IMAGE AS WORD:
VISUAL OPENINGS, VERBAL IMAGININGS

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> Like pictures, or like books gay coverings made
> For lay-men, are all women thus array'd;
> Themselves are mystick books, which only wee
> (Whom their imputed grace will dignifie)
> Must see reveal'd.
> John Donne, "Elegy 19"[1]

Reading the Virgin's Body

Ruminating upon the processes of reading, the Benedictine scholar Pierre Bersuire (d. 1362) once characterized Christ as "a sort of book written into the skin of the virgin. . . . That book was spoken in the disposition of the Father, written in the conception of the mother, exposited in the clarification of the nativity, corrected in the Passion, erased in the flagellation, punctuated in the imprint of the wounds, adorned in the crucifixion above the pulpit, illuminated in the outpouring of blood, bound in the resurrection, and examined in the ascension."[2] Bersuire's characterization of Mary—whose body forms both the substance and the covers of the sacred volume that contains holy narratives—finds a striking visual parallel in the statue of the Virgin and Child (ca. 1300), originally from the Rhine Valley and now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figs. 1–2).[3] The statue's small size, about 36.8 cm high, suggests that it was an object of private prayer and meditation; it likely came from a Cologne convent and belonged to a nun.[4] The crowned *Maria lactans* holds the Christ-Child on her left knee; a dove, held in Christ's hand, serves as an intermediary between the Holy Spirit and the exposed flesh. A vertical gash, which begins at Mary's neck and ends at her feet, hints at the hidden content and marks the place where the statue opens to unveil a large carved Throne of Mercy surrounded by painted scenes from Christ's Infancy on the hinged sides. The very makeup of the Shrine Madonna therefore signals an invitation to read it as an illuminated devotional compendium: both are predicated on revelatory potential; both visualize and make visible the Word; and both offer to their viewers a kind of a mnemonic map, designed to provide tools for the recollection of and meditation upon the gospel narratives. In this essay, I will explore

Fig. 1. The Shrine Madonna, closed. Rhine Valley, ca. 1300. (Photo: © The Metro-
politan Museum of Art.)

the different ways that the Shrine Madonna offers compelling and sophisticated
ways of negotiating the verbal and the visual—despite the fact that it features not
a single written word.

For some years, medievalists have attended to what Michael Curschmann
once called an "audiovisual poetic": the different ways word and image function
together and subvert one another.[5] Scholars have explored gaps and disjunctions
between texts and miniatures in illuminated manuscripts;[6] they have read Gothic

Fig. 2. The Shrine Madonna, open. Rhine Valley, ca. 1300. (Photo: © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

cathedrals as scholastic treatises;[7] they have looked at the ways visual and verbal cues work in concert to direct the viewing experience of late medieval murals.[8] St. Gregory's famous dictum, "Pictures are the books for the illiterate," has given rise to numerous discussions, both medieval and modern, about the (im)possibility of reading images, especially narrative images, as recorded information—as oral, aural, and written texts.[9] Although they have been fruitfully, albeit often briefly, analyzed in terms of monastic devotional practices, Marian studies, late medieval

mysticism, and norms of production, the Shrine Madonna statues have not been discussed as visual texts.[10] The complex and compelling capacity of these images to be so read, then, forms the central concern of the present study.

Shrine Madonnas possessed a tremendous appeal in the later Middle Ages: they were popular throughout Europe, including France and Spain, Germany and Sweden.[11] Larger statues were placed on altars and were opened on particular feast days, while smaller ones were owned by individuals and used for private devotions, frequently by female monastics.[12] Their exterior shows the Virgin, often crowned, holding the Christ-Child; the Child may sit or stand on her lap, and is sometimes shown nursing. Within, the sculptures are painted and/or carved. A number of statues contain pure narratives: those particular to Iberia center on the Virgin's life, while those found in France and Switzerland generally emphasize Christ's. The majority of the Shrine Madonnas, however, feature the carved Throne of Mercy in the middle, although the lateral imagery differs dramatically. Some statues, normally linked to the patronage of the Teutonic Order, figure crowds of the pious gathered on either side of the Trinity; this kind of image, in which Mary's body doubles as her cloak, is clearly related to the *Schutzmantelmadonna type*. Others, like the Metropolitan Madonna, surround the Throne of Mercy with christological narratives. The Trinitarian Madonnas in particular caused some discomfort in theological circles as early as the fifteenth century when Jean Gerson famously declared that they may lead to a theological error. Citing Gerson's remarks, Pope Benedict XIV banned the sculptures in 1745.[13]

The papal ban belies the fact that these sculptures were embedded within a complex cultural discourse that consisted of prayers, hymns, performances, and poems, all of which alluded to Mary as the bearer of the entire Godhead. For instance, a popular prayer originally attributed to Adam of St. Victor (d. 1192?) that casts the Virgin as the chamber for the Trinity—"Salve mater pietatis / Et totius trinitatis / Nobile triclinium"—is continued in fourteenth-century German hymns as "Hail, mother of good counsel, of the threefold Trinity noble, beautiful, threefold fortress" and "Greetings, mother most good, since God flowered from you in his threefoldness."[14] Poetry shifts the conception into the Virgin's heart: "You, mirror, without any blot, you enclosed the one and threefold God in your heart."[15] This rhetoric is not limited to German lyric. A fifteenth-century Middle English poem, *The Rose that bore Jesu*, exalts the Virgin's womb within which "we may weel see / That he is God in personys thre,"[16] while in *The Life of Our Lady* John Lydgate has Gabriel refer to Mary as the one in whom "all the vertu of the trynyte shall yshrouded be."[17] Although here the Trinity does not physically inhabit Mary's womb, it does so, and quite emphatically, in the Anglian N-town's *Salutation and Conception* play. There, the stage directions insist that all three members of the Trinity should descend upon Mary: "here þe holy gost discendit

with iii bemys (beams) to our lady / the Sone of þe godhed nest with iii bemys / to þe holy gost / the fadyr godly with iii bemys to þe sone / *And so entre All thre to here bosom*."[18] Subsequently, Gabriel calls the Virgin the "throne of þe trinyte," and, in the *Visitation* play, Elizabeth characterizes her as the "trone and tabernakyl of þe hyჳ trinite."[19] In other words, the Trinitarian Shrine Madonna does not exist in a textual vacuum but is intimately bound with the written and spoken word.

"Bound" in more sense than one: for Bersuire's remark—that Christ was written into Mary—casts the Virgin's body as the cover of the sacred codex. The interior of such a book is visualized clearly on folio 143v of a fourteenth-century devotional miscellany (BNF, nouv. acq. fr. 4338). Prefacing the text, which characterizes Christ as "cest benoit livre de vie" (this blessed book of life), is a miniature: a woman prays before a large open book, which takes up nearly half of the illumination's space (Fig. 3).[20] At the center of the book, the body of Christ hangs limply on the cross, which serves also as the spine of this particular codex. Christ's stretched limbs visually echo the stretched parchment of the codex—both the represented book of life, and the book the readers hold in their hands.[21] Similarly, the crucified Christ formed part of the spine of the Shrine Madonna, albeit here framed by the entire Trinity: the enthroned God the Father, snuggly fitted within Mary's body, holds a cross carved in the form of the *lignum vitae,* the Tree of Life (the figures of Christ and the dove are lost, as the holes in the chest of God the Father as well as those in the cross clearly show). The Virgin's body therefore encloses the book of the entire Godhead, the book akin to the one composed by Mechthild of Magdeburg (d. 1282/84), which God explicates as his own Trinitarian substance:

> "The book is threefold
> And portrays me alone.
> The parchment that encloses it indicates my pure, white, just humanity
> That for your sake suffered death.
> The words symbolize my marvelous Godhead.
> It flows continuously
> Into your soul from my divine mouth.
> The sound of the words is a sign of my living spirit
> And through it achieves genuine truth."[22]

At the same time as it encloses the divine codex, the interior of the Shrine Madonna's body itself functions as a book inscribed with holy narratives. These are episodes from the Infancy of Christ that flank the sculpted Throne of Mercy: on the viewer's left, the Annunciation, the Nativity, and the Adoration of the Kings cascade down the inside of the Virgin's body; painted across them are the Visitation, the Presentation in the Temple, and the Annunciation to the Shepherds. Physically, the layout of images—which, as we will shortly see, interact with one
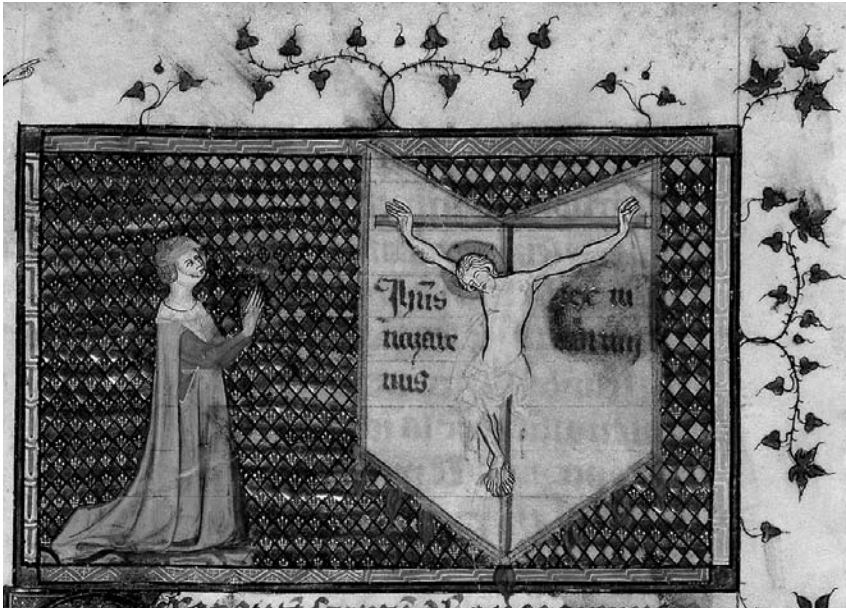
Fig. 3. Christ as the Book of Life. BNF, nouv. acc. fr. 4338, fol. 143v. (Photo: Biblio-thèque nationale de France.)

another in a rather complex fashion—is reminiscent of the design of contempo-rary manuscripts, in which multi-tiered narratives establish visual conversations across the facing folios (Fig. 4 a–b).[23] But the analogy to the manuscript here is not only physical but also metaphorical: the concept of Mary as a book had already appeared in the fourth century, and became a recurrent trope in theological writ-ings by the late Middle Ages.[24] Heinrich von St. Gallen elegantly sums up the simile in *Marienleben* (ca. 1400): "The holy Evangelist Matthew has written in his Gospel, which is read on the feast of the blessed Virgin Mary, it is the begin-ning of his Gospel: 'This is the book of the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ, son of David.' . . . Albert Magnus says about this that we are to understand by the book nothing but Mary, the precious book in which the precious letter Jesus Christ had been inscribed, when he lived inside her for nine months."[25] The metaphor takes a practical turn in the anonymous treatise *Wie Maria geistlich geleicht ist in zechen dingen einem puch*, which associates the Virgin's life with several of the stages required to create and use a codex.[26] It is notable that the extant copies of the treatise were made by nuns for their convents (both in Nuremberg); the earliest, copied by one Anna Winter, for the Poor Clares convent in 1400, and another, by Ursula Geiselherin, for the Dominican convent of St. Catherine in 1461.[27]

     The metaphor of the Virgin as a holy book is particularly apt for the Shrine Madonna who opens her body to reveal the Word written upon her womb, to offer to the viewer the sacred texts visualized within. The following study attempts to
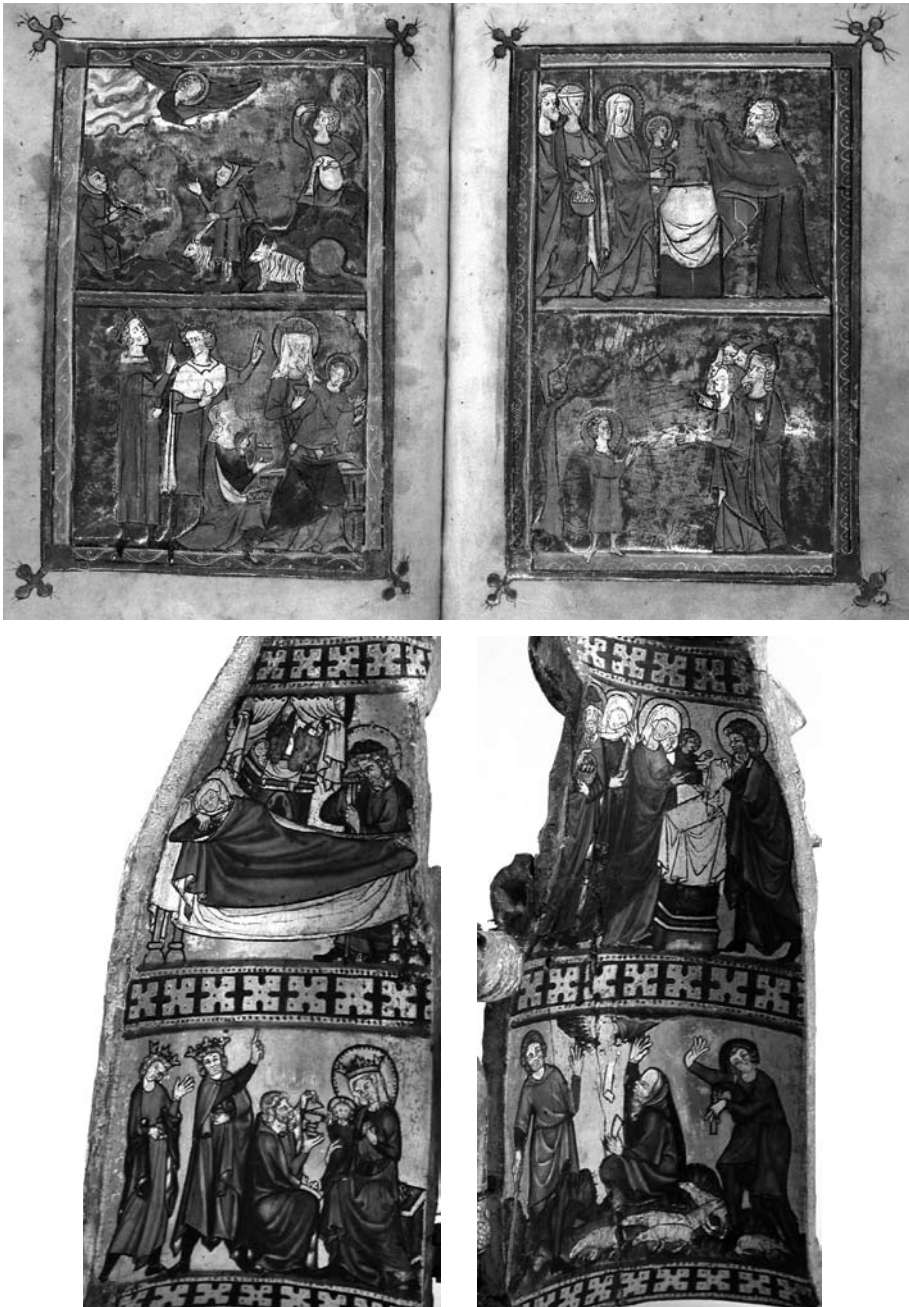
Fig. 4. A) Infancy narratives: Annunciation to the Shepherds, Adoration of the Magi, Presentation in the Temple, Christ among the Doctors. BL, Stowe 948, fols. 14v and 15; first quarter of the 14th century. (Photo: © The British Library Board.) B) Infancy narratives: Nativity, Adoration of the Magi, Presentation in the Temple, Annunciation to the Shepherds. The Shrine Madonna, interior. Rhine Valley, ca. 1300. (Photo: © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

explore the nature of these texts inscribed in the book of the Virgin's flesh, and to consider the role of the word in the construction of this image, as well as the role of the image in mediation of the word.

The Incarnate Word

The Salve, mater pietatis prayer, which visualizes Mary as an enclosure for the entire Godhead, continues by comparing her to a chamber for the Word Incarnate: "Verbi tamen incarnate / Speciale maiestati / Praeparans hospitium."[28] This metaphor of enclosure was a familiar one in medieval theology. In the roughly contemporary *Splendidissima gemma* antiphon, Hildegard of Bingen (d. 1179) exalts the Virgin by contrasting her with Eve who unsettled "the primal matrix" (word as creation): "To you the father spoke again / but this time / the word he uttered was a man / in your body."[29] Such poetics of Incarnation—whereby the Word became flesh, a tangible and material thing—is at the core of the visual reading of the Shrine Madonna, much as it was at the center of image making in general. For Augustine, as Meredith Jane Gill notes, God is "the wellspring of the Word as image as well as of the Word as meaning."[30] When in the eighth century the Gregorian dictum was expanded, images became correlated directly with embodiment: for Christ had "appeared visible to show us the invisible."[31]

The medieval viewer was accustomed to seeing the doctrine of the Incarnation visualized in a variety of ways. The theologically problematic image of the Christ-Child, already outfitted with the cross and descending towards Mary's ear just as she hears Gabriel's greeting, was nonetheless popular and appeared in panel paintings, Books of Hours, stained glass, and sculpture throughout the late Middle Ages.[32] In the north tympanum of the Würzburg Marienkapelle, for instance, the power of the word is underscored by the indication both of Gabriel's scripted greeting and of God the Father's utterance-turned-Child directed at Mary (Fig. 5). In other Annunciation representations, where time is collapsed, Mary already contains the Incarnate Word within and appears obviously pregnant.[33] Some images of the Virgin, which frequently appear in the context of the Visitation scene, visibly figure the Word made flesh within her body; in a fifteenth-century group from Passau, for example, the Christ-Child and the infant John are etched within uterine mandorlas incised in the cousins' bellies (Fig. 6a).[34] The literal visualization of the mystery of the Incarnation appears most plainly in sculptures that, like reliquaries, have a small trap door in the chest. Behind the door is a small chamber where, instead of a relic, stands a diminutive wooden doll representing the Christ-Child. For example, in the sculpture from St. Mary's church in the village of Malta, in Austrian Carinthia, dating to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, Mary's body is hollowed out in front to make room for an enclosure for the wooden

Fig. 5. The Annunciation from the north portal of the Marienkapelle. Würzburg, 15th century. (Photo: Foto Marburg / Art Resouce, NY.)

Christ-Child, which can be removed and reinserted into her flesh at will (Fig. 6b). This devotional image was meant, like many others, for those who desired to see the tangibility of salvation, to touch the imaged Word.[35]

The growing transparency of the Virgin's womb—or, rather, its visible manifestations—is epitomized in the Shrine Madonna, which unfolds its body in a mimetic process of birth. This is *performance* of birth, its enactment, not its depiction; one rarely sees the Virgin's labor represented in medieval art, the Nativity drawing from the *Meditationes vita Christi* (BnF, ital. 115, fol. 9r) being a very rare exception (Fig. 7).[36] The *Meditationes* birth is sedate and discreet. Mary leans against a column and separates the folds of her cloak, from which Christ-Child, already swaddled, slides out decorously. Conversely, the violent rupture of the Shrine Madonna's image—she is cut in half, flung apart—points to and exaggerates the moment when a body opens to deliver a child. The temporal shift is

Fig. 6. A) Christ etched in Mary's womb at the Visitation. Passau, early 15th century. (Photo: Author.) B) *Maria gravida*. St. Mary's Church, Malta (Carinthia), Austria, ca. 1400. (Photo: www.soisses.at.)

similarly jarring. When closed, the Metropolitan Mary is not represented pregnant but breastfeeding (Fig. 8); if the Nuremberg Annunciation group conflated time, here time is fractured, and *Maria lactans* opens in order to deliver the Incarnate Word to satisfy the beholder's ocular desire.[37] This performance of birth, as I have argued elsewhere, is made more visceral by the visual configuration of the interior, which resembles a seven-celled uterus as it was frequently imagined by a host of medieval thinkers: an elongated center flanked by six smaller compartments, three on each side.[38] The theory that a womb consisted of seven parts was common currency in the medieval world, expounded in numerous treatises, from the twelfth-century Honorius Augustodunensis's *De philosophia mundi* and *Anatomia Cophonis*[39] to the anonymous fifteenth-century *The Knowing of Woman's Kind in Childing*. The description of the seven uterine chambers in the latter (much as it was in Mondino de Luizzi's treatise on anatomy a century earlier) echoes uncannily the compartmentalization of the Shrine Madonna's body: "it is divided into seven chambers, of which three lie in the part towards the right side

Fig. 7. Christ's birth. *Meditationes vitae Christi*; BnF, ital. 115, fol. 19v. (Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France.)

Fig. 8. The Shrine Madonna, detail. Rhine Valley, ca. 1300. (Photo: © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

& three in the part toward the left side & the seventh even in the middle."[40] Here, the middle cavity is occupied by the Throne of Mercy—the focal iconic point of verbal gestation—while the subsidiary "chambers," carefully delineated, are filled with narrative paintings that reinforce the central image.

The breaking of Mary's body is at odds both with the narratives of Christ's conception that liken Mary's womb to glass, unshattered by the divine light, and with the narratives of Christ's birth, which caused her no pain; to quote Rachel Fulton, "the hymenal seal of her womb" was left "unbroken not only in the conception of her Child but also (as theologians have argued since antiquity) in his birth."[41] This performative tension signals that what the Virgin brings forth in this particular birth is not the Incarnated Word in the form of a joyous child, but, in effect, that the revelation of her womb unveils a much more macabre chamber—the chamber not of Christ's birth but of his sacrifice. The womb/tomb substitution is not unusual: in writing about the isolation of an anchorhold, the author of *Ancrene Wisse*, for instance, draws comparisons between the enclosures of Mary's uterus and Christ's sepulcher: "the womb is a narrow dwelling, where our Lord was a recluse. . . . Are you imprisoned within four wide walls? And he in a narrow cradle, nailed to the cross, enclosed tight in a stone tomb."[42] Moreover, debates on the nature of the Eucharist produced comparisons between Mary's womb and the altar where Christ's sacrifice is reenacted during every mass, as in Peter Damian's sermons: "The same body of Christ which the blessed Virgin bore, which she cherished at her bosom . . . it is that, I say . . . which we now receive from the sacred altar."[43]

That the Crucifixion in the interior of the Shrine Madonna is shown within the context of the Throne of Mercy is telling. This iconographic theme is frequently associated with the Mass and found depicted on a variety of liturgical objects, including patens and portable altars; it first appears, for instance, in the Cambrai missal of ca. 1120 (Cambrai, Médiathèque municipale, MS 234, fol. 2r), where it is placed before the beginning of the canon of the Mass *Te igitur* and is accompanied by a plea to God the Father to accept the eucharistic offering (Fig. 9).[44] In discussing the sacramental significance of the Throne of Mercy as, above all, the image of Christ's sacrificial death, Gertrud Schiller finds the genesis of this image in the tenth-century Cross of Lothar, which includes the hand of God and the dove of the Holy Spirit above the crucified Christ. The Throne of Mercy, she convincingly argues, "gave prominence to God's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice. . . . The emphasis of the message of the image was not at first on the Trinity but on the Father's sacrifice of his Son in an expiatory Death, a Death he offered to the world for its Redemption."[45] If the Carinthian statue—whose coffin-shaped chest cavity indicates, simultaneously, a life-giving uterus and a sepulcher—opens up nonetheless to show a living Christ-Child stored within, then the Shrine Madonna delivers the sacrificial body of the dead Christ. The iconicity of this body offered within the

Fig. 9. The Throne of Mercy. Cambrai, Bibl. Mun., MS 234, fol.
2. (Photo: Cambrai, Médiathèque municipale, Cliché CNRS-
IRHT.)

visual context of the Throne of Mercy underscores the narrative characteristic of
the Infancy scenes, and the contrast between the two is remarkable; the opening of
the Virgin's body, in fact, sets in motion two competing narratives—the narrative
of birth and the narrative of death.

The Narrative Impetus

In discussing the place of Mary's eucharistic affinities in vernacular litera-
ture, Miri Rubin writes about "a strong bond . . . created between the eucharistic
body reborn at the mass and the original body born from a virgin womb, to produce
the powerful image linked both to crucifixion and to Nativity in the Virgin Mary."[46]

This associative tension between narratives of Infancy and narratives of sacrifice writes another equally complex visual text within the Shrine Madonna, a text which consists of gaps and ruptures, and which marries the performance of birth with the figuration of death.[47] The chronological fissures in familiar narratives, as Marilyn Lavin aptly demonstrates in her seminal work on Italian murals, forces the viewer to seek out new meanings in these ruptures.[48] The story painted within the Shrine Madonna lurches forward and jumps back, drawing attention to the breaks in chronological sequencing, and highlighting the sculpted iconicity of the Throne of Mercy, which intrudes on the fluidity of narrative reading. The presence of the Trinity inflects the meaning of the pictorial cycle that threads around the Throne of Mercy: the images, even though carefully separated from one another, are paired thematically and visually (Fig. 10). They are made to establish a series of dialogues across the sculpted image of sacrifice, to be read through its lens.

On the upper left, Gabriel steps towards Mary, the empty speech scroll a conspicuous presence that divides them. Across from the Annunciation, the spare scene of the Visitation features Elizabeth embracing Mary. In both, Gabriel and Elizabeth provide visual parentheses to the two meetings. Both episodes, positioned on the reverse of Mary's chest, are narrow and almost severe in their sparseness. Read against the central image of the Trinity and within the context of the interior of Mary's body, the ostensibly benign narratives of pregnancy spell the association between Christ's body (Word turned flesh) and the consecrated wafer (flesh activated by Word), and between Mary's womb and the oven in which the bread is cooked. This trope, familiar since late antiquity, was common currency in the fourteenth century, when the Metropolitan Shrine Madonna was sculpted. For instance, the author of the *Meditationes Vitae Christi* proclaimed "Today the living bread that animates the world has begun to be baked in the oven of the virginal womb."[49] Even though the comparison between the womb and the oven was not limited to the Virgin alone,[50] Mary was a baker of a different order; to quote the Franciscan John Ryman, "This brede geveth eternall lyfe / Bothe unto man, to childe, and wife . . . / In virgyne Mary this brede was bake / Whenne criste of her manhood did take."[51]

The narrative tension persists in the second pair of images, below, where the Nativity is placed across from the Presentation in the Temple. There, the space allowed for more visual elaboration. On the left, Mary stretches across the bed, her body a focal point. Joseph keeps guard at her feet, while on the left the ox and the donkey crowd above the Child in the manger. Similar images appear on early fourteenth-century ciboria and pyxes, such as the Swinburne pyx from the Victoria and Albert Museum (ca. 1310–20), which, on its inner lid, features a Nativity scene akin to the one painted within the Shrine Madonna (Fig. 11).[52] On the right in the Presentation scene, Christ is being passed above the altar table to Simeon. The two images are linked through the theme of the offering. A thirteenth-century *Bible*

Fig. 10. Painted narratives around the Throne of Mercy; the Shrine Madonna, detail. Rhine Valley, ca. 1300. (Photo: © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

Fig. 11. The Nativity. Left: the Swinburne Pyx, ca. 1310–20. (Photo: Victoria and Albert Museum.) Right: the Shrine Madonna. Rhine Valley, ca. 1300. (Photo: © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

moralisée, Vienna, ÖNB, MS 2554, which stresses the common identity between the host and Christ, extends the comparison to include the Presentation in the Temple scene: "The bread that was in the oven and was offered to God signifies Jesus Christ who was in the womb of the Virgin and was offered to the heavenly father in the temple when Simeon received him."[53] The referential echoing between the shape of the manger and the shape of the altar links the two scenes, and marks them both as prefigurative of the sacrifice.

In the lowest register, the crowding of the middle scenes dissipates. Here, too, the visual parallels are established as the three men in the Annunciation to the Shepherds scene echo the Three Magi in the Adoration of the Kings episode; again, the explicit narrative of joy mixes with the implicit narrative of sorrow. The Annunciation to the Shepherds has one man emphatically pointing at the animal at his feet, designating Christ as the sacrificial lamb. In turn, the Adoration scene, frequently included on Gothic altars, has carried a strong sacrificial rhetoric since the fourth century. The liturgy of the Epiphany, for instance, developed into the play of the Three Wise Men, in which the magi, played by clerics, entered the church choir bearing gifts and laid them on the altar; the Adoration, in fact, is frequently visualized as taking place in a church.

This last pair of images is particularly important, marked as it is by exuberant gestures, which guide the viewer's eye. All three shepherds raise one of their hands up, toward the angel; two also point down, as if carrying the beholder's gaze upward and bringing it back again. Similarly, in the Adoration scene, the middle king points upwards, his finger touching the decorative band, pulling the viewer's gaze up toward the Annunciation scene, where the angel points down (ostensibly

to Mary's womb), leading the eye back. In this way, the gestures invite the viewer to read the three scenes on each side vertically, as a single narrative unit. The left side thereby chronicles the humanation of Christ: the beginnings of his gestation in Mary's womb, his appearance as a passive infant in the manger, and his place as the majestic Child-God on his mother's lap, actively blessing the viewer. The right side narrates a different transformation: baked in Mary's womb in the scene of the Visitation, Christ is shown as the implicit sacrifice in the temple scene, and disappears, replaced by the lamb imagery, in the final scene in the lower right. In this way, gestures map a new set of visual readings which reinforce, nonetheless, the dual narrative of birth and sacrifice.

One of these gestures is meant directly for the viewer: Christ's blessing. The blessing, which is often reserved for the Three Magi (as in the high altar in Cologne, for instance), is here aimed at the beholder. This is the only image in the narrative cycle in which the Child engages the viewer, and as such it is conspicuous and draws attention to the additional function of the two lower scenes. Both are dedicated to the images of worshippers and therefore model the ideal viewing behavior, the performance of beholding.

Visual and Verbal Performances

It has been said that "narrative swings the doors of performance open wider than any other medieval genre."[54] Narrative, as a pictorial genre, is predicated on the subjective reception of the viewer; it is "transactional," to borrow from Wolfgang Kemp, and operates "for the sake and with the help of its intended audience."[55] Nonetheless, this subjectivity is guided, as Otto Pächt argued, by the inherent structures of the image itself.[56] Pregnant with image and word, Mary delivers them both to the viewer when her body unfolds; the activation of her body is dependent on the activation of the beholding processes. These are directed by visual cues within each narrative episode, cues which invite the beholder to insinuate herself into the sacred scenes. Such devotional exercises, which made for exciting mental travel to sacred sites, were familiar fare in medieval monasteries, and became a staple of pastoral literature in later centuries.[57] The possible use of the *vierge ouvrante* as a visual guide for such a journey points to what Jeffrey Hamburger describes as "the increasingly important role of corporeal imagery in spiritual life," especially as it was formulated in the convents of the Upper Rhine, the place of origin of the Metropolitan Virgin.[58]

The opening of Mary's body in the act of a visually traumatic birth serves as the initial invitation for the viewer to enter her body. This is an unusual invitation indeed: it is not the Virgin's body, perpetually sealed, but rather the body of her son that was commonly used as such a point of visual and devotional ingress.[59] Christ's

wounds provide a site, as Sarah Beckwith writes, for "affective piety . . . obsessed with belonging, with the fantasy of fusion and the bitter reality of separation, and so with entrances to Christ's body," which "must be wrenched open, violently penetrated."[60] The *Meditationes vitae Christi* plays with this rhetoric of interpenetration, first citing the example of St. Cecilia "whose heart was . . . permeated with the life of Christ," and almost immediately quoting St. Bernard of Clairvaux's sixty-first sermon on the Canticles: "the wounds [of Christ] are clearly an entrance."[61] In the Shrine Madonna the discourses of unveiling and concealment are inverted, and the viewer is beckoned to enter her body through the gaping childbirth wound. As the *Wie Maria geistlich* treatise has it, "Mary can assert: 'I am the door, whoever wants to come to my son Jesus Christ must go through me.'"[62]

Once the entrance is gained, interior images guide and structure viewing as a performative experience by providing "hooks" for their audience. One such hook functions through gesture and gaze; another through text made invisible, the word implied but not shown. Within each image, at least one of the protagonists of the holy event is looking out at the viewer, engaging her gaze. God the Father fixes the viewer with a piercing stare; in some *vierges ouvrantes*, meant to be seen by parishioners from many angles, such as the Roggenhausen statue, God the Father was made slightly cross-eyed, a common device used to ensure that his gaze followed the viewer everywhere (Fig. 12). In the Metropolitan Madonna's scene of the Annunciation, the unmistakable contrast between the archangel, painted in profile, and the Virgin, represented in three-quarter view, is meant to underscore the disjunction in their conversation: Gabriel addresses the Virgin and gestures at her womb, but she, instead of looking down or returning Gabriel's salutation (a rather more common configuration), turns towards the beholder. A similar visual conversation is established in the Visitation scene, where Elizabeth turns to Mary, who, instead of meeting her cousin's gaze, faces the viewer.

The invitation to insinuate oneself into the holy scenes, to "make oneself present there" as advised in the *Meditationes vitae Christi*, is even more emphatically stated in the Nativity and the Presentation in the Temple narratives.[63] There, the intimacy of the two upper scenes is shattered by the introduction of subsidiary characters and various trappings that identify the specific settings of the episodes. In the Nativity scene the Virgin faces the viewer, while Christ, Joseph, and the beasts seem largely unaware of the visual intrusion. Mary serves as a bridge into the image at the same time as she blocks the viewer's access, her body barring entrance into the scene. In the Presentation episode it is Joseph, holding a basket with doves required for the rite of purification, who turns towards the beholder. As the viewer is invited to enter the scene, she is immediately directed, by the ordered rhythm of hand gestures, to join the Presentation. The long digits of the protagonists all point toward the pivotal scene—Christ being passed over the altar. The viewer's body is
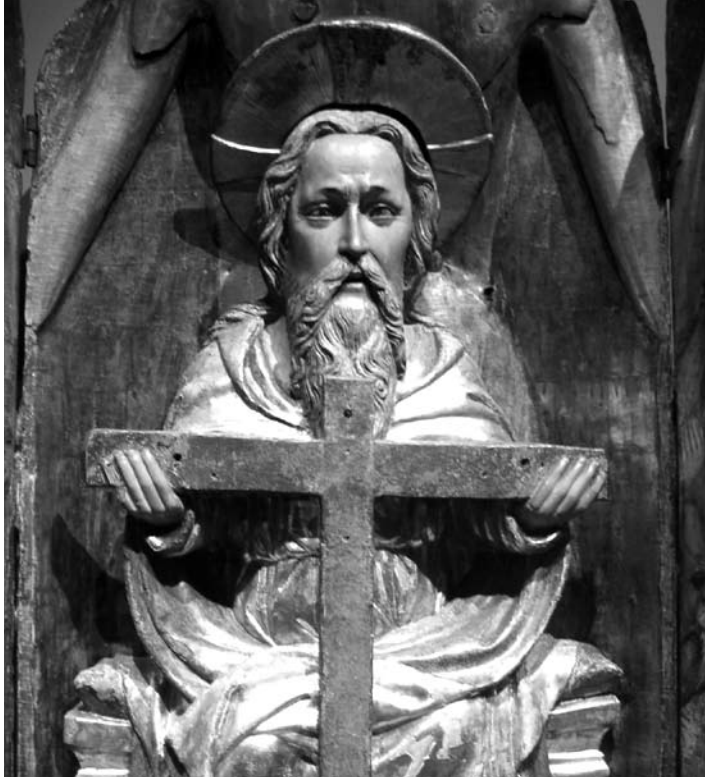
Fig. 12. The Roggenhausen Shrine Madonna; detail, God the Father. GNM, late 14th century. (Photo: Author.)

thereby activated, invited to cite the bodies of those gathered in the presence of the divine. In the lowest set of images, as we have seen, the intensity of the gestural language reaches its peak: the Shepherds gesticulate, enlisting the beholder to partake in the joyful frenzy caused by the words of the angel, and one of the Kings, who points a finger upwards, does not even bother to conceal the fact that his attention is completely redirected from Mary and Christ and focused on the viewer. If the beholder's presence was implied in other scenes, it is openly acknowledged here, where the Christ-Child himself turns to face the beholder and bless her.

As we have seen, the narrative fluidity of the scenes, which oscillate between the days of Christ's Infancy and the moment of his birth, and the cyclical nature of Christ's sacrifice and the moment of his death on the cross allow for different visual and devotional possibilities. The nun could choose her own mnemonic path, could stop at the sacred memories of her own choosing. Such a journey may have constituted a memory exercise, the kind in which points of meditation (here the sacred narratives within Mary's uterine cells) were, to quote Mary Carruthers, constructed as "sites plotted on a map," like "the stations of the way to be stopped at and stayed

in before continuing."[64] In this, the interior of the Shrine Madonna resembles a miniature church decorated with a complex mural program (a particularly apt comparison in view of Mary's identification with Ecclesia), and, like the wall paintings in French parish churches as described by Marcia Kupfer, offers the contrast between "the open-endedness of the meaning of images and the permanence of the pictorial medium [that] combine to activate the enduring hermeneutic potential of narratives unfolding across church walls and through architectural space."[65]

The narrative fluidity notwithstanding, the principal reading of the narrative pairs left to right and top to bottom uncovers a common point in the dominant right diagonal, between the first image, the Annunciation to Mary, in the upper left and the last image, the Annunciation to the Shepherds, in the lower right.[66] The meaning of these episodes is predicated on verbal exchange, as the verbal discourse forms a constitutive basis of both narratives. Both scenes include a banderole left conspicuously blank that belongs to an angel. It is hardly possible to imagine that this painstakingly executed sculpture was left unfinished; instead, the speech here is purposefully made simultaneously visible and invisible, and verbal lacunae become the agents of performance.

These empty spaces serve as a second set of performative hooks, verbal rather than visual. Emptiness, here, does not indicate silence; instead, it presents the beholder with an imperative to fill in the missing words. Later, this device would become a favorite among early modern printmakers, who left speech scrolls empty for their readers to fill; Peter Parshall and David Landau call them "an invitation to interpret."[67] There is no doubt that the nun knew what words needed to be spoken: "Ave gratia plena dominus tecum" (Hail full of grace the Lord is with thee) for the first scene, and "Gloria in excelsis deo" (Glory to God in the highest) for the second. Both were associated with daily devotions. "Gloria in excelsis" was subsumed into the popular hymn sung at matins and lauds, and also chanted at the mass. The angelic salutation formed the basis for the greatly popular Ave Maria prayer, which was included in the Hours of the Virgin and therefore chanted daily by priests and monastics; in the fourteenth century an indulgence was attached to the repeated recitation of the prayer during the ringing of the evening bell. In discussing Simone Martini's famous Annunciation altarpiece, Ann van Dijk points out the salutation inscribed on the panel to argue that "the angel's kneeling posture and the words emanating from his mouth become a model of devotional practice for viewers to imitate . . . the emphasis on vocalizing the words encourages viewers themselves to say the word aloud . . . adopting the angel's salutation as their own."[68] This performative impetus of vocalization becomes even more urgent in the Shrine Madonna images where the angels are left mute and only the viewer's verbal participation—what has been called, by Mark Amsler, "a textual gesture"— can restore the missing words of salutation and praise.[69]

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In discussing eighteenth-century anatomical models with movable parts, John Bender called them "narrative figurations of the body," since their interior organs are displayed to the viewer by the opening of the model that "reveals a succession of tableaus" (Fig. 13).[70] The description is strikingly apt for the Metropolitan *vierge ouvrante*, which discloses a similar succession of images through the narrative figurations of the body: figurations anatomical and devotional, imaginative and somatic, visual and textual. The example of this Shrine Madonna demonstrates the complex interplay of word and image at work in late medieval devotional sculpture: in exploring the visual and verbal possibilities of the Word made flesh, the Virgin opens like a book to reveal a series of narrative cycles that read as visual texts, and that fluidly cast the viewer's body as a true performative object, immersed in verbal, visual, and physical participation and defined by performance theorists therefore as unstable and simulated.[71] The statue resists the division into the semiotic systems of reading and looking, fusing, to quote Mieke Bal, "verbal and visual paradigms of interpretation."[72] Looking, here, is reading; it is also remembering; it is also performing.

In her recent essay on pictorial narrative, Suzanne Lewis points out W. J. T. Mitchell's characterization of contemporary culture in which "the interplay of word and image" are "volatile, complex, and pervasive . . . immediate and demanding."[73] Mitchell could just as well have been speaking about late medieval culture, which produced and was constituted by objects like the Shrine Madonnas. These statues, which inventively combine the media of sculpture and painting, invite us, therefore, to attend to the polysemous meanings of a visual text—text as image, text as performance, text as experience. The consideration of this experience, then, allows us to turn away from the Jacobsonian model of communication that constructs an ideal, fixed relationship between the omniscient sender and the passive receiver, and to consider instead the unstable performance of viewing activated through and dependent on the beholder's body.[74] In directing their audiences to perform the visual texts that unfold before them, the Shrine Madonnas forge the interconnections with contemporary devotional practices, which emphasize active, participatory viewership; they are therefore deeply embedded in late medieval discourse, both visual and verbal. As such, the statues beg to be addressed from an interdisciplinary perspective, raising questions about the relationship among art, liturgy, and devotional performance; about performative visual reading that binds together the image with the spoken and written word; and about the role of the beholder in the culture of prayer and meditation before an image.
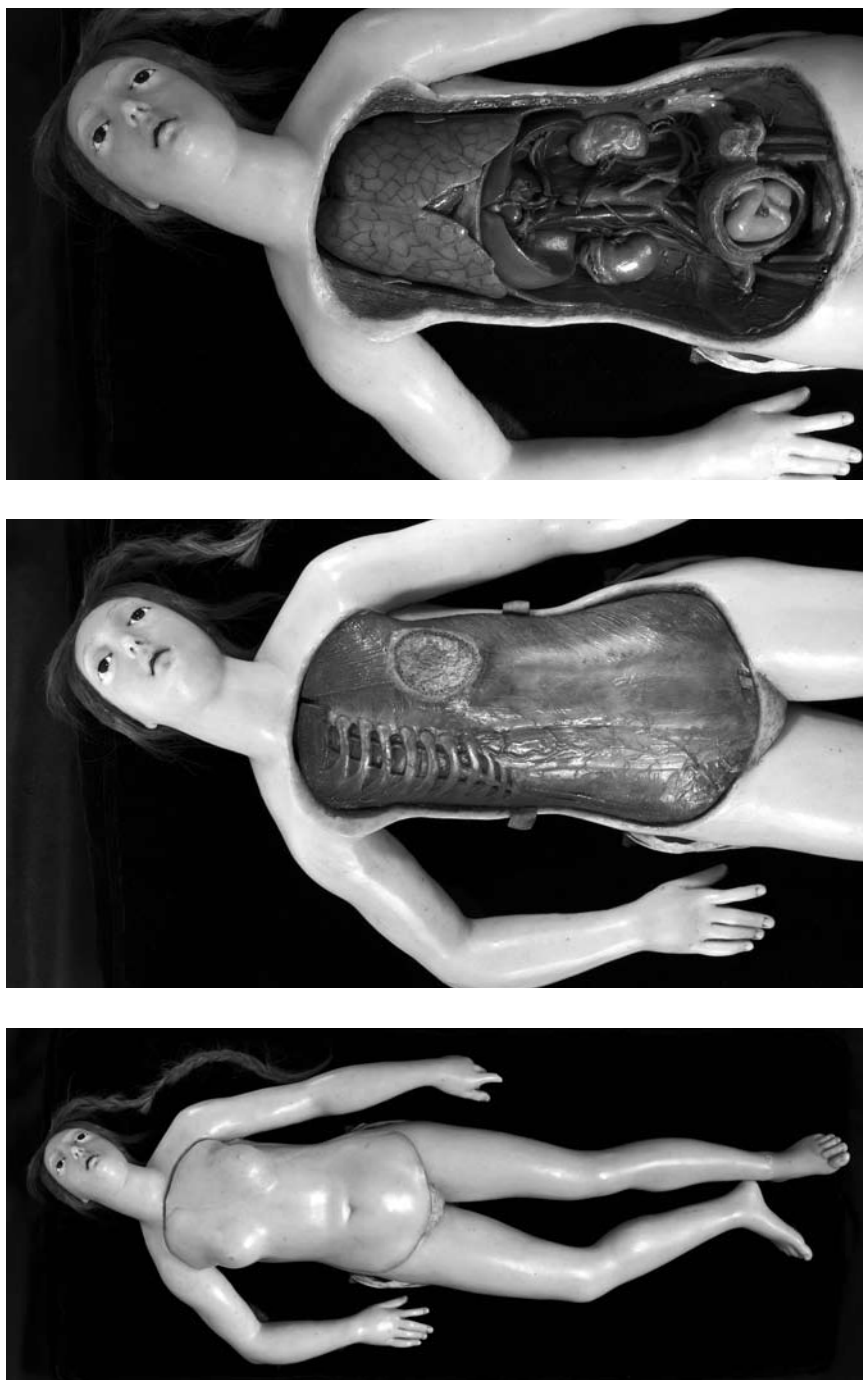
Fig. 13. Wax female figure with moveable parts. 18th century. Wellcome Collection. (Photo: Wellcome Images.)

NOTES

1. *The Poems of John Donne*, vol. 1, ed. Herbert J. C. Grierson (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), lines 39–43.

2. "Christus enim est quidam liber scriptus in pelle virginae. . . . Iste enim liber fuit dictatus in Patris dispositione, scriptus in matris conceptione, expositus in nativitatis manifestatione, correctus in passione, rasus in flagellatione, punctatus in vulnerum infixione, super pulpito politus in crucifixione, illuminatus in sanguinis effusione, [et] illagatus in resurrectione, [et] disputatus in ascensione." Pierre Bersuire, "Repertorium morale" in *Opera omnia* (Cologne, 1731), vol. 4, 462, s.v. "humanitate Christi"; translation in Jesse M. Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages: Language Theory, Mythology, and Fiction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 17.

3. Acc. 17.190.185. For the description of the statue and bibliography see Gudrun Radler, *Die Schreinmadonna "Vierge Ouvrante": Von den bernhardinischen Anfängen bis zur Frauenmystik im Deutschordensland, mit beschreibendem Katalog*, Frankfurter Fundamente der Kunstgeschichte 6 (Frankfurt am Main: Kunstgeschichtliches Institut der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, 1990), 77–80, 271–75. The statue is also discussed in *The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages in Europe, 1300–1500*, ed. Henk van Os et al (London: Merrell Holberton, in association with Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, 1994), exhibition catalog, 52–57; and, briefly, in William D. Wixom, "Medieval Sculpture at the Metropolitan, 800 to 1400," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 62, no. 4 (2005): 46. The Metropolitan Shrine Madonna is almost invariably mentioned in any published research on these sculptures; for recent work, see n. 10.

4. *Art of Devotion*, 52. As many documents show—especially those that record the fifteenth-century Observant reform of religious orders—nuns in Germany could privately own devotional images, a state of affairs that reformers sought to amend; the reformer who came to the Cistercian Wienhausen describes the space "in the choir behind the altar where [the women] stand and in their seats, most of the sisters each had images of Christ and the saints, both sculpted and painted, for their own devotion." See Johannes Busch, *Chronicon Windeshemense und Liber de reformatione monasteriorum* (Halle: Otto Hendel, 1886), 610–11; translated and discussed by Jeffrey F. Hamburger (*The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* [New York: Zone Books, 1998], 88), who cites the passage within the context of a discussion of "nuns' paraliturgical piety." On the Observant reform, see Anne Winston-Allen, *Convent Chronicles: Women Writing about Women and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

5. Michael Curschmann, *Wort–Bild– Text: Studien zur Medialität des Literarischen in Hochmittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, 2 vols., Saeculum Spiritalia 43–44 (Baden-Baden: Valentin Koerner, 2007), 1:261.

6. See, for example, Michael Camille, "The Book of Signs: Writing and Visual Difference in Gothic Manuscript Illumination," *Word & Image* 1, no. 2 (1985): 133–48; and "*Seeing and Reading*: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy," *Art History* 8 (1985): 26–49. For performative readings of illuminated manuscripts and the negotiation of word, image, and viewership therein, see, e.g., Suzanne Lewis, *Reading Images: Narrative Discourse and Reception in the Thirteenth-Century Illuminated Apocalypse* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Richard K. Emmerson, "Framing the Apocalypse: The Performance of John's Life in the Trinity Apocalypse," in *Visualizing Medieval Performance: Perspectives, Histories, Contexts*, ed. Elina Gertsman (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 33–56; and Pamela Sheingorn, "Performing the

Illustrated Manuscript: Great Reckonings in Little Books," in *Visualizing Medieval Performance*, 57–82. For a recent excellent collection of word/image studies, representative of the state of the field, see *Between the Picture and the Word: Manuscript Studies from the Index of Christian Art*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Index of Christian Art, Dept. of Art and Archaeology; University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005).

7. Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (Latrobe, PA: Archabbey Press, 1951).

8. See, for example, Marcia Kupfer, *Romanesque Wall Painting in Central France: The Politics of Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

9. Gregory the Great, Letters IX and XI, in *Registrum epistularum*, ed. Dag Norberg, *CCL* 140–140A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982), 140A: 768, 873–76. On Gregorian dicta on images, see Herbert Kessler, "Gregory the Great and Image Theory in Northern Europe during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2006), 151–72; Celia Chazelle, "Pictures, Books, and the Illiterate: Pope Gregory the I's Letters to Serenus of Marseille," *Word & Image* 6 (1990): 138–53; Pierre-Alain Mariaux, "Voir, lire et connaître selon Grégoire le Grand," *Etudes de Lettres* 3–4 (1994): 47–59; and Lawrence G. Duggan, "Was Art Really the 'Book of the Illiterate'?" *Word & Image* 5 (1989): 227–51, and, subsequently, "Reflections on Was Art Really the 'Book of the Illiterate'?," *Word & Image* 21 (2005), 109–19. On the early medieval negotiations of the verbal and the visual in light of Gregory's letters, see William J. Diebold's excellent *Word and Image: An Introduction to Early Medieval Art* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000). On the expanded idea of textuality, see D. F. McKenzie, who considers texts to be any manifestation of recorded information: "verbal, visual, oral, and numeric data, in the form of maps, prints, and music . . . everything in fact from epigraphy to the latest forms of discography" (*Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* [London: British Library, 1986], 5).

10. For a critical catalogue see Radler, *Die Schreinmadonna "Vierge Ouvrante."* Recent studies include Marius Rimmele, "Die Schreinmadonna: Bild-Körper-Matrix," in *Bild und Körper im Mittelalter*, ed. Kristin Marek et al (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2006), 41–59; and Elina Gertsman "Performing Birth, Enacting Death: Unstable Bodies in Late Medieval Devotion," in *Visualizing Medieval Performance*, 83–104; both studies focus on the corporeality of the Shrine Madonnas. Rimmele, in pointing out historians' attraction to the Shrine Madonna as an "eye-catching curiosity," argues precisely for the normative aspect of these statues (42); on this question see also Rudolph Berliner, "Freedom of Medieval Art," in *Rudolf Berliner (1886–1967): "The Freedom of Medieval Art" und andere Studien zum christlichen Bild*, ed. Robert Suckale (Berlin: Lukas, 2003), 60–75; and Jean-Claude Schmitt, "Liberté et normes des images occidentals," in *Le Corps des images: Essais sur la culture visuelle au Moyen Age* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 135–64. For brief and poignant critiques of the sculptures considered within the context of monastic piety, see Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 230–32; Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious Practice," in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 212; Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 283–84; and for the Shrine Madonna considered specifically within the context of female German mysticism, Jeffrey Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 150–51. For the Shrine Madonna as a tabernacle, see Renate Kroos, "*Gotes Tabernakel*: Zur Function und Interpretation von Schreinenmadonnen," *Zetschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 43 (1986): 58–64; on the contention that the Metropolitan Madonna was used to contain consecrated bread, see *Art of Devotion,* 557. For some scholars, the statues constituted a marvelous oddity. Erich Neumann (*The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, trans. Ralph Manheim, 2nd ed. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955], 331) declares the empowering heterodoxy of the Shrine Madonna, while Marina Warner (*Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin*

Mary [New York: Vintage Books, 1983], 47) calls this "fetish-like" image "a parthenogenetic goddess," which defies any possible *imitatio Mariae*.

11. In addition to Radler, *Die Schreinmadonna*, the following provide general surveys and overviews of these statues: J. Sarrète, "Vierges ouvertes, Vierges ouvrantes et la Vierge ouvrante de Palau-del-Vidre," *Ruscino, Revue d'histoire et d'archéologie de Roussillon et des autres pays Catalans* (1912): 5–59, 450–547; Walter Fries, "Die Schreinmadonna," *Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums* (1928–29): 5–69; Christoph Baumer, "Die Schreinmadonna," *Marian Library Studies* 9 (1977): 239–72; François Boespflug, *Dieu dans l'art: Sollicitudini nostrae de Benoît XIV (1745) et l'affaire Crescence de Kaufbeuren* (Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1984), 280–85; and Wolfgang Braunfels, "Maria, Marienbild, " *Lexicon der christlichen Ikonographie*, vol. 3 (Rome, 1971), 194.

12. See, for example, *A Description or Breife Declaration of all the Ancient Monuments, Rites, and Customes Belonginge or Beinge within the Monastical Church of Durham before the Suppression; Written in 1593* (ed. James Raine [London: J. B. Nichols and Son, 1842], 26) for a description of the Durham *vierge ouvrante*, and the liturgical context that governed its opening: "And every principall daie the said immages was opened, that every man might se pictured within her the Father, the Sone, and the Holy host, most curiouslye and finely gilted. . . . [The crucifix] was to be taiken fourthe every Good Fridaie and every man [moncke] did crepe unto it that was in that church at that daye. Amd ther after yt was houng upe againe within the said immage."

13. "Je le dy en partie pour une ymaige . . . semblables qui ont dedans leur ventre une Trinité comme se toute la Trinité eus prins cher humainne en la Vierge Marie. Et qui plus merveille est, il y a enfer dedans paint . . . a mon petit jugement il n'y a beauté ne devocion en telle ouverture, et puet ester cause d'erreur et d'indevocion," Sermon 385 in Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Palémon Glorieux, vol. 7 (Paris: Desclée, 1966) 963.

14. "Salve, mueter gueter rete, / der gedreiten trinitete / edels, schöns, gedreits geslos"; "Wis gegrüsset, aller güte / muter, seit got aus dir blüte, / in seiner dreivaltichait." "Salve, grüest Pist, Mueter hailes" and "Got grüess dich, Mueter unsers Herren" hymns printed in *Die geistlichen Lieder des Mönchs von Salzburg*, ed. Franz Victor Spechtler (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1972), 158 and 164 respectively; translated in *Art of Devotion,* 57.

15. "Du spiegelglass, on allen rums, / den ein und den druvalten / versluss du in dins herzen schrein." Peter Kern, *Trinität, Maria, Inkarnation: Studien zur Thematik der deutschen Dichtung des späteren Mittelalters*, Philologische Studien und Quellen 55 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1971), 137; discussed and translated in Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists*, 151.

16. From Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O. 3. 58 (1230), cited in *The Oxford Book of Late Medieval Verse and Prose,* ed. Douglas Gray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 162–63, D.

17. John Lydgate, *A Critical Edition of John Lydgate's Lyf of our Lady*, ed. Joseph A. Lauritis, Ralph A. Klinefelter, and Vernon T. Gallagher (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1961), 344, line 480. For the double meaning of the word "yshrouded" as the incarnational and burial vestments, see Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 156.

18. *Ludus Coventriae; or, the Plaie Called Corpus Christi, Cotton ms. Vespasian D. VIII*, ed. Katherine Salter Block (London: Published for the Early English Text Society by Oxford University Press, 1922), 107; emphasis is mine. Gibson (*Theater of Devotion*, 144) suggests that the image of the Trinity, similar to the one we see in the interior of the Shrine Madonna, was to be lowered on gilded wires upon the boy who played Mary.

19. *Ludus Coventriae*, 108 and 120 respectively; discussed in Gibson, *Theater of Devotion*, 144–46.

20. Discussed in Sylvia Huot, "Polytextual Reading: The Meditative Reading of Real and Metaphorical Books," in *Orality and Literacy in the Middle Ages: Essays on a Conjunction and Its Consequences in Honour of D. H. Green*, ed. Mark Chica and Christopher Young, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 207–9.

21. Christ's body/skin was also frequently compared to the stretched parchment in English devotional literature; see examples in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole, an English Father of the Church, and His Followers*, ed. Carl Horstman, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1895–96), 1:206, 2:440 ("oure blessed fadir . . . spared not his owen sone but suffrede hym to be streyned on the harde cros, moore dispitously & geruously than euer was schepys skyn streyned . . . vp-on the parchemyn-makeris harowe aȝens the sonne to drye").

22. Book 2, sec. 26 in Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, trans. Frank Tobin (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 96–97.

23. The painting style of the interior scenes of the Metropolitan Madonna is specifically compared to the late thirteenth-century illuminated books from northeastern France, in particular the so-called *Picture Book of Madame Marie* (BNF, nouv. ac. fr. 16251), in Peter Brieger and Philippe Verdier, *Art and the Courts: France and England from 1259 to 1328*, 2 vols. (Ottawa: GNC, 1972), cat. no. 12. The comparison is especially apt, since, as François Avril notes, the book contains no text or commentary save for brief notations that identify the subjects (*L'Art au temps des rois maudits: Philippe le Bel et ses fils, 1285–1328* [Paris: Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, 1998], 294). For *Picture Book*, see Andreas Bräm, *Das Andachtsbuch der Marie de Gavre, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Ms. nouv. acq. fr. 16251: Buchmalerei in der Diözese Cambrai im letzten Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Reickert, 1997); and Alison Stones, *Le livre d'images de Madame Marie: Reproduction intégrale du manuscrit Nouvelles acquisitions françaises 16251 de la Bibliothèque nationale de France* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf and Bibliothèque national de France, 1997). For BL Stowe 948, see, for instance, Charles O'Conor, *Bibliotheca Ms. Stowensis: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Stowe Library*, vol. 2 (Buckingham: J. Seeley, 1818–19), 13–14; Tony Hunt, *Popular Medicine in Thirteenth-Century England: Introduction and Texts* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990), 71; and Ruth J. Dean and Maureen B. M. Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts*, Anglo-Norman Text Society, Occasional Publications Series 3 (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1999), no. 746.

24. See Klaus Schreiner, " . . . *wie Maria geleicht einem puch*: Beiträge zur Buchmetaphorik des hohen und späten Mittelalters," *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 11 (1971): 1437–64, and Peter Kesting, "Maria als Buch," in *Würzburger Prosastudien*, vol. 1, *Wort-, Begriffs- und Textkundliche Untersuchungen*, Medium Aevum, Philologische Studien 13 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1968), 122–47.

25. "Nun schreibt vnß der heiligt ewangelist Matheus daß ewangelium, alß man daß list von dem tag der geburt des hochgelobten kindleins Maria, vnd ist der anfangk seins ewangeliumß vnd spricht also: 'Daß ist das bch der gepurt vnsers Ihesu Cristi deß sns Dauidß' . . . Vber daß wort spricht Magnus Albertuß, daß wir pey dem buch anderß nichcz sullen verstien dan Mariam daß edel puch, dare in geschriben ist der edel puchstab Cristus Ihesus, do er in ir wonet newn monet." *Das "Marienleben" des Heinrich von St. Gallen: Text und Untersuchung, mit einem Verzeichnis deutschsprachiger Prosamarienleben bis etwa 1520*, ed. Hardo Hilg, Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters 75 (Munich: Artemis, 1981), 132–33; trans. in Winfried Frey, "*Maria Legens—Mariam Legere*: St. Mary as an Ideal Reader and St. Mary as a Textbook," in *The Book and the Magic of Reading in the Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen, Garland Medieval Biographies 24 (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 284.

26. Reproduced in Kesting, "Maria als Buch," 122–25.

27. Berlin, Staatsbibl., germ. 2° 1276, fols. 145v–147v; and Nuremberg, Stadtbibliothek, Cod. Cent. IV, 30, fols. 218rb–222ra, respectively. Another late copy of the text exists, now virtually unreadable because of its state of preservation (Prague, University Library, XVI. A. 2); it is a copy of the Berlin manuscript, and was made for the Clarissa convent in Eger, Hungary. For the critical discussion and comparison between the Berlin and the Nuremberg copy, see Kesting, "Maria als Buch," 125–47.

28. Spechtler, *Die geistlichen Lieder*, 158

29. Hildegard of Bingen, *Symphonia: A Critical Edition of the Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum*, trans. and ed. Barbara Newman (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 114–15.

30. See the discussion of the sixth book of Augustine's *De musica* (recently edited by Martin Jacobsson as *Aurelius Augustinus: De musica liber VI*, Studia Latina Stockholmiensia 47 [Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2002]) in Meredith Jane Gill, *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance: Art and Philosophy from Petrarch to Michelangelo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 179.

31. *Registrum epistularum*, 272; discussed in Herbert Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 121; and in Kessler, "Gregory the Great and Image Theory."

32. This visual formula was considered to be theologically unsound, and was disparaged by ecclesiastics as far south as Italy and as far north as England; such an image assumed that Christ took flesh outside Mary's womb, that the Incarnation was completed independent of her. By the sixteenth century, for instance, Bishop Parkhurst of Norwich decreed that such Annunciation scenes be destroyed. See Christopher Woodforde, *The Norwich School of Glass-Painting in the Fifteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 24. One finds similar sentiment in St. Antoninus of Florence (d. 1459): "Represensibiles sunt pictores, cum pingunt . . . in Annunciatione Virginis parvulum puerum formatum, scilicet Jesum, mitti in uterum Virginis, quasi non esset ex substantia Virginis corpus eius assumptum" (*Summa hist*. 3, tit. 8, 4.11); translated and discussed in Creighton Gilbert, "The Archbishop on the Painters of Florence, 1450," *Art Bulletin* 41 (1959): 75–87; and Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 43.

33. On Mary's pregnancy, see Gregor Martin Lechner, *Maria Gravida: Zum Schwangerschaftsmotiv in der bildenden Kunst*, Münchner Kunsthistorische Abhandlangen 9 (Munich: Schnell & Steiner, 1981); and—especially for the context of the Visitation narrative—Hildegard Urner-Astholz, "Die beiden ungeborenen Kinder auf Darstellungen der Visitatio," *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archaeologie und Kunstgeschichte* 38 (1981): 29–58.

34. Although the episode is described in Luke 1:39–45, this particular image is likely based on Jacobus de Voragine's version of the meeting between the Virgin and her cousin; according to Voragine, John, "already filled with the Holy Spirit, sensed the Son of God coming to him and leapt for joy in his mother's womb . . . as one wishing to greet his Lord and to stand up in his presence." Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, ed. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 1:330.

35. See Lechner, *Maria Gravida*, fig. 162, pp. 420–21. For changes in Marian iconography, and the progressive transformation of Mary as the Throne of Wisdom into Mary the queenly mother, see Penny Schine Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude, and Experience in Twelfth-Century France* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1985); and R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 238–41. On Mary as *Sedes sapientiae*, see Ilene H. Forsyth, *The Throne of Wisdom: Wood Sculptures of the Madonna in Romanesque France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972). On changes in devotion to the Virgin see Hilda C. Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, and London: Sheed and Ward, 1990); Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); and Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). On the importance of touch—as opposed to vision—in late medieval culture, see Gordon Rudy, *The Mystical Language of Sensation in the Middle Ages,* Studies in Medieval History and Culture 14 (London: Routledge, 2002); and essays in *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

36. The description is equally sedate: "At midnight on Sunday, when the hour of birth came, the Virgin rose and stood erect against a column that was there. . . . Then the Son of the eternal God came out of the womb of the mother without a murmur or lesion, in a moment; as He had been in

the womb so He was now outside, on the hay at His mother's feet." See *Meditations on the Life of Christ, an Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 33; for the original Latin text of the manuscript, see Iohannes de Caulibus, *Meditaciones vite Christi*, Corpus Christianorum, Instrumenta lexicologica latina, Series A, 93 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000). On the iconography of Mary's birthing pains, physical and metaphorical, see Amy Neff, "The Pain of Compassio: Mary's Labor at the Foot of the Cross," *Art Bulletin* 80 (1998): 254–73.

37. On changes in medieval visuality and ocular desires, see "Ocular Communion" in Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 133–64.

38. See Gertsman "Performing Birth, Enacting Death" and "The Pilgrim's Progress: The Devotional Journey through the Sacred Body," in *Push Me, Pull You: Art and Devotional Interaction in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Sarah Blick and Laura Gelfand (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

39. See Honorius Augustodunensis, "De matrice," in *De Philosophia Mundi*, book 4, chap. 10, in *PL* 172:88, quoted and discussed in Marie-Christine Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages*, trans. Rosemary Morris (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 137; and George Corner, *Anatomical Texts of the Earlier Middle Ages; A Study in the Transmission of Culture, with a revised Latin Text of Anatomia Cophonis and Translations of Four Texts* (Washington DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1927), 20.

40. *The Knowing of Woman's Kind in Childing: A Middle English Version of Material Derived from the Trotula and Other Sources,* ed. Alexandra Barratt, Medieval Women 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 44; this passage is discussed in Alexandra Barratt, "Context: Reflections on Wombs and Tombs," in *Anchorites, Wombs and Tombs: Intersections of Gender and Enclosure in the Middle Ages*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy and Mari Hughes-Edwards (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), 29. On Mondino, see the facsimile of *Anothomia Mundini*, printed on December 19, 1478 in Pavia by Antonio de Carcano, in the collections of British Library Cote IB. 31321; reproduced as a part of *Anatomies de Mondino dei Luzzi et de Guido de Vigevano*, ed. Ernest Wickersheimer (Paris: Droz, 1926), 25 (section "De anhotomia matricis"); translated in Charles Singer, *The Fasciculo di Medicina, Venice 1493* (Florence: R. Lier & Co., 1925), 1:76. For more medical views about the seven-celled uterus, including *Anatomia Cophonis* and the work of Richardus Salernitanus, see Karl Sudhoff, *Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Anatomie im Mittelalter: Speziell der anatomischen Graphik nach Handschriften des 9. bis 15. Jahrhunderts* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1964), 27.

41. Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 257. See also Clarissa Atkinson, "'Precious Balsam in a Fragile Glass': The Ideology of Virginity in the Later Middle Ages," *Journal of Family History* (1983): 131–43; and Jacqueline Jung, "Crystalline Wombs and Pregnant Hearts," in *History in the Comic Mode: Medieval Communities and the Matter of Person*, ed. Rachel Fulton and Bruce W. Holsinger (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 226. See, e.g., Rupert of Deutz: "When [Jesus] was born she did not suffer like other mothers" (*Commentaria in Evangelium Sancti Iohannis*, ed. Rhabanus Maurus Haacke [Turnhout: Brepols, 1969], 743–44), translated and discussed in Neff, "Pain of Compassio," 256.

42. *The Ancrene Wisse: The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle, Edited from ms. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge 402*, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien, intro. N. R. Ker (London: Published for the Early English Text Society by the Oxford University Press, 1962), 192–93; translated in *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*, trans. and intro. Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 186.

43. Peter Damian, *Sermons*, ed. Giovanni Lucchesi, *CCM* 59 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), 267; translated in Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 22. On the eucharistic debates, see pp. 14–35.

44. Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, vol. 2 (London: Lund Humphries, 1971), 122–24, at 122.

45. Schiller, *Iconography*, 123.

46. Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 142; on "Mary of the Eucharist," see 142–47.

47. For historiography of medieval narrative, see Suzanne Lewis, "Narrative," in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 86–105; for the synthetic treatment of the term, see Wolfgang Kemp, "Narrative," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Schiff (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 58–69. Exemplary studies of medieval narrative include Madeline Caviness, "Biblical Stories in Windows: Were They Bibles for the Poor?" in *The Bible in the Middle Ages: Its Influence on Literature and Art*, ed. Barbara S. Levy (Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992), 103–47; and Cynthia Hahn, "Purification, Sacred Action, and the Vision of God: Viewing Medieval Narratives," *Word & Image* 5 (1989): 71–84.

48. Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, *The Place of Narrative: Mural Decoration in Italian Churches, 431–1600* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 6.

49. *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, 20.

50. Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg," *Renaissance Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (1986): 421.

51. See *The Early English Carol*, ed. Richard Leighton Greene (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), 220.

52. M.15–1950. On the pyx, see Marian Campbell, *An Introduction to Medieval Enamels* (London: HMSO, 1983), 39, fig. 30; Charles Oman, "The Swinburne Pyx," *Burlington Magazine* 92, no. 573 (1950): 337–41; and *Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200–1400*, ed. Jonathan J. G. Alexander and Paul Binski (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1987), 453 no. 571 and 53 fig. 25.

53. Vienna, ÖNB, MS 2554, fol. 27v. Translated in Joan Holladay, "The Iconography of the High Altar in Cologne Cathedral," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 4 (1989): 472–98, at 477; Holladay's article makes an extended comparison between the Infancy narratives of the Cologne altar and eucharistic rhetoric, stressing especially the link between the theme of the Adoration and the theme of sacrifice.

54. In introduction to *Performing Medieval Narrative*, ed. Evelyn Birge Vitz, Nancy Freeman Regalado, and Marilyn Lawrence (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2005), 3.

55. Kemp, "Narrative," 67.

56. Otto Pächt, *The Practice of Art History: Reflections on Method* (London: Harvey Miller, 1999), 70.

57. See Giles Constable, "Monachisme et pèlerinage au Moyen Age," *Revue Historique* 256 (1977): 3–27; and Jean Leclercq, "Monachisme et pérégrination du IXe au XIIe siècle," *Studia Monastica* 3 (1961): 33–52. On performance of physical/visual pilgrimage vis-à-vis Shrine Madonnas, see Gertsman, "Pilgrim's Progress," forthcoming. For the discussion of imagined pilgrimages, see Matthew Botvinick, "The Painting as Pilgrimage: Traces of a Subtext in the Work of Campin and His Contemporaries," *Art History* 15, no. 1 (1992): 1–18; and Daniel K. Connolly, "Imagined Pilgrimage in Gothic Art: Maps, Manuscripts and Labyrinths" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Chicago, 1998).

58. On the role of imagery in monastic devotions, see, in addition to Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists* and Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary*, three essays in *Crown and Veil: Female Monasticism from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Susan Marti (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008): Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Robert Suckale, "Between This World and the Next: The Art of Religious Women in the Middle Ages," 76–108; Barbara Newman, "The Visionary Texts and Visual Worlds of Religious Women," 151–71; and Caroline Walker Bynum, "Patterns of Female Piety in the Later Middle Ages," 172–90.

59. See, for example, Martha Easton, "The Wound of Christ, the Mouth of Hell: Appropriations and Inversions of Female Anatomy in the Later Middle Ages," in *Tributes to Jonathan J. G. Alexander: The Making and Meaning of Illuminated Medieval & Renaissance Manuscripts, Art & Architecture*, ed. Susan L'Engle and Gerald Guest (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 395–414. For a rather different view see Flora Lewis, "The Wound in Christ's Side and the Instruments of the Passion: Gendered Experience

and Response," in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 204–29. For a recent discussion and up-to-date bibliography, see Silke Tammen, "Blick und Wunde—Blick und Form: Zur Deutungsproblematik der Seitenwunde Christi in der Spätmittelalterlichen Buchmalerei," in *Bild und Körper im Mittelalter*, 85–114.

60. Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 42, 44.

61. *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, 2.

62. Kesting, "Maria als Buch," 125.

63. The *Meditations on the Life of Christ* instructs its readers to imagine themselves at key moments of Christ's life, to inscribe themselves, as it were, into the scenes as they unfolded, "feeling [themselves] present in those places as if the things were done in [their] presence" (387).

64. Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 116.

65. Marcia Kupfer, *Romanesque Wall Painting in Central France: The Politics of Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 150.

66. European viewers have a tendency to read the image from left to right, top to bottom—this is a function of language as much as it is of agentic perception. Heinrich Wölfflin discussed these visual directions in "Über das Rechts und Links im Bilde," in *Gedanken zur Kunstgeschichte: Gedrucktes und Ungedrucktes* (Basel: B. Schwabe & Co, 1941), 82–96; see also Rudolph Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye; The New Version* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 30–36. Recently, Anne Maass, Caterina Suitnera, Xenia Favarettoa, and Marina Cignacchia argued that "spatial imagery is systematically linked to stereotypic beliefs, such that more agentic groups are envisaged to the left of less agentic groups," and that "results suggest a subtle spatial bias in the representation of social groups that seems to be linked to culturally determined writing/reading habits," in "Groups in Space: Stereotypes and the Spatial Agency Bias," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 45, no. 3 (2009): 496–504 (abstract). See a similar claim made by Ameya Athavankar in "Form as a Visual Encounter: Using Eye Movement Studies for Design Reasoning," in *Design Computing and Cognition '08: Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Design Computing and Cognition*, ed. John S. Gero and Ashok K. Goel (New York: Springer, 2008), 123–42.

67. David Landau and Peter W. Parshall, *The Renaissance Print, 1470–1550* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 62. See the discussion of various readings and filling in of empty speech scrolls in the depiction of William Gardiner's execution, and for a similar device in Caxton's *Mirrour of the Worlde* and *Golden Legend*, discussed in John N. King, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 202–3.

68. Ann van Dijk, "The Angelic Salutation in Early Byzantine and Medieval Annunciation Imagery," *Art Bulletin* 81 (1999): 421.

69. Mark Amsler, "Affective Literacy: Gestures of Reading in the Later Middle Ages," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 18 (2001): 84.

70. John Bender, "Impersonal Violence: The Penetrating Gaze and the Field of Narration in Caleb Williams," in *Vision and Textuality*, ed. Stephen Melville and Bill Readings (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 272.

71. See, e.g., Jon McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (London: Routledge, 2001), 18.

72. Mieke Bal, "Reading the Gaze: The Construction of Gender in 'Rembrandt,'" in *Vision and Textuality*, 147.

73. Suzanne Lewis, "Narrative," 87

74. *Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics,"* in *Style in Language*, ed. T. A. Sebeok (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), 350–77.