A similar argument is, for instance found in the twelfth century Old Norse book of homilies, see Gammelnorsk homiliebok (1971) which includes a sermon for the Purification, pp. 76–78, see p. 76.

Although Tausen here did call her God’s ‘most noble creature’, he again takes up the question of her election in order to state that, in the narrative of the Annunciation, she was not praised by the angel. From what follows, it is clear that the notion ‘most noble creature’ should not be understood so as to imply any merits of Mary’s own. What she has received from God was not received because she deserved it but simply through God’s favour which is not explained; it is God’s supreme decision.

...she has met favour and grace with God. And thereby the angel does not praise Her but God who has let Her find that through Him which by nature She did not have in Herself as a human being. And this favour God wants to make known through such a high and superb birth: that She has become a natural mother to such a superb child by the grace of God, not through Her own merit whether it be humility, chastity or any other merit that She might have possessed.

As Tausen reads the gospel text, she accepted this, humbly. She could not understand what was happening, but she accepted God’s word and God’s will, acknowledging her position simply to be God’s servant. In this sense, she can be taken as a model for others:

She contented Herself with this: to know God as the almighty and to let the whole case rest in His hand, know Herself as a humble servant to God whom He could use where He wanted according to His will. And she asked that it should happen to Her according to what the angel had said and She then believed God’s word, which Gabriel had preached to her before: a faith which Elisabeth also highly praised... and called Her blessed because She had believed God even though She did not see anything or could understand it with Her human mind. Indeed, blessed are those along with Her who do not this election. From there, Tausen goes on to discuss how the congregation, the ‘we’ of the text should greet her; this should be based on the biblical words and the meaning of those words, something that leads Tausen to a polemical statement against traditional Marian devotion. As Tausen interprets the narrative of the Annunciation, Mary should not be praised and honoured but rather through her, only God must be honoured:

If we would now in a proper and suitable way greet this chosen mother of God together with the holy angel, then we should do it, not only with the same words, but also with the same angelic meaning that God is the one who in Her, as in His most noble creature, must be praised and honoured, not She should (as has happened before and even now in many places does happen among the simple-minded) be worshipped here as if She was a female idol in whom one might put one’s trust and be comforted. Just as the unlearned had let themselves learn that in this way they might make Virgin Mary rosaries and garlands of lilies to put on their heads when they had let this angelic greeting run through the mouth with many thoughtless words, ungodly and without spirituality and then let themselves into the belief that they had earned great merit in this way; and where in truth they could not but deserve much ingratitude both from the Mother and the Son and the angel because it happened with the disapproval of them all; indeed, as all sensible Christians now rightly will understand, as many as have rightly understood and grasped the Gospel.

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seek the advice of natural wisdom and human mind when God's word is brought to them ... 

This, of course, leads to the question whether such humility should be considered a merit? The theme is brought up again in the sermon for the Visitation with more or less the same formulation as in the sermon for the Annunciation:

Therefore greater blessing and benediction has also befallen Her because of this birth than any other mother; for this reason She may be called according to Gabriel's and Elisabeth's words: blessed above all women. The same is also acknowledged by the holy mother Mary in that She gives God the honour of all things and knows Herself as unworthy in all ways to receive this from God. Therefore She rejoices of all her heart, not only because of the honour God has bestowed on Her in this way, but mostly because of the unutterable grace God has shown Her and the whole world through the now present Jesus Christ, His only begotten son. And through this same joy of the heart she bursts into many words with true thanksgiving in the honourable and holy song of praise, Magnificat ... 

Again, it seems to be very important for Tausen to state that all these obviously positive characterisations of Mary as faithful, trusting and humble do not constitute merits to have caused her election. Tausen broadens the situation to consider how God was gracious also to his elect Jewish people, not because of their merits but founded on his promise to Abraham. This provides him with the background for also understanding how to relate to the Magnificat and to God's election of Mary altogether.

Not because of their own merit but because of his own mercy which he very well remembered to have promised and granted them in their ancestor Abraham. This same [promise] he would now keep, not because they had deserved it thus but because he had promised it in this way and granted them that he would keep his word. Should we then not let it be to sing loudly or read silently this Magnificat, which in truth is a highly honourable and holy spiritual song, unless we treat it with such similar thoughts and with such a spirit and the same godliness as Mary did, for otherwise we might rather despise and deride God or Her, more than praise God or Her. Therefore we should out of a very noble knowledge of the heart give God true thanks and honour for his virtue and benefaction, which he has shown us through our saviour Christ.

Luther, in his Magnificat treatise also used Abraham's promise in a very similar way. Although Tausen's sermons seem to be independent works of his own, there is no doubt that the theological

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This seems only to make sense, if merit is understood strictly \textit{coram deo}, in relation to God. Such is the fundamental Lutheran theology of good works as belonging to those who receive them, not to those who do them and never becoming a platform from which to obtain salvation or righteousness, a fundamental point in Luther’s theology. Mary may have much merit, seen in a general human sense, but for Luther and Tausen not in such a way that it enables her to be a saviour, an intercessor, or in any way to claim a place that could cause God’s election of her or God’s actions in relation to her in any way.

The emerging picture of Tausen’s understanding of Mary fits into the general findings of Beth Kreitzer concerning Lutheran preachers. She points out the same double structure of Marian thought. After summarising various positions and uses of Mary in sermons, much to the same effect as described here, in sermons by Luther and other preachers, she also points to the gradual changes during the sixteenth century where some of the traditional positions concerning Mary which Luther also seems to have held – especially that Mary was free of sin – were given up. Then she continues:

\begin{quotation}
We should not assume, however, that the ‘Lutheran Mary,’ or the image of Mary found in these sermons, is a one-dimensional figure. A number of tensions remained unresolved and ensured that Mary would continue to be a complex symbol, even for those so intent upon breaking the hold of ‘papist’ superstition and doctrine. Mary is still a paradox; virgin, yet mother; human, yet the Mother of God; a humble maid, yet one whose praise would be sung by all generations; a symbol of the church, and yet only one of its members.
\end{quotation}

Luther and Tausen and probably many (or most) Lutherans were traditionalists, preserving and wanting to preserve customs and traditions which were not abusive in their theological views. If we think of how the cultural memory of Mary must have been at the time, then – apart from Mary as an intercessor and as a triumphant, militant agent of the Church – much was not only unprob-

\textsuperscript{35} Danish text in Tausen 1934, II, f. clii v: \textit{Wdi dette samme kærligheds exempel giffuer oc den hellige ma Maria alle iomfruer oc gode piger ett helligt eftersiun att hun bewiser saadan sin iomfruelige tucht oc ere …}

\textsuperscript{36} Kreitzer 2004, p. 141.
lematic, but in line with Lutheran anthropology. Indeed, there was no reason to change this (part of the) cultural memory which functioned as a moral guideline for the faithful. The point, here as in so much else, was to cleanse the cultural memory, purify it of the wrong doctrine of 'papist' thought. The difficulty, however, was, as argued above, that the saintliness then in a certain sense came to nothing at the same time as it was important to claim this nothingness as an ideal or a model.

What Tausen did, and, as it seems, in accordance with Luther, was to try to maintain a balance between honouring and emulating Mary as a true Christian and a model for women and Christians altogether and repeatedly pointing out that there was no merit involved, that it was all God's free choice, not founded in anything but His own will to bless Mary and give her the highest possible honour a human being could possibly get, to give birth to the saviour, Jesus Christ. The balance, however, was so fine as to become almost impossible, emphasising the ideal of a person who in one way is the highest, in another the lowest. A very similar, paradoxical, kind of statement by Luther may shed light on such a Lutheran anthropology which seems to come to the fore in Tausen's approach to Mary:

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all. These two theses seem to contradict each other. If, however, they should be found to fit together they would serve our purpose beautifully.37

The consequences of such paradoxical approaches are difficult to gauge. In the liturgical order of Jespersøn's Gradual it is interesting to note that there are no songs praising Mary indicated in the liturgy for any of the three preserved Marian feasts. The feast day includes the appropriate biblical readings, about the presentation in the temple and Simeon's praise of the child for the Purification, and similarly the narratives about the Annunciation and the Visitation for the other two feasts, the last of which includes the Magnificat. However, there are no songs which actually praise Mary in the liturgies. It seems reasonable to assume that a praise of Mary would have had to be indirect in view of the paradoxical understanding of her sainthood.

André LaCocque and Paul Ricoeur's reception historical notion 'foreground' points to the idea that interpretations – at least those turning out to be important – tend to become so attached to the texts or phenomena they interpret that it becomes difficult to separate the original phenomenon from the interpretation.38 Based on such an understanding one might say that the medieval (theological) foregrounding of the figure of Mary came to put her in a perspective that meant that, for the Lutherans, this foreground needed to be torn off. However, since it had become so closely attached to the narrative biblical figure and the descriptive language employed in devotional prayers and other texts, this process of detaching her from her foreground had to lead into a paradoxical figure, in some ways devoid of all the traditional descriptions while still being proclaimed as the true, and truly humble, saint.

In a sense, the resulting new cultural memory normatively influenced by the Lutheran reformers thus made Mary difficult to describe since every positive description would have to be followed by statements as to her lack of merit. The figure of Mary thus lost personality; she came to personify a paradoxical principle. Even though her feasts were preserved into the late eighteenth century in Denmark, the Annunciation remaining in the liturgical calendar of the Danish Lutheran Church to this day (although moved to the Sunday before Palm Sunday), Mary as a figure came to appear as rather obscure in Lutheran Denmark, although she was never made into a negative figure.


In agreement with this, a medieval hymn for Good Friday, *The Holy Cross our Lord carried himself* was ‘cleansed’ as it is made clear in a rubric in *Hans Thomisson’s Hymnal*: ‘The old song of common people, The Holy Cross etc. Improved …’ The second stanza of the song has the following wording:

Saint Mary, mother of Christ  
And all saints they are now with God for sure.  
It happened for the sake of Christ alone  
And not because of any merits of theirs.

It has been a general question in Danish Reformation historiography whether the Lutheran Reformation constituted the major break between the medieval and the modern or whether to emphasize continuity across the Reformation. My attempt has been to underline the balance between these two extremes. Clearly, the Reformation did change much in the Church, but it is equally important to acknowledge that even some changes occurred because of the need for continuity. This is in deep agreement with Martin Luther’s personal attitude which was not revolutionary, but based on his wish to restore what he had come to consider the fundament of Christian faith. Change was not important *per se*, as his controversies with the so-called enthusiasts showed, but change was necessary to cleanse Christianity from what he and his main followers had come to consider as abuse.

This is as important to note concerning the attitude toward saints and especially the Virgin Mary as it is in all other theological concerns. And, as I have argued in this article, this was also how the Danish Reformation was shaped theologically in the case of saints and the Virgin. Such balance between continuity and change has been emphasized recently in a study of the changes of the interiors of Danish village churches over the Reformation, concerning not least images and the setting of the liturgy. Such balanced studies are important in order to avoid historiographic (and ideological) simplification.

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39 Danish text in *Den danske Psalmebog* (1997), f. 80 r: ‘Almuens gamle sang, Det hellige kaarrs etc. Forbedret …’
40 Danish text in *Den danske Psalmebog* (1997), f. 80 v:

Sancta Maria, moder at Christ  
Oc alle Helgen hoss Gud ere de nu vist  
For Christi skyld skede det allenist  
Oc icke for nogen deris egen fortienist.

The same text (but not the rubric) is also found in *En Ny Psalmebog* (1944), no pagination. The hymn is indicated as the final hymn for Good Friday (with the same text) in *Niels Jesperssøns Graduale* (1935), pp. 185–186.

41 Jürgensen (forthcoming 2015).
Epilogue
Mary: the Return

Virginia Langum

My most profound experience with the Virgin Mary was in Uppsala Cathedral after finishing a job interview about a year ago. Nervous and innervated, and a little sleep deprived, I was perhaps primed for such an experience.

Behind the main chancel, a strange, small woman caught my gaze. She was perfectly still, reflecting upon the ornate chapel where the Swedish King Gustav Vasa lay buried with his wives. I assumed, perhaps due to the head scarf, that she was a conservative believer, a pilgrim. I worked slowly around her trying not to disturb her reflection. After discreetly staring at her, I began to approach, stopping and starting several times, prepared to apologise. As the reader no doubt has already suspected, the woman was made of wax.

‘Mary: the Return’ or Maria återkomsten stands in oblique position to the king Gustav Vasa’s tomb, what was once a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary in the Middle Ages. Gustav Vasa chose his burial place 10 years before his death in 1560; however, Mary was further displaced in the 1800s with a series of baroque, nationalist scenes from the life of the former king.

Mary returned to Uppsala officially in 2005, with ethnic features and simple clothing that cannot easily be placed. At once eerily vivid and timeless, Anders Widoff’s Mary engages in a powerful diachronic dialogue with the older yet more transient icon Gustav Vasa. In so doing, her return to the cathedral witnesses the disillusionment with both Swedish nationalism and secular hubris.

Others have remarked upon her ‘return’ more generally in the Swedish Church. In the revised hymnbook of 1983, for example, additional hymns are dedicated to her. This may be evidence of her alleged growing importance in Protestantism. Several recent works

Fig. 1. Anders Widoff: Maria (Återkomsten). Photo: Anders Damberg/Geobild 2005 © BUS.
and collections written by or containing essays by Protestant theologians attest to this. Some of these titles include Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Cynthia L. Rigby’s *Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary* (2002), Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson’s *Mary, Mother of God* (2004), Shannon Kubiak’s *God Called A Girl: How Mary Changed Her World – And You Can Too* (2005), Tim Perry’s *Mary for Evangelicals* (2006), and Scot McKnight’s *The Real Mary: Why Evangelical Christians Can Embrace the Mother of Jesus* (2006).

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Mary continues to be a subject of fascination and devotion in traditional and non-traditional sacred sites, attracting more numerous and more diverse pilgrims than ever. She has even featured in online apparitions as documented in Paolo Apolito’s *The Internet and the Madonna* (2005).

She has also figured prominently in medieval studies of late, and scholars have produced several comprehensive studies, such as Miri Rubin’s *Mary: Mother of God* (2009) as well as many studies with particular geographical, generic or comparative foci, such as Mary F. Thurlkill’s *Chosen Among Women: Mary and Fatima in Medieval Christianity and Shi’ite Islam* (2007), Lesley Twomey’s *The Serpent and the Rose: The Immaculate Conception and Hispanic Poetry in the Late Medieval Period* (2008), and Adrienne Williams Boyarin’s *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England* (2008).

One might wonder, however, whether Mary’s return to religious culture was preceded by a departure. Or rather as Miri Rubin suggests she is a ‘constant presence’ standing, however humbly, in the shadows of the Reformation.

The waxen immediacy of the Uppsala Mary is an appropriate medium for representing a figure characterised by flexibility across communities, periods, and ideologies. As a recent interdisciplinary collection has demonstrated, contemporary Mary represents both a hope for social and economic justice and a tool for repressive regimes (see *Moved by Mary. the Power of Pilgrimage in the Modern World*). Likewise she has been reappropriated by feminist the-
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