

8 Inciting despair

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Я молод, жизнь во мне крепка;
Чего мне ждать? тоска, тоска! . . .

A. S. Пушкин, *Евгений Онегин*

Hieronymus Bosch's *Christ Carrying the Cross*, one of his last authenticated paintings, is a merciless study of humanity lost (Figure 8.1). In the center, the pallid Christ, having surrendered to the mob, carries an enormous cross-beam. All around him are faces, hideous, suffering: it is a crowd of hostile and violent, foul and desperate men. Even those who might offer support appear defeated: in the left lower corner, Veronica, holding the sudarium, turns away, and Simon the Cyrene disappears into darkness, all but crushed by the weight of the crossbeam. The painting tends to elude scholarly notice; when it does come under scrutiny, the image is usually discussed in terms of attribution or cross-cultural influences.¹ The present chapter instead focuses on *Christ Carrying the Cross* as a site of response that targets the late medieval beholder's complex system of feelings, to borrow Barbara H. Rosenwein's felicitous phrase, in order to catalyze a spiritually reformative process by eliciting despair.²

The study of emotions is notoriously unstable: teasing out the beholder's response to an image is a particularly fraught enterprise. Emotions are culturally coded, as are their triggers. When I look at Bosch's image what I feel is an unsettling mixture of despondent angst and detachment tinged with lugubriousness: it is, unmistakably, what Russians refer to as *toska* (тоска). There is no word like it in English, or apparently in any other language. The epigraph to this chapter, taken from Alexander Pushkin's magnificent *Evgenii Onegin*, reflects just that: an accepted translation of it is "I'm young and still robust, you see; / So what's ahead? Ennui, ennui!"³ And yet, "ennui" is a poor substitute for *toska*, the word that Pushkin uses to invoke his protagonist's state of mind. Vladimir Nabokov, in annotating his own translation of Pushkin's poem, once characterized *toska* as "a sensation of great spiritual anguish, often without any particular cause . . . it is a dull

ache of the soul, a longing with nothing to long for, a sick pining, a vague restlessness, mental throes, yearning.”⁴ This is not to say that native Russian speakers have a monopoly on the emotion itself, but that we recognize, conceptualize, and define it readily, exclusively, and through linguistic, and therefore cultural, means.⁵ Russians describe *toska* as an often non-specific and just as often inexplicable emotion, at once lofty and quotidian, and not at all uncommon. I feel it not because Bosch’s painting stirs in me pity, or compassion, or pious melancholy – some of the feelings, I will suggest, stirred in the late medieval beholder – but because something about its dirty but luminous palette; its claustrophobic arrangement of figures cropped so as to represent a crowd without end; and the deformed, grotesque, distorted facial features of its protagonists, activates in me that sense of emptiness, of nagging dissatisfaction, and of existential, endless, displaced despair that is the definition of *toska*. It might be, in fact, because I see *toska* inscribed on Christ’s face imprinted on Veronica’s sudarium.

My reaction to Bosch’s painting is no more than an anecdotal footnote in a charged topic of debate between social constructivists – the proponents of a cognitive emotion theory that suggests emotions as operating within a specific social, psychological, interpretative framework – and those who seek to define a set of basic, biological, primitive emotions common to all and recognizable by all. Paul Ekman, for example, one of the leading researchers in the field of non-verbal communication, uses facial gestures to argue for the immutability of emotional response across cultural and temporal divides.⁶ The presentist tendency of Ekman’s arguments, however, is predicated on a de-contextualization of these gestures, their abstraction from the lifeblood of social culture: in other words, the recognition of universal emotions presupposes the universality of a fixed, predetermined reception of a visual signal that passes from the sender to the receiver – a problem that any art historian is apt to recognize. Ekman’s theories have been challenged by historians and psychologists alike, from Rosenwein to James Russell, and it should be clear where my allegiances lie.⁷ My response to Bosch’s panel might be visceral but it is also culturally specific. It is predicated on my upbringing, and locates me temporally, socially, geographically, and linguistically. Before I respond as a trained medievalist and as an art historian, and before I venture to suggest patterns of emotional response likely for a fifteenth-century Netherlandish viewer, I react and feel as a member of the Russian *intelligentsia* raised on the poetry of Marina Tsvetaeva and Sergey Esenin, who monumentalized the notion of Slavic *toska* in countless doleful verses.

But even so, my focus on the *veronica* is not all that anachronistic: this is the only face in the painting that confronts and engages its beholders directly, and it is therefore made to draw attention to itself. All other protagonists of this disquieting panel turn away from the viewer or their gaze is veiled. Christ himself seems asleep on the crossbeam he carries; Veronica’s eyes are nearly closed as she looks down on her sudarium, as are those of the smiling magus and of a tormentor directly above Christ. Others roll their eyes, appearing half-blind: for instance, the irises of the man commonly

identified as the good thief just barely show above a strip of white. In the foreground, grotesque men, the embodiment of the caricatured “other,” find themselves deep in conversation with the bad thief, their bulging eyeballs focused on the thief’s deformed face. Simon of Cyrene tilts his head until his eyes become swallowed by shadow. It is, instead, the imprint of Christ’s face on the piece of cloth, made to look like a fleshly disembodied object and not an imprint at all, that provides a point of access into the painting. An image within an image, an icon within a narrative, it functions as a meta-comment both on image-making and on looking at images – it is an image with agency, one that looks back.⁸ It is also a visual cue that guides the beholder across several echoes of Christ’s likeness, arranged on a diagonal that cuts across the sweep of the *patibulum*: the living *veronica*, the already-dying Christ, and the seemingly dead good thief. In this way, the network of missed or averted gazes, along with the *veronica*’s manifest stare, function as well-understood visual signals for those emotional communities that cohere around devotional images.

These communities, guided by what Rosenwein defines as “modes of emotional expression that [people] expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore,” structure and are structured and indexed by late medieval devotional images such as Bosch’s panel.⁹ One of the key emotions for a community formed by the late medieval religious culture of images is empathy, achieved by contemplation and imitation of Christ’s pain.¹⁰ Indeed, as Esther Cohen has pointed out, it is in the late Middle Ages that we see a wide variety of sources that “starkly outline the landscape of pain . . . in the most extravagant possible manner.”¹¹ Pain and empathy, and empathy *with* pain, are extolled in numerous devotional treatises, which prescribe what we may call immersion exercises predicated on thinking about Christ’s passion and re-enacting it in the mind’s eye. Ludolph of Saxony’s *Vita Christi*, which circulated in a host of European vernaculars well into the sixteenth century and was particularly important for the practitioners of *devotio moderna* (with which Bosch was, if not directly associated, then certainly familiar), details the dynamics of such fervent contemplation that must include the vivid visualization of the events of the Passion as well as “speaking, living, and grieving, as though the Lord were suffering before thy very eyes.”¹² The enormously popular *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, now attributed to John of Caulibus, instructed the devout to imagine themselves participating in key moments of Christ’s life, “feeling [themselves] present in those places as if the things were done in [their] presence.”¹³ In order to aid such pious visualization, the author of the treatise provided details about Christ’s suffering: the exchange of sorrowful glances between John and Mary, the blood stains on the flagellation column, the way Christ dressed in front of his tormentors. This kind of particularized description aimed to elicit an emotional response, even if it meant exaggeration and fictionalizing. The author of the *Meditations* readily admits that his detailed, heartrending retellings of the Passion have little basis in Gospel narratives but are told “as if they had occurred,” “as if they had actually happened,” and “in accord with certain imaginary scenarios.”¹⁴

A hallmark of these treatises is the direct address to the reader: the *Meditations* offers up a veritable litany of “you will see” and “watch him closely,” enjoining the devout to picture Christ’s Passion and, in doing so, to “[p]ay careful attention here and think about his demeanor in each and every thing he does.”¹⁵ In his description of the carrying of the cross, the author asks his readers to “[f]ocus your attention on him closely as he makes his way, bent beneath the cross and gasping for breath. As much as you can, suffer with him, as he is placed in the midst of so much agony and renewed ridicule.”¹⁶ Similarly, the author of the *Privity of the Passion* – a free Middle English translation of *Meditations* – repeatedly admonishes the reader to “Behold him meekly and diligently!”, “Behold him carefully!”, and follows the description of the flagellation with the following reprimand: “If you are able to have no compassion for your Lord Jesus, know well that your heart is harder than stone.”¹⁷ Such direct address, visual or textual, implicates the viewer-reader in the “perpetual passion,” the concept of Christ’s suffering made continuous by the ongoing transgressions of the unremittingly sinning humanity.

It is precisely such direct address that is visualized by the *veronica*’s unaverted gaze in Bosch’s painting, displaying the synergy between devotional treatises and emotional expression, located and challenged by later medieval material culture. Images were often considered to be an ideal starting point for affective meditation: John of Genoa’s exhortation that they “excite feelings of devotion, these being more effectively aroused by things seen than by things heard,” was echoed widely, and repeated nearly verbatim two hundred years later by Fra Michele da Carcano in a 1492 sermon.¹⁸ That images should have a protagonist who draws the viewer in and aids in contemplation was far from unusual. When the fifteenth-century Italian theorist Leon Battista Alberti postulated in his famous treatise on painting that each image should have a figure that looks out and engages the viewer (“tum placet in historia adesse quempiam qui earum quae gerantur rerum spectators admoneat”), he was codifying an existing convention.¹⁹ Alberti suggested that this role of an interlocutor and guide should be played by a secondary character, but northern painters, including Bosch, were fond of having Christ himself confront the viewer. For instance, Bosch’s Madrid version of *Christ Carrying the Cross* has Christ fix the beholder with an accusatory gaze (Figure 8.2). The enfleshed Christ on Veronica’s veil was a favorite, as was the trajectory of the protagonists’ gazes: Veronica looks downward, the imprinted living image looks at the beholders, and the beholders look back (Figure 8.3).²⁰ This kind of visual summons was often accompanied – and sometimes substituted – by a place within the image made explicitly for the viewer. So, in the *Nativity* scene painted by a contemporary of Bosch, Gerard David, Mary, Joseph, and the angels form a half-circle around the infant Christ; the other space is reserved for the viewer, who, invited by the shepherd, enters through the crumbling brick wall (Figure 8.4).²¹ Still more emphatic about including the beholder is Master of Heiligenkreuz’s *Death of the Virgin*, in which a space was left empty right in front of the Virgin’s bed, and a pillow

was helpfully placed between the two reading Apostles, for the viewer to kneel upon (Figure 8.5).²² In Bosch's own re-iteration of *Christ Carrying the Cross*, this one in Vienna, Christ moves not exactly within but alongside the crowd, and the emptiness to his right is stark and inviting; here, too, a protagonist to the extreme left is gazing outward (Figure 8.6).

But the world into which the Ghent *veronica* leads presents a considerable problem. One of the goals of immersion into Christ's life was the act of imitation: *imitatio Christi*, certainly, but also imitation of the sacred community around Christ. And yet, unlike, for example, Rogier van der Weyden's famous *Deposition* altarpiece – where the main actors all reliably model appropriate distress, with Mary directly imitating Christ, and with Saint John and the Magdalene providing convenient parentheses for this cohesively suffering group – Bosch's painting seems to suggest a smorgasbord of emotions, which overwhelm and subvert empathetic compassion.²³ Women, the archetypes of empathy that populate devotional treatises and images, are scarce here, and the Virgin as the exemplar of compassion is missing, replaced by the ghostly Veronica who moreover turns away from Christ and from the viewer, at best resigned, at worst cold and indifferent. Three figures in the foreground coalesce around the bad thief: two, instead of taunting, listen to him with avid curiosity, astonishment, and greedy incredulity; the magus smiles in quiet satisfaction; and the thief himself is snarling at them angrily. Next to the complacent, submissive Christ, a man appears to be screaming, his mouth wide open. On the other side a man raises his hand in an uncanny, mocking echo of Christ's right hand, while another smiles contentedly. The good thief is surrounded by two misshapen characters, the one with the tonsure lifting his finger in heated admonition, the other simply appearing bored. Veronica's aloof face is underscored by the blank visage at the panel's edge, which mimics, disconcertingly, the face on her cloth. The three men at the upper register of the panel appear as disfigured choric figures: one closes his eyes serenely, a smile playing across his lips; another gazes toward the right, seemingly unaware of or indifferent to what is occurring; the third has his mouth downturned in what might be the only trace of sadness to be found here. The sacred community is replaced by demonic countenances that isolate Christ's spectral face. Ugliness dominates: figures scowl and leer, and intensely evil hideousness swallows the signs of goodness in the suffocating sea of toothy mouths, deformed noses, expressive hands, and, especially, gleaming, frightful and frightened, rolled or narrowed eyes. If Bernard of Clairvaux once posited that the "beauty of the soul" becomes "outwardly visible . . . when the motions, the gestures and the habits of the body and the senses show forth their gravity, purity and modesty," then the filthy gesticulating men, with ostentatiously pierced faces and distorted features, manifest the outwardly visible ugliness of their spirit.²⁴

That the medieval viewer was primed to take immediate notice of this ugliness is both a social and a cognitive function. Pious beholders were taught to focus on the grisly: detailed descriptions of pain and anguish, after

all, stand at the heart of affective meditations on the Passion. These same texts also describe those who tortured Christ as the wicked, the pitiless, the foolish, and the mad. Just as devotional guidebooks and fervent sermons elaborated and exaggerated Gospel narratives for emotive effect, so Bosch here elaborates and exaggerates the treatises, exteriorizing the nature of Christ's tormentors for that very same emotive effect. But not just medieval viewers were trained to see the ugly: our brains, it seems, are also wired to do so first, to pick the bad over the good and to assign it a dominant value. Cognitive scientists are now looking at the amygdala, activated during a host of emotional states, for its function as a "threat center" that recognizes, processes, and reacts to even schematic representations of what we recognize as a negative emotion long before it registers anything we may deem positive. This, quite simply, as Daniel Kahneman puts it, is a "mechanism that is designed to give priority to bad news," and images like *Christ Carrying the Cross* reinforce and intensify this priority, especially because a positive emotion is scarcely to be found in the ugly horror of the panel.²⁵

The crowd gathered around Christ consists, really, of faces: jagged, rough, bumpy, and disproportionate faces, obviously irregular and therefore in demand of scrutiny, of staring. In human interaction, of course, the face is the focus of cognitive and social clues: as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson has put it in her discussion of different modes of staring, "faces are consequential texts that we read attentively."²⁶ Our impulse to concentrate on the face has fascinated thinkers from Emmanuel Levinás (who reads each face as a moral obligation) to Jean-Paul Sartre (who sees faces as "sacred objects" that make oneself feel limited).²⁷ But what we expect in a face is a norm, and when this norm is upset, we stare: the unexpected draws our gaze and rejects it at the same time. Contemporary artists have used this dual response to disfigureation to similar effect, in order to induce what Garland-Thomson so aptly termed "visual vertigo." As a representative example, she cites Doug Auld, who painted a series titled "State of Grace," in which portraits of burn survivors are rendered in uncomfortable close-up (Figure 8.7). Whether Auld's stated purpose, to convert our repulsion and fear into disarming beauty, was successful is open to debate, but his other mission – to make his viewers look, really look without turning away – was certainly achieved.

Unorthodox faces – asymmetrical, uneven, again to borrow from Garland-Thomson "irrationally organized" – are visual failures, chaotic caricatures of themselves that repulse but fascinate, "captivat[ing] our focus even if we deliberately attempt to ignore them."²⁸ This is, indeed, their function in Bosch's panel. It is not because the unsightly faces crowding the Via Dolorosa require an intense version of what the sociologist Erving Goffman terms "face-work"; on the contrary, their features are easily recognizable and read.²⁹ It is because the shift and flux of these features – the tip of the nose that hangs too low, the bulbous chin that juts out too far, the bridge of the nose that disappears, the toothless mouth frozen in silent scream – challenge facial norms, exemplified by the symmetrical, properly proportioned face

of Christ. This challenge attracts attention and therefore signals danger, the danger of looking, of staring, and this signal is, once again, picked up by the uncanny *veronica* whose open eyes appear both in stark contrast with the closed eyes of its prototype and in visual echo with the opened eyes of most of Christ's tormentors.

Late medieval culture considered looking to be a potent act: visible things were believed to leave physical impressions on the malleable human body and the equally malleable human spirit. Much has been written about the importance of the trope of stamping in medieval discourses on vision, memory, and spiritual reformation. Here, I will simply reiterate that in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the intromission model of seeing – at least as articulated two centuries prior by Roger Bacon, and based in no small part on Alhazen's writings – remained prevalent.³⁰ The visual species, which multiplied in the air to be impressed first on the eye and then on the brain, to be subsequently interpreted and conscripted to memory and to the heart, carried transformative power.³¹ The physical and moral mutability of the body, dependent on optical imprinting, conceptualized the reformation of the individual, and its uses for devotional purposes are clear: images had direct somatic and spiritual effects on the viewer because one's body received appropriate visual signals and activated the process of reformatory change.³² Still, the change was not always positive: Bernard of Clairvaux, for instance, describes “the prurience of delighting in iniquity” that marks memories “with a bitter impression” and “dirty footprints.”³³ The impact of such impressions was discussed by Flemish and Dutch theologians, among them Jan van Ruusbroeck and of Geert Grote, the latter a founder of the Brotherhood of Common Life that flourished in Bosch's home town.³⁴

It is no accident that the only protagonist of Bosch's painting to engage with the viewer is not a protagonist at all but an imprinted image that has gained living agency. In addition to carrying complex semiotic baggage, the imprinted *veronica* thus signals the theological physiology that is at work in this image. Christ's eyes are closed, shielded by paper-thin eyelids; he does not see the raging horror of depravity around him, and neither does Veronica, who turns away conspicuously. But the viewers do: along with whatever spiritual rehabilitation they receive from seeing those two, beholders are assailed with a veritable blitz of depravity, assaulted by the visual “otherness” that is certain to leave “dirty footprints” in their memories, their bodies, and their souls. Like the cloth stamped with the Holy Face, the viewers are stamped as well; and the obvious fact that Veronica's veil looks nothing like an imprint of blood and sweat, and very much like a painted face, serves not only as a self-referential comment on the power of the painted image, but also as a suggestion that the thing that is seen and the thing that is imprinted is, in the end, one and the same.

Ludolph of Saxony can well remind the devout that they “must carry the cross of the Lord, and be pleased to carry it.”³⁵ And yet, the painting forbids it; in order to step in, to carry the cross alongside Simon of Cyrene, one must push through the thicket of flesh and be conducted by the sinful throng down Via Dolorosa, the road indexed by the crossbeam, the road that inexorably ends in the terrifying event of the Crucifixion. Implicated in Christ’s perpetual passion by the gaze of the *veronica*, absorbed into the suffocating crowd of the overpoweringly ugly sinners, imprinted and transformed by their moral ugliness, lost without the usual models for compassionate imitation, ignored by Christ, Veronica, and Simon, the viewer is left – led, really – to experience an emotion well known to the righteous devout in Bosch’s Low Countries: that of despair, an emotion that was understood to result from the recognition of one’s sinful nature and, to paraphrase Bernard of Clairvaux, one’s unlikeness to God.³⁶

Later medieval theology recognized this self-knowledge as the beginning of the path to salvation. It was, however, a dangerous path, studded with demonic presence. Despair, after all, is the devil’s weapon: as the *Vitae patrum* tells us, “The closer a man comes to God, the more he sees himself a sinner.”³⁷ Despair, as does its parent *tristitia* – sorrow – is thus defined by its dual nature. In Corinthians, Paul identifies one aspect of despair as “sorrow according to God” that achieves redemption through penitence, and the other as the “sorrow of the world” that “works death” (2 Corinthians 7:10). Late medieval mystical texts, from the *Cloud of Unknowing* to Walter Hilton’s *Scale of Perfection*, warned of the danger of despair that comes with the necessity of introspection. Hilton compared despair to the dark night, a comparison similarly drawn by the palette of Bosch’s panel.³⁸ In a curious diagram of vices, engraved at the end of the fifteenth century in Italy (Figure 8.8), Despair is not only related to a variety of sins, but also dominates them all. It appears as one of the daughters of Lust, herself an adopted daughter of Pride, and one of the daughters of Sloth who was associated with Melancholia – an important point to which I will shortly return. Above the tree appears a set of inscriptions, one of which, in the large circle, lists the five “damnable ways” that “may give offense to God, and they are called sins in the Holy Spirit”; one of them is “Desperatione dela misericordia de dio.”³⁹ This genealogy of sins is rooted in much earlier representations of the tree of vices, such as the early thirteenth-century German diagram from the *Speculum Virginum*, produced at the Cistercian abbey of Himmerode, which also emphasizes Superbia as the main culprit but isolates Tristitia as the cardinal vice and indicates Despair, along with Sloth, as one of its fruits (Figure 8.9).

In exploring later medieval definitions of despair, Susan Snyder suggests that despair was seen “as a pathological upset of emotional balance,” at times rational, at times irrational.⁴⁰ The famous nave capital from Sainte-Madeleine Church at Vézelay figures despair as a mad demon, plunging a sword into its twisting body, its open toothy maw, here with a lolling tongue,

and its maddened gaze more than a little reminiscent of the demonic faces in Bosch's image (Figure 8.10).⁴¹ Another demonic face marks a similar act of self-destruction by a madman at Notre-Dame-des-Fontaines in Brigue: this time it is Judas, whose dead eyes watch, in horror, as a sharp-horned, blood-gushing demon rips his soul from his body, helping to free it from the spilling organs with his long pointed claws (Figure 8.11).⁴² Sorrow for one's sins can be, as Origen writes, "supra mensuram" (beyond measure): so intense was Judas's despair that it led to suicide – despair so hopeless as to induce the loss of faith.⁴³ The apocryphal Acts of Andrew and Paul describe Judas who, "in despair," wanted to ask Jesus for forgiveness, but instead decided to hang himself and meet Jesus in the abode of the dead – a plan that did not quite work out.⁴⁴ It is no accident that the personification of despair is often shown in the act of committing suicide by hanging, a clear reference to Judas's death – and that the figure of Judas sometimes *replaces* the figure of Despair as it apparently did in the now-destroyed mausoleum of the Liège bishop Erhard de la Marck.⁴⁵ Judas's despair exemplified the kind of *tristitia* that worked spiritual as well as physical death: in this way, as Aquinas suggests, the Betrayer's remorse was poisoned by fear and sorrow "because he lamented his past sin; but he did not have hope. And such is the penitence of the wicked."⁴⁶

In light of the physiological underpinnings of medieval visuality, it is important to point out that despair was closely associated with melancholy, a temperament that resulted from the humoral predominance of black bile located in the spleen. Caesarius of Heisterbach, a Cistercian prior and the author of the gripping *Dialogues on Miracles*, dedicates book four of the *Dialogues* to temptations, among which is despair, which he directly links to melancholy and suicide.⁴⁷ In chapter 40, he tells of a nun who attempted to drown herself in the Moselle because she was "distressed by the vice of melancholy, and so much troubled by the spirit of blasphemy, doubt, and unbelief, that she fell into despair." Her attempted suicide was meant to avoid her prior's threat that, unless she came to her senses, he would be forced to bury her in unconsecrated ground: she reasoned that rather than having her corpse torn apart by beasts, she would give it to the flow of the river. And although Caesarius's moralizing stories, by and large, carry happy endings – heathens convert, blasphemers repent, the wicked are smitten and the good rewarded – this one remains ambiguous, because despair is intimately connected to the doctrine of the uncertainty of salvation. The saved nun was carried back to the monastery to be watched over by her sisters, but what became of her, Caesarius does not say; although she was "a chaste virgin, devout, dependable, and religious," the fate of her soul remains undetermined.⁴⁸ More certain is the fate of a lay brother whom Caesarius claims to have personally known (chapter 41), who became melancholy, and, greatly fearing his sins, "completely despaired of eternal life . . . Afflicted as he was with the vice of melancholy, he was overtaken by sloth, and so in his heart despair was born."⁴⁹ The man subsequently drowned himself in a nearby fish pond. Closer to Bosch's painting temporally and geographically is the famous account that one Gaspar

Ofhuys, a brother in the Red Cloister near Brussels, composed between 1509 and 1513. Ofhuys, writing a couple of decades after the fact, describes an incident involving a fellow brother, the painter Hugo van der Goes, who, upon becoming a *converso*, succumbed to melancholy and “unceasingly said that he was doomed and condemned to eternal damnation [and] even wanted to injure himself physically or commit suicide.”⁵⁰

A plethora of medical and devotional texts expounded on the association between despair and melancholy, including the English treatise “Agayne despayre,” in which a downcast student who recollects his “many great sins” is lectured by a learned doctor who offers remedies against despair.⁵¹ Melancholics were particularly prone to being impressed with visual species because of the ostensible nature of their brain cells that were physiologically forged so as to preserve imprints of visible and intellectual knowledge.⁵² According to Ramon Llull, a Catalan mystic and the inventor of the *ars inveniendi veritatis*, melancholy was associated with earth, “a dense medium, in which the impressions of the species are held for the memory; and therefore melancholy men are disposed to acquiring great learning through the multiplication of many species.”⁵³ Here, again, Bosch’s *veronica* provides a self-reflexive comment on the nature of viewing: Christ’s face, of course, is soaked in and impressed upon the cloth. It signals the potential of the image to act most directly upon those who, through their melancholy nature, were already prone to despair, whose supple earthlike brain cells were most readily impressed with visual species, and most capable of retaining them. In a world that intimately correlated the physical and emotional natures of the individual, this association was hardly surprising. Indeed, when writing about despair, Saint Bonaventure likened it to a humor that overwhelms others in the human body; he also held excessive fear to be directly responsible for despair.⁵⁴ Aquinas, as we saw, brought up fear as poisonous to remorse and an ingredient for despair as well – and Auld, incidentally, also mentions fear when discussing his portraits of burn survivors.⁵⁵

Yet the kind of despair that torments the righteous need not always be spiritually fatal; on the contrary, it can be efficaciously cleansing and therefore useful for the salvation of the individual. To quote Hugh of Saint-Victor, “Many have fallen and have arisen better than they were before they fell.”⁵⁶ In addition to fear, Aquinas mentions hope as the only way to obtain pardon for one’s sins. This lesson was taught both in word and in image: long before Bishop de la Marck commissioned his mausoleum, Hope (*Spes*) conquered Despair in numerous late medieval images.⁵⁷ Similarly, the *Golden Legend* implies that hope could have saved Judas himself from damnation. In interpreting the first seven days of Christ’s life that preceded his circumcision on the eighth, Jacobus discusses the tropological meanings of each day, with the

seventh symbolic of hope of forgiveness: “for although Judas,” he writes, “confessed his sin, he did not hope for pardon and therefore did not obtain mercy.”⁵⁸

Precisely this spiritual lesson is taught in the guidebook for proper dying, the *Ars moriendi*, a popular manual that would have been well known to Bosch’s contemporaries, and which encapsulates conceptions of the *bona mors*, the “good death,” death in one’s own home, surrounded by family, and accompanied by proper sacraments.⁵⁹ *Ars moriendi* unfolds as a dramatic performance of sorts, a staged moral event that turns into a cosmic battle for the soul, wherein the Virgin, the Trinity, the angels, the devil, and the demons of hell all proffer their personal attention in order to determine the fate of the dying individual, Moriens. Moriens is beset by five temptations (to reject faith, to despair over sins, to become impatient, to indulge in vainglory, and to succumb to avarice), and is guided by five comforts, or inspirations (to confirm faith, to hope for mercy through the act of contrition, to sustain patience through suffering, to humbly recollect one’s sins, and to become detached from the material world).

In this general scheme, temptation to despair is second only to the rejection of faith. Illustrated versions of *Ars moriendi* feature several demons that gather at Moriens’s bed to drive him to despair and force him to lose hope in salvation by enumerating his sins: perjury, avarice, fornication, even murder (Figure 8.12). One of the demons holds a list of the man’s sins in his hand while others point to figures who bear witness to these sins. The devilish accusers, whose physiognomies exteriorize Moriens’s transgressions, are every bit as ugly and disfigured as Christ’s tormentors in Bosch’s painting, who similarly exteriorize a wide range of moral ugliness. The accompanying text relates that demons are making the dying man recall Christ’s words at the Last Judgment (“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels’” [Matthew 25:4], and “For judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy” [Epistle of St. James 2:13]). Fear of predestination is another building block of despair: even those who have tried to live piously cannot be sure that they have succeeded, and a demon quotes Ecclesiastes 9:1: “No one knows if he is worthy of love or hate.” These demons incite despair as masterfully as Despair herself – the personified *Desesperance* – incites Judas to commit suicide in the late fifteenth-century *Mystère de la passion*, Jean Michel’s re-working of Arnoul Gréban’s passion play.⁶⁰ After extending to him the many tools of her trade (daggers, knives, an icepick, matches, awls, and, finally a rope), she urges him to give in: “Oeuvre ton cuer et metz dedens / de[se]sperance et tu n’as garde; abrege ta vie et te pends:/ vecy ung las que je te garde” [“Open your heart and place inside / Despair; then you won’t hesitate./ Go hang yourself; do not abide!/ I’ve saved this rope to seal your fate”].⁶¹ Satan appears in order to inquire whether Judas relinquishes all hope in the possibility of a divine pardon, and the Betrayer

agrees that his fate is “estre dampné pour le mains, / sans espoir de misericorde” [“to be damned forever without hope for forgiveness”]. Before giving up, Judas invokes “dyables, dyables petis et grans” – akin to those that Moriens encounters – to give them his body and soul.⁶² But the *Ars moriendi* provides what Judas so badly lacked: a sure guide to combating despair by recalling those who sinned greatly but never lost hope and were therefore forgiven. The very next image shows the crucified penitent thief, Saint Peter with his rooster and key, Mary Magdalene with a pot of aromatic oil, and Saul of Tarsus at the moment of his conversion (Figure 8.13). One demon, who concedes that his case is lost, crouches on the ground, a bestial echo of Saul’s horse; another hides under the dying man’s bed, only his hindquarters remaining visible.

That Bosch was familiar with, and inspired by, the *Ars moriendi* seems very likely. Several scholars have pointed out that one of his earlier paintings, *Death and the Miser*, features a fairly straightforward interpretation of the fifth temptation found in the *Ars moriendi*: earthly attachments, including attachment to property (Figure 8.14).⁶³ Here a man on his deathbed, just like Moriens, is beset by demons, but still – in a visual conflation of temptation and comfort – recommended to the crucified Christ by an interceding angel. *Christ Carrying the Cross* itself seems to quote a detail from the first temptation that assails Moriens – the temptation to lose faith – as its three doctor-magicians, one with a conical headdress, another with a floppy hat, find their reflection in the tormentors in the lower right of Bosch’s panel (Figures 8.15a and b). But *Christ Carrying the Cross* is a more complex call for self-examination than *Death and the Miser*, and if the *Ars moriendi* – although admitting to the dying man’s liminal spiritual state – is quick to extend comfort, Bosch’s claustrophobic panel does no such thing.⁶⁴ Here, the *vice* of despair mutates into a *feeling* of despair – a crucial event.⁶⁵ Rooted in the doctrine of the uncertainty of salvation, the painting forces viewers to confront their sinful nature, inciting despair and the consequent *psychomachia*, the soul’s struggle, but offers no easy signposts to the proper *tristitia* path: the struggle to define what is and what is not “supra mensuram” will have to take place within each and every individual. Here, Bosch’s preoccupation with eternal punishment, so clear in his many images of the Last Judgment, comes to the fore; and yet, *Christ Carrying the Cross* is not nearly as didactic as any of them. The panel is not prescriptive; instead, it acts as a catalyst, allowing *desperatio* to blossom in its beholders, thereby emphasizing the importance of humanity’s own agency in the trajectory of its salvation and catalyzing a complex system of feelings to be negotiated and overcome. Van der Weyden’s *Deposition*, with its well-defined models of imitation, suddenly appears impossibly facile. For Bosch, it is not simply empathy or compassion, but the most abject despair that leads, just maybe, to salvation. And this despair is, finally, a fundamental ingredient of what Russians define as *toska*, even if it is, perhaps, much more spiritually productive.



Figure 8.1 Hieronymus Bosch, *Christ Carrying the Cross*, c. 1490–1510, oil on panel, H: 76.7 cm, W: 83.5 cm, Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent (The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY).

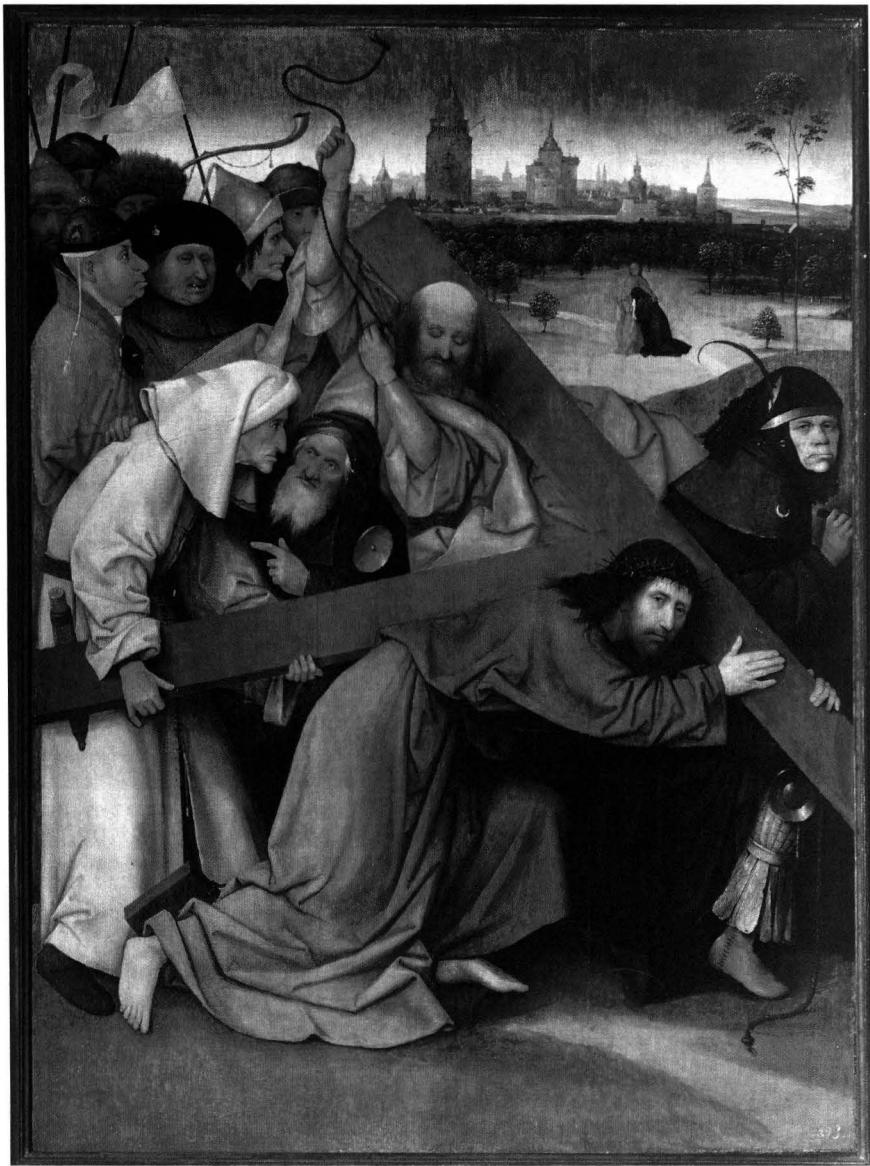


Figure 8.2 Hieronymus Bosch, *Christ Carrying the Cross*, 1505–1507, Palacio Real, Madrid (Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY).



Figure 8.3 Hans Memling, *Saint Veronica* [obverse], c. 1470–1475, oil on panel, painted surface: 30.3 x 22.8 cm / 11 15/16 x 9 inches, overall panel: 31.2 x 24.4 cm / 12 5/16 x 9 5/8 inches, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Samuel H. Kress Collection 1952.5.46.a (Art Resource, NY).

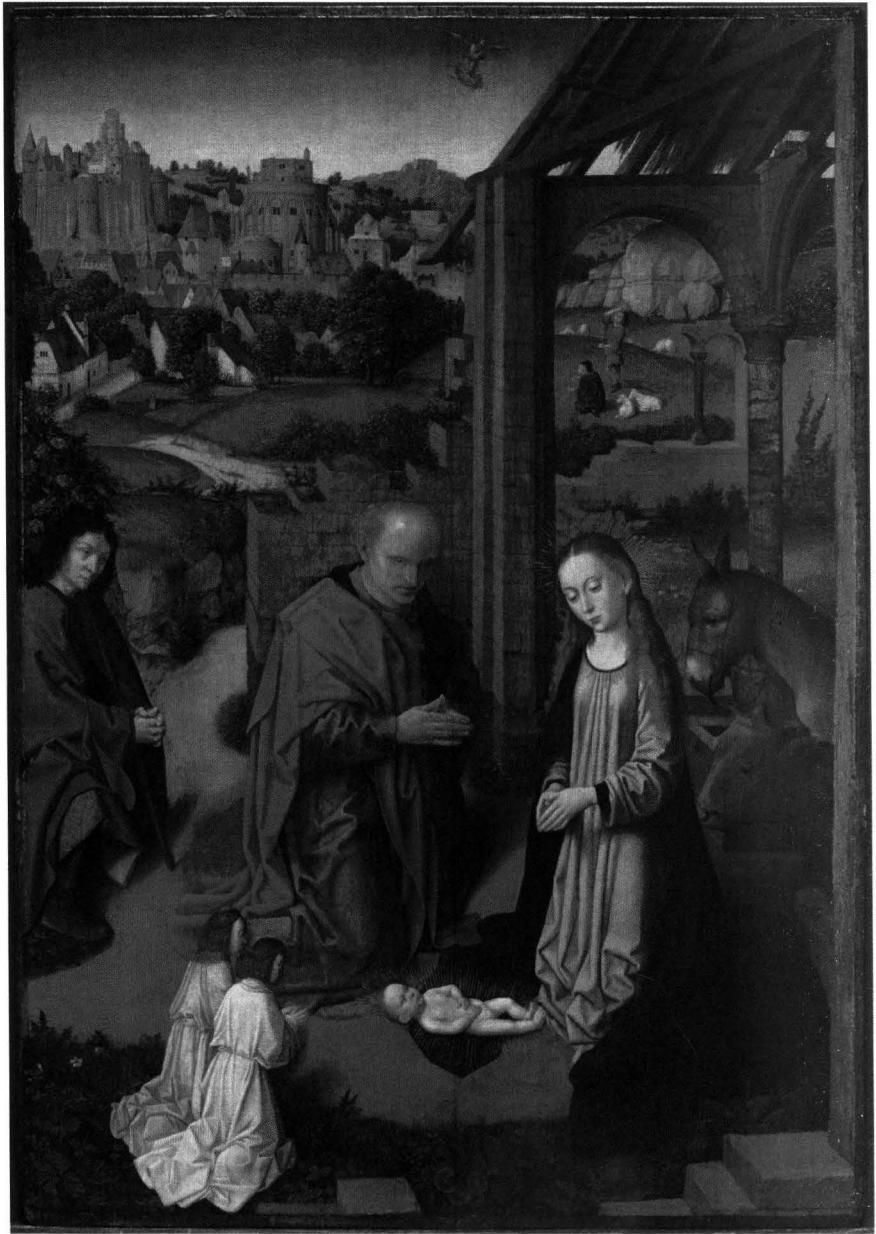


Figure 8.4 Gerard David, *The Nativity*, c. 1485–1490, oil on wood panel, unframed: 85.20 x 59.70 cm (33 1/2 x 23 1/2 inches) The Cleveland Museum of Art, Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. Fund 1958.320 (© The Cleveland Museum of Art).

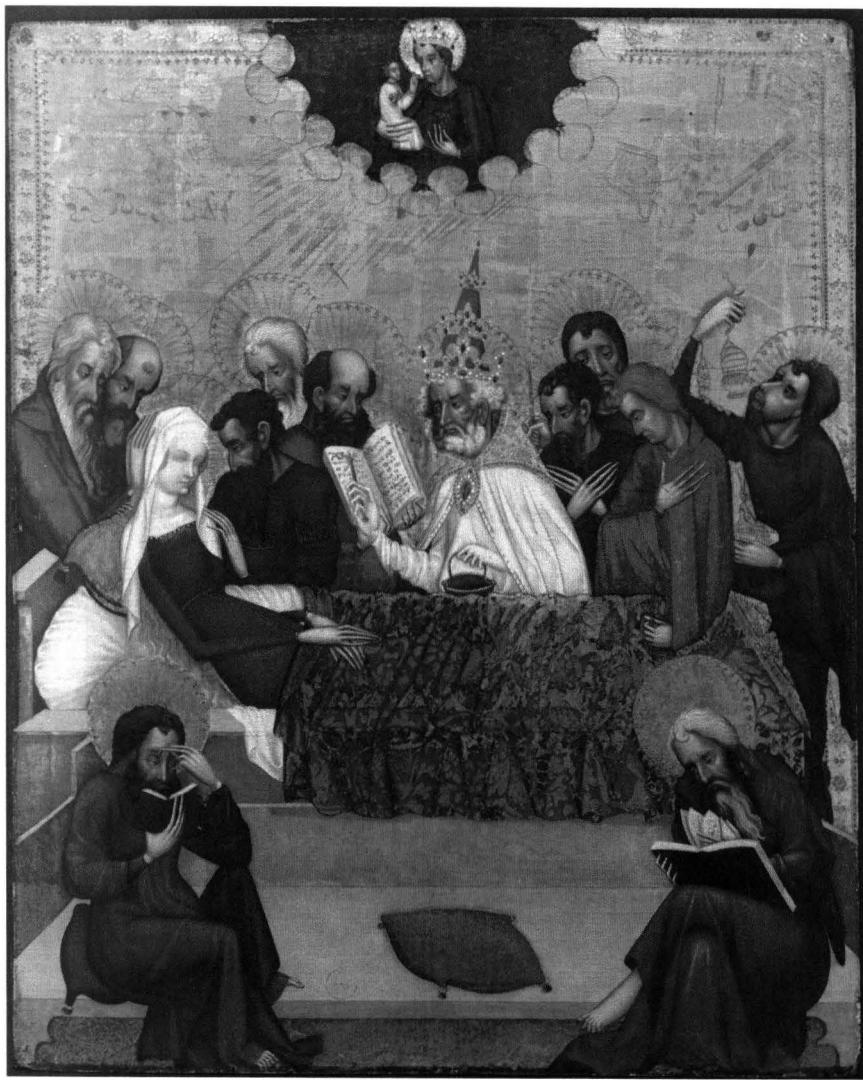


Figure 8.5 Master of Heiligenkreuz, *Death of the Virgin*, c. 1400, tempera and oil with gold on panel, image: 66.00 x 53.30 cm (25 15/16 x 20 15/16 inches), unframed: 71.00 x 54.00 cm (27 15/16 x 21 1/4 inches) The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of the Friends of The Cleveland Museum of Art in memory of John Long Severance 1936.496 (© The Cleveland Museum of Art).

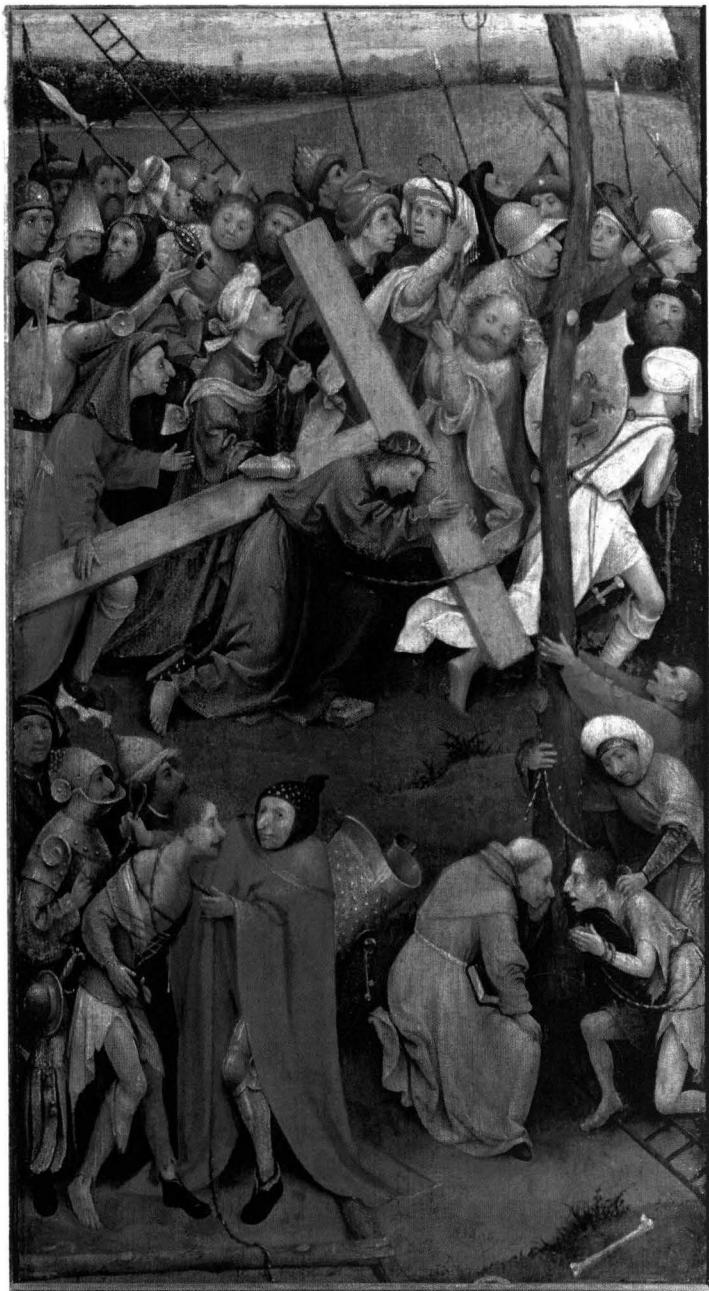


Figure 8.6 Hieronymus Bosch, *Christ Bearing the Cross*, c. 1480s (?), oil on panel, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY).



Figure 8.7 Doug Auld, *Rebecca and Louise*, diptych, oil on linen, 80 x 50 inches, 2005 (© dougauld 2005, photo courtesy Doug Auld).



Figure 8.8 *Garden of Vices*, engraving, late fifteenth century, Venice? (public domain).

ostendit. quoniam agnoscatur ex fructu quod est. quod modicū est utiliter mutando posse
sunt spes fructus enim carni superbia radix est fructus spiritus humilitatis. que diuisi
tas radicem inspecta. quis fructus de his eligendis sit per aptam declarat indicia.
Quia ergo vita et mores ex arborum fructu puerit. formam viri usque hinc ponere

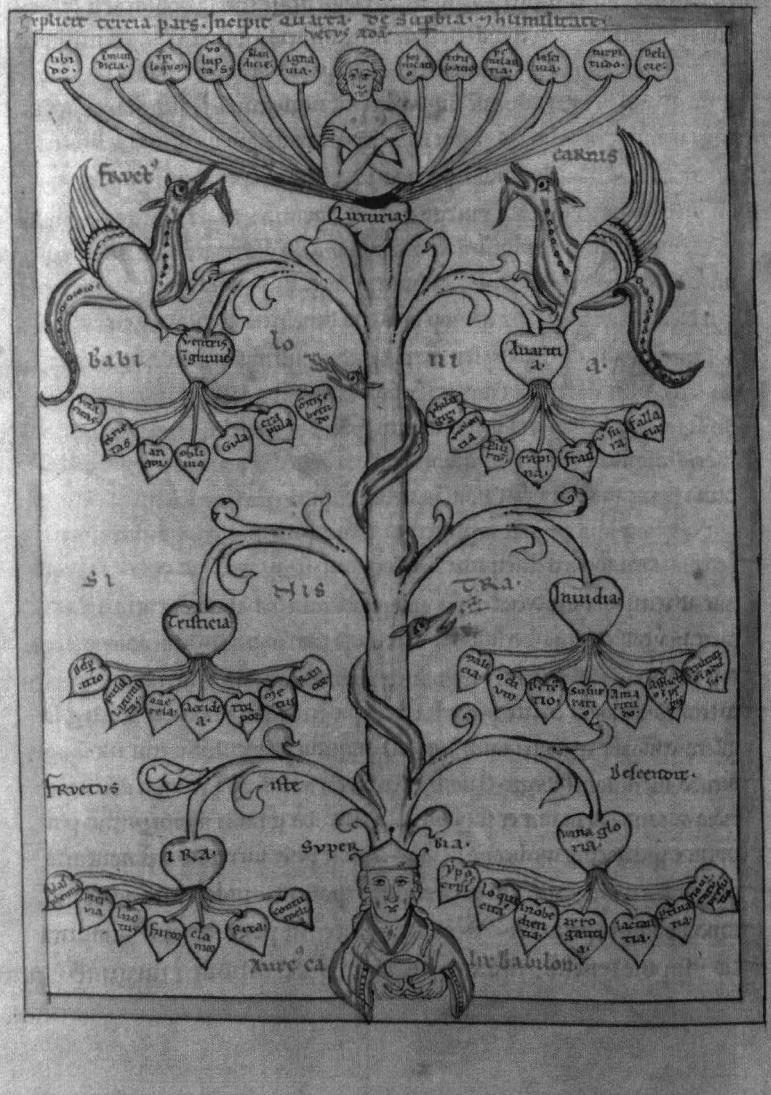


Figure 8.9 The Tree of Vices, from the *Speculum virginum*, Himmerode, Germany, first quarter of the thirteenth century, Walters Ms. W.72, fol. 25v (Photo: The Walters Art Museum).



Figure 8.10 *Desperatio* and *Luxuria* [or, *Despair*], 1125–1140, detail of demon from nave capital (south face), north aisle, second pier, French Romanesque, Church of Sainte-Madeleine, Vézelay, France (Foto Marburg / Art Resource, NY).



Figure 8.11 Giovanni Canavesio and Giovanni Baleison, *Judas Iscariot Hanged Himself* [or, *Suicide of Judas*], 1492, fresco, Chapelle Notre-Dame-des-Fontaines, La Brigue, France (© François Guenet / Art Resource, NY).



Figure 8.12 Temptation to Despair, *Ars Moriendi*, Germany, c. 1466, The Library of Congress, Rosenwald 20 (Photo: courtesy of the Lessing Rosenwald Collection, Rare Book division, the Library of Congress).



Figure 8.13 Hope for Forgiveness, *Ars Moriendi*, Germany, c. 1466, The Library of Congress, Rosenwald 20 (Photo: courtesy of the Lessing Rosenwald Collection, Rare Book division, the Library of Congress).

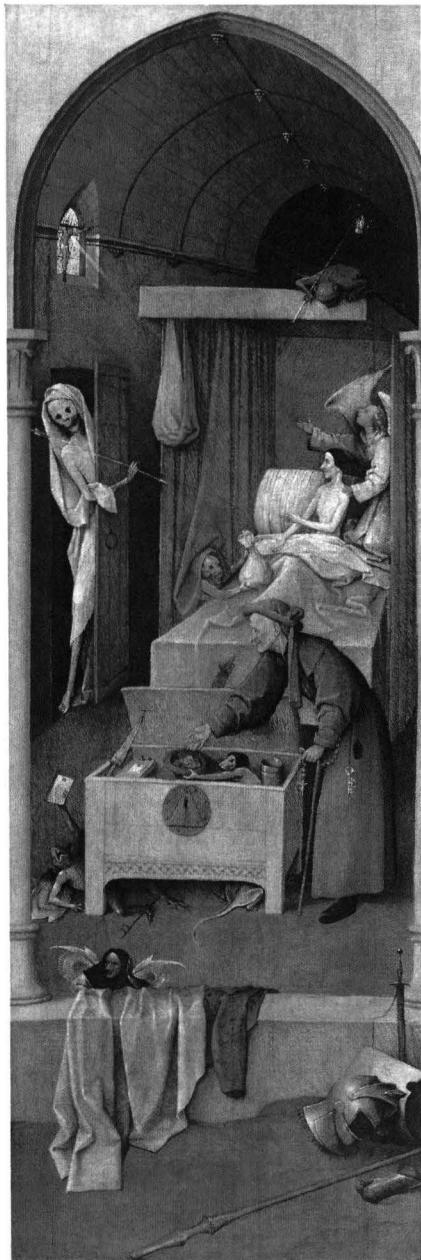


Figure 8.14 Hieronymus Bosch, *Death and the Miser*, c. 1485–1490, oil on panel, overall: 93 x 31 1/36 5/8 x 12 3/16 inches, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Samuel H. Kress Collection, 1952.5.33 (Art Resource, NY).

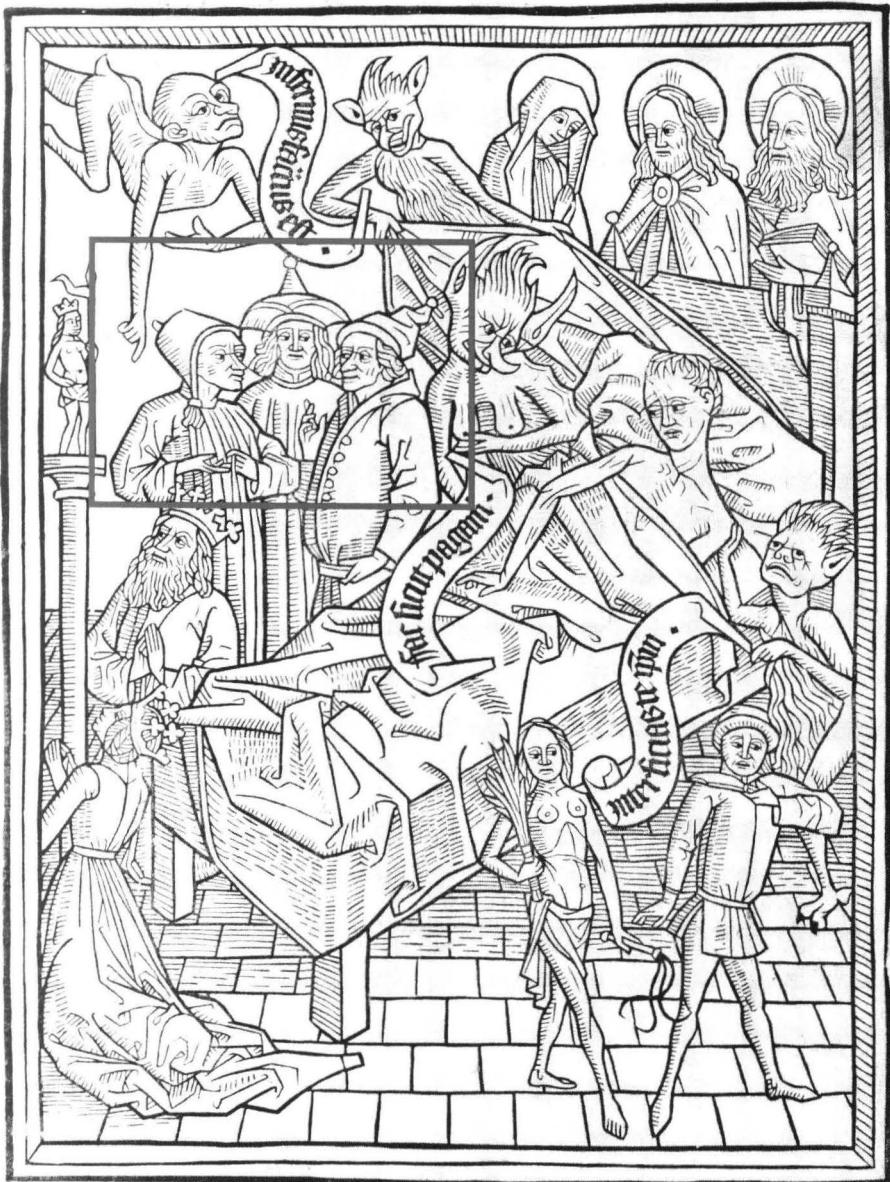


Figure 8.15a Temptation to Lose Faith, detail, *Ars Moriendi*, Germany, c. 1466, The Library of Congress, Rosenwald 20 (Photo: courtesy of the Lessing Rosenwald Collection, Rare Book division, the Library of Congress).



Figure 8.15b Hieronymus Bosch, *Christ Carrying the Cross*, c. 1490–1510, detail, Museum voor Schone Kunsten Ghent (Gianni Dagli Orti / The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY).

Notes

My thanks to Maureen Miller and Edward Wheatley for inviting me to speak at the Newberry symposium, and for their valuable work on this chapter; to Robert Carroll, as always, for his glorious editing skills; and, of course, to Barbara Rosenwein who has been an inspiration for many, many years.

- 1 This discussion is usually centered on the extraordinary features of the remarkable horde that surrounds Christ. See Larry Silver who, in discussing *Christ Carrying the Cross* in the context of Bosch's other half-length passion images, suggests that painting indeed belongs to Bosch, and points out a visual continuity between this and Bosch's other *Carrying of the Cross*, now in Vienna, *Hieronymus Bosch* (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 2006), 329–37, esp. at 334–35. See also several essays in *Hieronymus Bosch, New Insights into His Life and Work*, eds. Jos Koldeweij, Bernard Vermet, with Barbera van Kooij (Ghent: Ludion, 2001), which mention the painting. In chapter 3, "Hieronymus Bosch and Italy?" Bernard Aikema dismisses the influence of Leonard Da Vinci's study of grotesque heads on the panel (27–28) and points instead to northern passion scenes and the prints of the Martin Schongauer and Master E.S., among others. In chapter 17, "Parallels between Hieronymus Bosch's Imagery and Decorated Material Culture from the Period between Circa 1450 and 1525," Hans Jassen, Olaf Goubitz, and Jaap Kottman attribute to the faces "Satanic Cruelty" (191); on 108, Roger van Schoute, Hélène Verougstraete, and Carmen Garrido discuss the conservation of the panel in "Bosch and his sphere. Technique." See also Walter Bosing, *Hieronymus Bosch, C. 1450–1516: Between Heaven and Hell* (Cologne: Taschen, 2004), 77–78.
- 2 E.g., Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *The American Historical Review* 107.3 (2002): 35.
- 3 Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse*, trans. James E. Falen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 219.
- 4 Aleksandr Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse*, trans. and comm. Vladimir Nabokov, volume 2 (New York: Bollingen Foundation 1964), xxxiv, note 8.
- 5 On the discussion of and social constructivism vs. basic emotion see Anna Wierzbicka, *Semantics, Culture, and Cognition: Universal Human Concepts in Culture-Specific Configurations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 169–76, who says, "If there are some pan-human emotional prototypes, they cannot be identified by means of English folk-categories such as anger, shame, or disgust; they can only be identified in a culture-independent semantic meta-language" (176). There exists a robust bibliography in Russian devoted to the concept of *toska* in literary, linguistic, and cognitive studies.
- 6 See, e.g., Paul Ekman, *Emotions Revealed: Recognizing Faces and Feelings to Improve Communication and Emotional Life* (New York: Times Books, 2003).
- 7 For a thorough critique of universalist and presentist attitudes toward emotions, see Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions," *Passions in Context: International Journal for the History and Theory of Emotions* 1.1 (2010): 1–32, esp. 2–10.
- 8 Image agency and the attendant concept of response have become hotly pursued topics among historians of medieval and early modern art, who use, even while acknowledging their limitations, David Freedberg's *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) and Alfred Gell's *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) as the foundation for their own work.
- 9 Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions," 842.

- 10 See, e.g., a recent case study by David Areford, *The Art of Empathy: The Mother of Sorrows in Northern Renaissance Art and Devotion* (Jacksonville: The Cummer Museum, 2013), a catalogue that accompanied the exhibition *The Art of Empathy: The Cummer Mother of Sorrows in Context*.
- 11 Esther Cohen, *The Modulated Scream: Pain in Late Medieval Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 3.
- 12 Ludolph adds: “Your part will be . . . to put aside all other preoccupations; and then, with all the affection of your heart . . . make yourself present to what the Lord Jesus has said and done, and to what is being narrated, just as if you were actually there, and heard him with your own ears, and saw him with your own eyes.” (*The Hours of the Passion Taken from The Life of Christ by Ludolph the Saxon*, ed. and trans. Henry James Coleridge [London: Burns and Oates 1887], 2).
- 13 *Meditations on the Life of Christ, an Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*, trans. Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 387. This edition, based on BN ms. Ital. 115, still attributes the text to Saint Bonaventure; I will use this as well as the more recent translation by Francis X. Taney, Sr., Anne Miller, and C. Mary Stallings-Taney, which names John of Caulibus as the author: *Meditations on the Life of Christ* (Asheville: Pegasus Press, 2000). Stallings-Taney has also recently edited the Latin text as *Iohannis de Caulibus Meditaciones vite Christi: olim S. Bonaventuro Attributae* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997). For the purposes of this chapter I will identify the author as John of Caulibus, although this identification is far from definitive; see, e.g. Sarah McNamer, “The Origins of the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*,” *Speculum* 84 (2009): 905–55.
- 14 Emphasis mine. Taney, Sr., Miller, and Stallings-Taney, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, 4.
- 15 Ibid., 249.
- 16 Ibid., 250.
- 17 “The Privity of the Passion,” in *Cultures of Piety: Medieval English Devotional Literature in Translation*, eds. Anne Clark Bartlett and Thomas H. Bestul (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 91.
- 18 Discussion and translation of original excerpts appear in John F. Moffitt, *Paint-erly Perspective and Piety: Religious Uses of the Vanishing Point, from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2008), 53–54. John of Genoa is discussed and translated in Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 41. Examples of this type of discourse are numerous; e.g. Albertus Magnus similarly suggests that “something is not secure enough by hearing, but it is made firm by seeing”; see the discussion by Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 17. The bibliography on image-guided meditation is too broad to include here.
- 19 Leon Battista Alberti, *Della pittura*, ed. Luigi Mallè (Florence: Sansoni, 1950), 75.
- 20 On the relation of the Veronica and the nature of visual representation, see, first and foremost, essays in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation: Papers from a Colloquium at the Biblioteca Hertziana, Rome and the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1996*, eds. Herbert Kessler and Gerhard Wolf (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1998); Jeffrey Hamburger, “Vision and the Veronica,” in *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone, 1998); and Alexa Sand, “Saving Face: The Veronica and the *visio dei*,” in *Vision, Devotion, and Self-Representation in Late Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 27–84.
- 21 See Henry S. Francis, “The Nativity by Gerard David,” *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 45 (1958): 225–36; Wolfgang Stechow, *European Paintings before 1500, Catalogue of Paintings: Part One* (Cleveland: Cleveland

- Museum of Art, 1974), 150–53, cat. 53; Junko Ninagawa, “A Succession of Wishes: The Triptych of the Baptism of Christ by Gerard David,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 76 (2013): 13–50.
- 22 On the painting, see, among others, Henry S. Francis, “A Panel by the Master of Heiligenkreuz, a Memorial to John Long Severance,” *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 24.10 (1937): 153–56; Holger A. Klein, Stephen N. Fliegel, and Virginia Brilliant, *Sacred Gifts and Worldly Treasures: Medieval Masterworks from the Cleveland Museum of Art* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 2007), 236, cat. 87; Heinrich Theodor Musper, *Altdeutsche Malerei* (Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1970), 27, 93; and Jorg Oberhaidacher, *Die Wiener Tafelmalerei der Gotik um 1400: Wekgruppen-Maler-Stile* (Wien: Bohlau Verlag, 2012), 33, 343, no. 12.
 - 23 The bibliography on this painting is vast; see especially Otto van Simson, “Compassio and Co-redemptio in Rogier Van Der Weyden’s Descent from the Cross,” *Art Bulletin* 35.1 (1953): 9–16, and, most recently and inventively, Amy Powell, *Depositions: Scenes from the Late Medieval Church and the Modern Museum* (New York: Zone Books/MIT Press, 2012), who sees it as “perpetual self-absenting” (35).
 - 24 Bernard of Clairvaux, “Ad clericos de conversione (On Conversion).” in *Selected Works*, ed. and trans. Gillian R. Evans (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), 69.
 - 25 Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 301.
 - 26 Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 98.
 - 27 See, e.g., Emmanuel Levinás, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan T. Pepperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi, *Studies in Continental Thought* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008); Jean-Paul Sartre, *L’Être et le néant: essai d’ontologie phénoménologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943).
 - 28 Garland-Thomson, *Staring*, 21.
 - 29 Erving Goffman, “On Face-Work” (1955), in *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*, ed. Charles Lemert (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 338–43.
 - 30 See Roger Bacon, “De Multiplicatione Specierum,” in *The “Opus majus” of Roger Bacon*, ed. and intro. John Henry Bridges, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897–1900), 2, 405–552. Medieval theories of vision are discussed most fully in David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Katherine Tachau, *Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham: Optics, Epistemology, and the Foundations of Semantics, 1250–1345* (Leiden: Brill, 1988); and Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave, 2002). It should be said that the concept of intromission remained a presence at least through the seventeenth century.
 - 31 On medieval memory see, first and foremost, Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*; Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge, 1999 [1966]); Paolo Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory: The Quest for a Universal Language*, trans. Stephen Lucas (London: Athlone Press, 2000). For early modern memory and its mechanisms, see Lina Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory: Literary and Iconographic Models in the Age of the Printing Press*, trans. Jeremy Parzen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).
 - 32 Historians of medieval art have engaged with this subject; see especially Michael Camille, “Before the Gaze: the internal senses and late medieval practices of seeing,” and Cynthia Hahn, “Visio Dei: changes in medieval visuality” in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 169–223; Cynthia Hahn, “Vision,” in *Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Rudolph Conrad (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 44–64; and Alexa Sand,

- “Visuality,” *Studies in Iconography* 33 (2012), 89–95. For a case study that interrogates the processes of visual and mnemonic impressions in terms of late medieval print culture, see Elina Gertsman, “Multiple Impressions: Christ in the Wine Press and the Semiotics of the Printed Image,” *Art History* 36.2 (2013): 310–37.
- 33 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Ad clericos de conversione*, 69.
 - 34 Jan van Ruusbroeck, *De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum* (*Die geestelike brulocht*) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); Geert Grote, “A Treatise on Four Classes of Subjects Suitable for Meditation: A Sermon on the Lord’s Nativity,” in *Devotio Moderna: Basic Writings*, intro. and trans. John Van Engen (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 98–118.
 - 35 Charles Abbott Conway, *The Vita Christi of Ludolph of Saxony and Late Medieval Devotion Centred on the Incarnation: A Descriptive Analysis* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1976), 136. Studies on affective devotion are numerous; I signal here Sarah McNamer’s recent study, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).
 - 36 In exploring later medieval definitions of despair, Susan Snyder draws attention to Bernard of Clairvaux’s *De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae*, which defines the different stages of mystical ascent, the first of which is humility “achieved through self-recognition, the painful process by which the soul realizes its unlikeness to God. Self-knowledge is the beginning of salvation, but without a corollary knowledge of God it will bring only despair” (“The Left Hand of God: Despair in Medieval and Renaissance Tradition,” *Studies in the Renaissance* 12 [1965]: 18–59, at 22–23). See further on despair Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Transmitting Despair by Manuscript and Print,” in *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History*, ed. Elina Gertsman (New York: Routledge, 2012), 249–60.
 - 37 PL 73:959.
 - 38 Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 319–23.
 - 39 On medieval representations of vices and virtues, see Emile Mâle, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century* (New York, Harper, 1958), 98–130; Adolf Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Mediaeval Art from Early Christian Times to the Thirteenth Century* (London: Warburg Institute, 1939); and Jennifer O’Reilly, *Studies in the Iconography of Virtues and Vices in the Middle Ages* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988).
 - 40 Snyder, “The Left Hand of God,” 35.
 - 41 Kirk Ambrose provides an up-to-date bibliography on this capital, which pairs Despair with Lust; he identifies the demon as Ira and points out that the capital has been interpreted as a narrative, with Luxuria as a cause of despair: *The Nave Sculpture of Vézelay: The Art of Monastic Viewing* (Toronto: PIMS, 2006), 92.
 - 42 On the Notre-Dame-des-Fontaines murals, see Véronique Plesch, *Painter and Priest: Giovanni Canavesio’s Visual Rhetoric and the Passion Cycle at La Brigue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); and Paul Roque, *Notre-Dame des Fontaines: guide des peintures murales de La Brigue* (Nice: Serre, 2002).
 - 43 Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, part III, in *Opera omnia quae graece vel latine tantum exstant et ejus nomine circumferuntur*, vol. 5, eds. Charles Delarue, Charles Vincent Delarue, and Carl Heinrich Eduard Lommatzsch (Berolini: Sumtibus Haude et Spener, 1835), section 117, p. 26.
 - 44 *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*, ed. J. K. Elliott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 301–302.
 - 45 As Mosche Barash suggests, “[t]he belief in an intrinsic affinity between . . . the treacherous apostle Judas and ultimate, total despair, also implies a judgment on despair” (“Despair in the Medieval Imagination,” *Social Research* 66.2 [1999]: 565–76, at 568). See Jean-Claude Schmitt, “Le Suicide au Moyen Age,” *Annales, Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 31 (1976): 3–28; for suicide and despair, see

- Jody Enders, *Death by Drama and Other Medieval Urban Legends* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 169–81, and Alexander Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 369–95. On Judas and despair, see also Murray, *Suicide*, 2:323–68 and Norbert Schnitzler, “Judas’ Death: Some Remarks Concerning the Iconography of Suicide,” *Medieval History Journal* 3.1 (2000): 103–18. For a recent discussion of this topic in the context of other suicide images, in this case auto-crucifixion, see Kathryn Smith, “The Monk Who Crucified Himself,” in *Thresholds of Medieval Visual Culture: Liminal Spaces*, eds. Elina Gertsman and Jill Stevenson (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), 44–72.
- 46 Thomas Aquinas, *Matt. evang. Exposition* 27 in *Opera Omnia*, introduction by Vernon J. Bourke (New York: Musurgia Publishers, 1948–50), 10:262.
- 47 Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum. Textum ad quatuor codicum manuscriptorum editionisque principis fidem*, ed. Joseph Strange (Cologne: Heberle, 1966 [1851]).
- 48 Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, 209–10, trans. mine.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Reproduced in *Northern Renaissance Art: Sources and Documents*, ed. Wolfgang Stechow (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), 16–18. This passage is interpreted in many ways: see Hjalmar Sander, “Beitrag zur Biographie Hugos van der Goes und zur Chronologie seiner Werke,” *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 35 (1912): 535; Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting, Its Origins and Character*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 331; Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, *Born under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists: A Documented History from Antiquity to the French Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1963), 108; Stechow, *Northern Renaissance Art*, 15; and H.C. Erik Midelfort, *A History of Madness in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 26–32. See William McCloy, *The Ofhuys Chronicle and Hugo van der Goes* (Ph.D. diss., State University of Iowa, 1958), on Ofhuys’s account as influenced by (and stolen from in its description of illness) Bartholomaeus Anglicus’s *On the Properties of Things*, esp. 31–32. On Hugo’s illness and its relationship to his work, see Bernhard Ridderbos, *De melancholie van de kunstenaar: Hugo van der Goes en de oudnederlandse schilderkunst* (“s-Gravenhage: SDU, 1991) and Susan Koslow, “The Impact of Hugo van der Goes’s Mental Illness,” in *Healing and History: Essays for George Rosen*, ed. Charles E. Rosenberg (New York: Science History Publications, 1979), 27–50.
- 51 London, British Library ms. Add. 37049, fols. 89v–94r (ca. 1460–1500), a Carthusian miscellany that includes treatises, poems, chronicles, and some of Mandeville’s travels. See Jessica Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 230–31.
- 52 The relationship between humors, temperaments, and memory was explored by Aristotle who suggested that “dry” people remember things much better than “moist” ones: Aristotle, *De Memoria et Reminiscencia*, in *Aristotelis Opera edidit Academia Regia Borussica*, ed. August Immanuel Bekker (Berlin: Berolini, 1831–1870), 453a 14. One is tempted to speculate whether Caesarius’s protagonists in the throes of despair chose to throw themselves into water as an antidote to the dryness of their melancholy humour.
- 53 Ramon Llull, ‘De astronomia’, 1.1 in M. Pereira and T. Pindl-Bücher, eds., *Raimundi Lulli Opera Latina*, Vol. 17 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1989), 108–109, translated and discussed in Rebecca Zorach, *The Passionate Triangle*, Chicago, 2011, 118. Llull associated melancholies both with water and earth; ostensibly, the combination of the two elements would make for the most effective impression-retaining medium.
- 54 Serm. I, Dom. IV in Quadrag, *Opera*, XIII, 171.

- 55 See n. 46 for Aquinas; for Auld's quote, see Garland-Thomson, *Staring*, 80.
- 56 Hugh of Saint-Victor, *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith (De sacramentis)*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Cambridge: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1951), 409.
- 57 For instance, the personification of Hope brought down Despair in a fourteenth-century stained glass window from the Collegiate Church of Saint Florentius, in Niederhaslach (Alsace).
- 58 Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, intro. Eamon Duffy, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012 [1993]), 77.
- 59 For editions and analysis of texts and/or images, see *The English ars moriendi*, ed. David William Atkinson (New York: P. Lang, 1992); Florence Bayard, *L'art du bien mourir au XVe siècle: étude sur les arts du bien mourir au bas moyen âge à la lumière d'un "Ars moriendi" allemand du XVe siècle* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000); Donald F. Duclow, "Everyman and the *Ars Moriendi*: Fifteenth-Century Ceremonies of Dying," *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 6 (1983): 93–113; Arthur Erwin Imhof, *Ars moriendi: die Kunst des Sterbens einst und heute* (Wien: Böhlau, 1991); Mary C. O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well: The Development of the Ars moriendi* (New York: AMS Press, 1966); and Rainer Rudolf, *Ars Moriendi. Von der Kunst des heilsamen Leben und Sterbens* (Köln: Böhlau, 1957).
- 60 Jean Michel, *Le mystère de la Passion* (Angers 1486), ed. Omer Jodogne (Gembloux, J. Duculot, 1959).
- 61 Michel, *Le mystère*, lines 23797–8000, discussed in Jody Enders, *Death by Drama and Other Medieval Urban Legends*, 175–76, translated therein at 176.
- 62 Ibid., lines 23920–21, and 23948.
- 63 On this image as an allegory of avarice and pride, and its connection to *Ars moriendi*, see Silver, *Bosch*, 239–43; literature on the painting includes John Oliver Hand and Martha Wolff, *Early Netherlandish Painting* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1986); Paul Vandenbroeck, *Jheronimus Bosch. De Verlossing van de wereld* (Ghent: Ludion, 2002), 104–107; Anne M. Morganstern, "The Pawns in Bosch's *Death and the Miser*," *Studies in the History of Art* 12 (1982): 33–41; and Christopher Paparella and Heleen Vinken with Lucy Schlüter, *Icons and Enigmas: Investigations in Art* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2014), 77–93; a full bibliography is available at <http://www.nga.gov/collection/gallery/gg39/gg39-41645-lit.html>.
- 64 Nonetheless, even the *Ars moriendi* does not hand out forgiveness easily. As Austra Reinis writes, "the dying person from the *Ars moriendi* finds himself in the state of uncertainty. The one who has done many good works cannot be certain of his salvation, but the one who is assaulted by his past sins cannot be sure of his damnation either. All are uncertain of their fate and therefore must and can have hope" (*Reforming the Art of Dying: The Ars Moriendi in the German Reformation (1519–1528)* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007], 20–21). In reprising Sven Grossé's argument in *Heilsun gewissheit und Scrupulositas im späten Mittelalter: Studien zu Johannes Gerson und Gattungen der Frömmigkeitstheologie seiner Zeit* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), and agreeing with it, Reinis writes that the *ars moriendi* tradition "must be interpreted in the context of three theological doctrines: the doctrine of the uncertainty of salvation, the teaching that human beings may earn their salvation by doing what is in them, and the doctrine of free will . . . [The dying man] is not to despair of his sins, but he is not given any certainty of salvation either. Paradoxically, these deathbed gestures of humility and hope amount to good works that restore the dying person to a state of grace at the moment of death, enabling his soul to proceed directly to heaven" (22).
- 65 Jean-Claude Schmitt might argue otherwise; in "Suicide" he writes that "la *Desperatio* n'était ni un sentiment, ni un état psychique, mais un Vice," 4 ("Desperatio was neither a feeling nor a psychological state, but a vice").

Emotions, Communities, and Difference in Medieval Europe

**Essays in Honor of
Barbara H. Rosenwein**

**Edited by Maureen C. Miller and
Edward Wheatley**



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