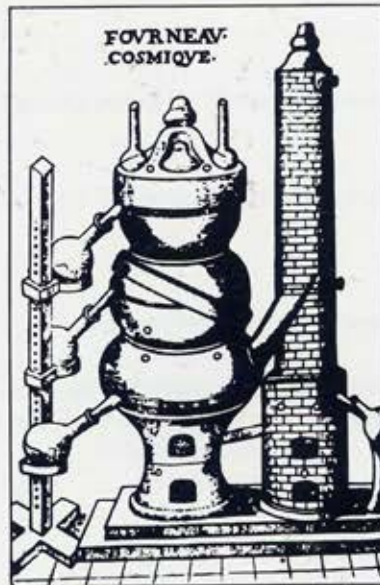


ATHANOR XII



ATHANOR XII

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY



Cosmic oven or *Athanor* from Annibal Barlet, *LeVray Cours de Physique*, Paris, 1653.

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ATHANOR XII

<i>François Bucher</i> Foreword: From Saints to Excrements	4
<i>William Travis</i> Points of View in Romanesque Sculpture: The Cluniac Group	9
<i>Tania Mertzman</i> An Examination of Miniatures of the Office of St. Louis in Jeanne de Navarre's Book of Hours	19
<i>Jennifer L. Fields-Crow</i> Controlling Images: Portraits of Charles V as Representations of His Political Agenda in Fourteenth Century France	27
<i>Gail A. Kallins</i> Mantegna's <i>Minerva Overcoming the Vices</i> Reconsidered	35
<i>John Gabriel Haddad</i> The Sabbatarian Struggle of Michelangelo	45
<i>Thomas Bayer</i> Socio-economic Aspects of Netherlandish Painting during the Sixteenth Century	55
<i>Glenn Taylor</i> "Cloth of the Spider:" Deciphering Alfred Stevens' Intriguing "Puzzle Painting," <i>Young Woman with a Japanese Screen</i>	61
<i>Betty Lou Williams</i> Frederick Carl Frieseke Rediscovered	69
<i>Verlon Cary</i> Picasso's Influence on Jackson Pollock's Late Black and White Paintings	79
<i>Diana McClintock</i> The Art of Bessie Harvey: Her Gift of the Spirit	85

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From Saints to Excrements

"Since standards are wanting everywhere nowadays, we must have lost ourselves in this long sought breadth without having experienced the new dimension. In the course of time and with the means of physics and mechanics we did, in fact, achieve some astonishingly successful results; but at the same time we let our psyche more or less wretchedly wither away and go to ruin, and thus obstruct other possible means of access to the deeper strata of human existence lying within us."—Johannes Gachnang, Introduction to the *Documenta 7* catalogue (Kassel, 1982), xxviii.

Imagine an art connoisseur around 1300 A.D. describing the glorious procession of burghers carrying Duccio's *Maestà* altarpiece into the cathedral while loudly criticizing Dante for preferring the lumbering figures of Giotto which lacked even Cimabue's or Simone Martini's courtly elegance. Or in the 1450s another critic praising the enamel-like quality of the Richard II portrait in the Wilton Diptych while objecting to the 'degrading' naturalism in Konrad Witz's Geneva altar. In both cases, these critics would have missed the great movements toward a deepening complexity of physical reality which art was going to explore in the subsequent centuries. Most critics of 20th century art wishing to define trends within an ever increasing disarray of unpredictability may have missed the boat trying to separate quality works from a host of irrelevant and thoroughly inept junk art.

It thus seems significant that the essays in the present issue of *Athanor* deal with solid topics and avoid artists whose iconography is obtuse and imagery chaotic.

As we approach the end of the Millenium, a panoramic sifting of major cultural turning points is in order. What is and will be worth chronicling, who and what will disappear in the dust bin of history? Which highly praised works have already ended up in cavernous museum depots, and what will be discarded by the grandchildren of fashion-struck collectors? Finally, how does 20th century art stack up against the cultural energy of the last nine centuries?

From the beginning of the Millenium to a break around 1500 A.D., the arts strived toward enlightenment, offering the viewer specific information as well as proofs of wealth and status within a relatively stable, identifiable context. All objects—be they aquamales, shields, banners (painted e.g. by the van Eycks), tombs, stained glass, statuary—served a purpose, be it an encouragement to devotion, a display of refined practicality or an intent at self aggrandizement. The houses of the burghers, the mansions of the powerful, were built to last, ornamented with frescoes, tapestries, enamelled floor tiles, etc., all fabricated with accomplished knowhow. The Renaissance

brought a blast of secular themes, allegories, emblems and a tremendous surge of graphics, much of which is artistically mediocre. Financial well being and the increasing importance of art as a status symbol lowered the quality of portraits, house altars, sculptures and pottery further. All these artifacts were still technically proficient and could, such as in the temporary triumphal arches for Maximilian I by Dürer and Hans Burgkmair, reach the upper limits of skill and iconographic variety.

From the 17th through the end of the 19th centuries the demand for privately owned art increased geometrically. Artisans churned out copies of paintings, produced innumerable family portraits and still lifes, some of which are said to have served as appetizers in opulent dining rooms illuminated by highly elaborate candelabras. These artifacts including bibelots in ivory, polished minerals, silver and gold, were still technically irreproachable and based on disciplined apprenticeships or rigorous training in Academies or Ecoles des Beaux-Arts. Treatises ranging from color theories, gilding, lace patterning, the rendering of any possible facial expression, appeared by the dozen. Manuals with examples for furniture design, garden sculpture, beakers, ornaments and gazebos provided guidance to even uninspired artists and eased the choices for patrons. Migrant painters found a fertile market in the colonies where they added portrait faces to puppet bodies and produced works now prized for their naive, charming ineptitude.

By the 20th century—and certainly after the breakwater 1913 Armory Show in New York—the industrial nations became a single cultural bloc offering a global encyclopedia of artistic choices, in fact Malraux's *Musée Imaginaire*. Contacts between intellectuals, scientists and artists speeded up. Photography and film, which amazingly are still not recognized as perhaps the most solid and major art forms of this century, allowed for an ever more precise transmission of images. Actual artifacts were shown side by side at international exhibits, world fairs and the rapidly emerging private galleries which eventually took over the art "market." Einstein's theories, Freud and Jung's explorations of the subconscious, the disasters of World War I, the rise of Fascism, World War II, Viet Nam, portrayed in photographs and films of corpses in muddy trenches, or rice paddies, acted as fundamentally unsettling forces and put into question the traditional anthropocentric imagery with its socially and aesthetically clear messages.

This new disconnectedness produced a frightening flood of choices in which the lines between potent and decipherable messages understood by the intellectual elite, and an undisciplined chaotic search for empty originality or totally personal confessionalism became blurred. The original heady sense of a new de-traditional approach such as Gaudi's rubberized concrete, Picasso's disruptive space-time, Duchamp's exploration

of chance, collages and sculptures made from flotsam and jetsam, and eventually Tinguely's self-destructive constructions broke down all traditional assumptions. By the second half of this century—for the first time—the artists faced unlimited freedom and a public demand for exquisitely absurd originality. Any viewer with the critical eye honed by innumerable examples of human creativity will, at first, be stunned walking through any of the large contemporary art shows such as the Biennale in Venice, or the Documenta in Kassel. The works are shockingly seductive, their impact often almost physical with bits and pieces of rocks, packaged with string, refuse with aggressive angles hammered together, rusty sheets of iron splattered with cracking paint, drift art picked up from the cultural beach. It is strange that by the following day there are barely any memories, short of a taste of dreary despair.

How could this happen? A flood of publications has made art from all periods and places eminently available from Benin bronzes, Inuit sculptures, Bulgarian icons, artifacts from all corners of the globe, to thousands of ideas spewed out by design firms. Responding to this immense ever-present vocabulary, invention of new images, making a statement in a culture overwrought with slogans became difficult. Confronted with an avid group of status seekers, some willing to buy in bulk, responding to names *en vogue*, the gallery owners stalked the lofts looking for instant sensations. Important messages enunciated by Malevitch, Picasso, Jackson Pollock, the color fields of Rothko, the worlds of Germaine Richier and Louise Bourgeois began to be replaced by shrill, ever more obtuse outbursts of forced originality. The mostly visually uneducated patrons, who in previous centuries had cooperated with artists and architects were now snowed under by waves of critics judging the saleability of works. Art entered the columns of the *Wall Street Journal* and helped to support firms specializing in investment. Auction houses provided safe purchases filtered through the eyes of badly-paid interns. Gallery owners strained to group bizarre imageries, turning them into trends such as Minimalism, launching, for instance, Judd's badly nailed plywood artifacts as sculpture. Yearly, new personalities exploded on the 'scene,' were swept up by collectors and disappeared. The grandchildren of surrealism such as Peter Phillips, Allen Jones, even Wayne Thibaud, the Matisse collage followers such as Matt Mullican's cutouts and Mangold's Xs, Joseph Kosuth's upside down Netherlandish female portrait plus text, Carlo Mariani's and Stephen McKenna's neo Ingres-Poussin assemblages of gods and artists, innumerable collages reminiscent of Schwitters and Hermann Hoeh, an avalanche of inept abstract expressionism satellites of Rauschenberg and Sam Francis, boring imitations of Claes Oldenburg, Klaus Staeck's Lichtensteinisms, A.R. Penck's plagiarized Keith Harings, Long's tedious Jasper Johnsian *Mud Circle*, Ludwig Gerdes's sterile perspectives, all of them mediocre, irrelevant, dead-on-arrival pieces, in short, all these desperate tabulations of creative coma left one with a sense of bewildered despair. Documenta 1982 from which some of the above artists are culled, also included texts. Much as basically non-musical rap has replaced rock and roll, "visual" artists—or are

they writers, aphorists, poets—jettisoned imagery and replaced it with plaquettes with a few words, numbers, dates or larger lettered statements. Creators such as On Kawara, Hanne Darboven, Jenny Holzer, Rémy Zaugg seem out to prove that the power of language which can only be distorted to the point of becoming ludicrously irrelevant are killing an out of control imagery.

As a collector walking through exhibits, I always search for works I might negotiate to buy. Among the hundreds of dismal efforts at the 1982 Documenta, I'd only have considered works by Anselm Kiefer, monumental and relevant, and a humble poetic landscape by the barely known Dutch painter Hans van Hoek. Everything else was grating, badly manufactured, compositionally questionable, impossible to live with, its purpose little more than to *épater le bourgeois*.

In this minefield of frustrating, often junky, art three areas have remained solid, namely earthworks, photography / film, and the yet to be discovered "hidden" first rate works. While the portraits of the presidents at Mount Rushmore are overblown Victorian busts, the *Spiral Jetty* of Robert Smithson or the titanic reshaping of a volcanic landscape by James Turrell as well as other earth works going back as far as the mythological designs on the plain of Nazca are as symbiotically integrated with the soil as the giant meteor crater in Arizona. They appeal to archetypal wonder, and demand a response. The same is true for photography and the best films. Each of these two art forms requires technical expertise, circumspect knowhow, careful mapping of emphases and a definable message. Beginning with Atget, Stieglitz, Ansel Adams, Werner Bischoff and including directors of cinematic events such as Eisenstein and the creators of films such as *La Dolce Vita*, *Apocalypse Now*, *The Piano*, as well as recent carefully-researched period pieces, photography and film have fulfilled the age old demands on art, technical competence, a balanced composition, a clearly enunciated message defining a philosophy or sometimes eternal problems. A story, carefully framed, presented with virtuosity, confronting us with lasting, often archetypal images and situations would have delighted Bernini as well as Wagner.

Finally the most neglected segment of valid statements within the 20th century art consists of several hundred "hermit artists," accomplished practitioners whose works have only been shown and acclaimed locally and have never reached large urban centers. Not yet fashionable masters such as Lucien Freud, some photorealists, sculptors in obscure locations, are waiting to become trendy, and to be catapulted into the global scene. They will be bought by a public which for several decades has not been allowed to greet desperate attempts to shock with derision, or to reject strenuous provocation. The artless *Piss Christ* or the certified, nicely-labelled canned excrements of an Italian artist may in the end serve as fertilizer for a new and at the same time age old vision of humanity relevant to a public exhausted by visual cynicism. As to the eminently forgettable art junk, most of it is so ineptly put together, it will simply disintegrate. The few important statements will survive and serve as a reminder of the difficulties facing artists who had to handle untrammeled, uncritical and absolute freedom.

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Points of View in Romanesque Sculpture: The Cluniac Group

William Travis

The most enduring definition of the aesthetics of Romanesque sculpture was advanced over two generations ago by Henri Focillon (1931).¹ This theory, known in English as the "laws of frame and plane," interprets Romanesque sculpture as an art inseparable from its architectural support: the frame dictates the shape of the image, while the plane precludes any continuity with the space of the viewer. Expanding on this notion, Jurgis Baltrušaitis (1931) deduced a number of simple motifs which supposedly inform all Romanesque compositions.² Louis Grodecki (1978), another student of Focillon's, characterized Romanesque sculpture as an art of frontality.³ According to this mode of interpretation, then, sculpture of this period was conceived in terms of images hieratically fixed to the stone; each work was designed to be seen from a single angle.⁴

In this paper, I will propose a different reading of Romanesque aesthetics, based on a group of sculptures in which several vantage points were considered. This phenomenon of "points of view"—i.e., the various angles from which sculpture was designed to be seen—is usually associated with Mannerism; more recently, it has been extended to Gothic production as well.⁵ In my opinion, the phenomenon was already present in the Romanesque period, however surprising this may seem in light of the prevailing theories on Romanesque sculpture.

I will concentrate on sculptures from the Cluniac group. As used in this essay, the term "Cluniac" designates only that style associated with the celebrated eight choir capitals of Cluny. In my view, the major exponents of this manner, apart from Cluny itself (e.g., ambulatory and nave facade), were Montceaux-l'Etoile (nave facade), Perreccy-les-Forges (nave facade), Saint-Barnard of Romans (two capitals in the nave), Vézelay (lateral portals of nave facade, especially), and Saint-Vincent of Mâcon (various fragments in the Musée des Ursulines). Sculptural activity at these sites extended over several generations, particularly at Cluny, Vézelay, and Mâcon, but the period of the choir capitals and their shop can be situated c. 1115-1135.⁶ Rather than discuss each site separately, I will proceed by type, examining each of the major sculptural fields (capitals, consoles, tympana, and lintels).⁷ The Cluniac group is the best example I know of sustained experimentation with points of view in monumental sculpture. It needs to be stressed at the outset that it was not the only group to explore this aesthetic.

Points of view never became as widespread a phenomenon in Romanesque sculpture as the "laws of frame and plane;" but they help nuance our view of the complexity of Romanesque style. The aim of this article is thus two-fold: to offer new

insights into the aesthetics of Romanesque sculpture and in so doing to contribute to our knowledge of a major group (Cluny and its circle).

Three Principal Views. Before analyzing points of view in Romanesque sculpture, it is first necessary to summarize the system this phenomenon overturned. A characteristic example is provided by a capital from Saint-Lazare of Autun (Saône-et-Loire) representing Two Virtues and Two Vices (south nave arcade, pier 6, east face; Figures 1-2). Though the boasting (*épannelage*) establishes three sides, all sculptured, each side functions independently of the other two. The major axes are defined by the elongated figures of *Largitas* and *Patientia* at either corner. Seen from the back, these figures are little more than a simple vertical. The corner is a barrier; the integrity of each side is absolute.

With points of view, the sculptural field was unified.⁸ One of the most successful works with multiple viewpoints is the St. Michael and the Devil console (nave facade, S.XI) from Vézelay (Yonne; Figures 3-5).⁹ Set at the corner and deeply undercut, the archangel pivots around his own axis, presenting an always changing view. The first, and predominant view, is the central one (Figure 4); the second is defined by the direction toward which the figure moves (Figure 3); the third view is defined by that direction from which the figure moves (Figure 5). Between each there is a fluid transition. This triple viewpoint became standard in the Cluniac group.

A narthex capital from Perreccy-les-Forges (Saône-et-Loire) provides a non-figurative example of the same method. Seen frontally, the foliage appears stiff, but from the side it flows (Figures 6-7). A standard derivative of the Corinthian has been rethought; the principal stalks rotate around the edge of the block, rather than defining a vertical where the two sides intersect.¹⁰ A single form—in this case a leaf—can be read in different ways according to the spectator's position. As at Vézelay, points of view unify the sculptural field by joining sides which more commonly were treated as disparate units.¹¹

The approach of both works is inherently sculptural, turning to advantage the point of greatest salience. For Wilhelm Vöge, this rethinking of the block in terms of projecting corners constituted the most significant innovation of Gothic sculpture; these Cluniac sculptures demonstrate, however, that the technique was already practiced in a systematic way during the Romanesque period.¹² In conception the engaged capital is no longer a sculpture with three sides and two corners; instead, it is

a curved surface susceptible of representing continuous action.

Where a corner was not available, sculptors devised other methods for enhancing visibility. The choir capitals of Cluny (Saône-et-Loire) show a characteristic solution in the adoption of a deeply carved mandorla, creating a "stage" for figures (Figure 8). Traditionally the mandorla was reserved for representations of the theophany; at Cluny (capitals 4, 5, 7, 8), however, it enframed various personifications whose meaning continues to mystify scholars.¹³ In other words, the mandorla was exploited for its artistic potential, even though this involved the incorrect use of a symbol.

Similar in approach, though now iconographically correct, is the tympanum of Montceaux-l'Etoile, where the rotating Christ in a deep stage looks suspiciously like a borrowing from a Cluny choir capital (Figures 9-10). The mandorla made high relief possible even on otherwise flat surfaces.

Other solutions were found for lintels.¹⁴ At Perrecy-les-Forges the lintel was carved as a half-concave (*en demi-cuvette*) (Figure 11). This created a deep base, or platform, for the figures, allowing them to twist and turn in the prescribed triple-viewpoint method. Reinforcing this effect, various conversational groups link figures across space. Bodies turn in one direction, heads in another; figures work equally well whether seen from the right, the left, or head-on.

The working methods of the time underline the achievement of this new technique. For work executed *après la pose*, i.e., after emplacement, the craftsman approached a piece at eye level, but did so without compensating for the changed perspective from the ground. For sculpture carved *avant la pose*, the sculptor was obliged to lean over his work; only after completion would it be set at eye level. Renaissance and later artists, by contrast, placed their blocks on a high table, allowing them to attack a piece from the same perspective it would enjoy once *in situ*.¹⁵ Whether the decoration was executed *avant* or *après la pose*, then, Romanesque sculptors attacked their blocks at an angle different from that accessible to the spectator. With points of view—effective only if the observer's position is taken into account—this indifference *vis-à-vis* the audience began to change.

Origins. Various roots for this transformation can be suggested. The sculpture of Classical and Early Christian Antiquity offered a ready model as the only major precedent for a craft with a short history. The abundant cult statues of Burgundy may, for instance, have furnished a paradigm for images observable in the round.¹⁶ Among relief sculptures, an Early Christian "imago" sarcophagus discovered near Arles provides a parallel for Perrecy-les-Forges, with its high salience and twisting figures (Figures 11-12). Such evidence is consistent with the classicism of Burgundian art, e.g., at Saint-Lazare of Autun, where both the architecture and the large-scale nude of Eve recall ancient models.¹⁷ These similarities do not, however, establish a direct or exclusive reliance on ancient art. For instance, two of the most classicizing regions of Romanesque Europe, Tuscany and Provence, were largely untouched by the phenomenon of points

of view.¹⁸

A more immediate connection survives in the conventions of Romanesque sculpture. For instance, "heraldic" capitals, i.e., compositions in which identical images intersect to form a new one at the center, had two vantage points by definition. This approach represents a first step toward overturning the predominant "one side-one scene" of Romanesque sculpture; it is still far, though, from points of view. A comparison between Cluniac and non-Cluniac capitals may clarify this point. In a capital from Saint-Rustice (Haute-Garonne), for example, both sides are identical; the image is immobile; two creatures merge into a new, composite one (Figure 13). The views are limited and rigidly fixed: either strictly frontal for each side or at a forty-five degree angle for the corners. At Vézelay, by contrast, each side was differentiated; the figure was conceived as moving in space (Figures 3-5). Transitions are fluid; each view gives more information about the figure; images turn *within* the block.¹⁹

Another possible source is Mosan metalwork. In works such as the font of Renier of Huy (1107-18) or the foot of the cross of Saint-Bertin (c. 1170-80), the human figure has become an organic whole, conceived in the round, and successful from several points of view (Figure 14).²⁰ Indeed, metalwork produced by the lost-wax method, a technique of modelling wax prototypes, was three-dimensional from its inception. Portable pieces can also be picked up and examined from different angles.

In manuscript illumination as well—not to mention stained glass, frescoes, and the other arts—violently contorted figures present a wealth of postures, juxtaposed to heighten the sense of excitement and variety.²¹ With sculpture, artists were now able to realize these poses in three dimensions, within the same figure.

In my view the crucial parallel is with Burgundy, homeland of the Cluniac style. The tympana of La Charité-sur-Loire (Nièvre; Transfiguration tympanum), with its stepped-back panels; of Donzy-le-Pré (Nièvre), with its deep proscenium; of Saint-Vincent of Mâcon (Saône-et-Loire), with its five superimposed registers carved *en demi-cuvette*; of Montceaux-l'Etoile, with its carving *en cuvette*; of Avallon (Yonne), with its flat ground, suggest so many approaches to the problem of relief.²² This rethinking of the ground bears witness to an interest in creating a stage for multi-directional figures.

Other Burgundian sculptors devised "all-over" compositions in which figures uncoil across the capital. The best-known example is the "acrobat" from Anzy-le-Duc (Saône-et-Loire). There is no triple viewpoint *per se*, but the stasis of a fixed view has been overturned. A shop which Neil Stratford has centered around Neuilly-en-Donjon (Allier) specialized in such "serpentine creatures."²³

The calligraphic quality of Burgundian sculpture may have favored the development of points of view, too, by transforming the flowing line into a three-dimensional mass. Other regional "schools" excelled in this agitated calligraphy, as seen, for instance, in the trumeau of Souillac (Lot) or the apse capitals of Vigéois (Corrèze). In Cluniac sculpture, however, the pattern

does not lie on the surface, but penetrates the stone.

Chronology. A chronology of points of view remains elusive, though a rough outline can perhaps be attempted. Several of the "preconditions" alluded to above, such as hieratic capitals, the calligraphic treatment of line, and an experimentation with grounds were all known, it would seem, by the eleventh century.²⁴ The flourishing of the Cluniac shop, c. 1115-35, combined with the evidence of Mosan metalwork (e.g., Renier's font of 1107-18), suggest that points of view, as a conscious and coherent system, began in the early-twelfth century.

In this first generation, the adoption of points of view appears to have been somewhat haphazard. On the nave facade of Vézelay (usually dated after 1120), for instance, they affected some figures (console S.XI, among others), but not others.²⁵ Over time they became increasingly schematized, as on the narthex facade of Charlieu (usually dated about mid-twelfth century; Figure 15).²⁶ In the lintel and capitals of the *majestas domini* portal, the multidimensionality of figures decreases on approaching the center. The roundest forms are the foliate capitals, followed by the figures of King David and John the Baptist in the outer jamb, King Boso with St. Stephen (?) and Bishop Ratbert with St. Fortunatus (?) in the inner jamb, and finally the apostles in the lintel proper.²⁷ The arrangement, strictly symmetrical, implies a degree of foresight in organizing the relief.

Points of view also affected the production of other regions; but to the best of my knowledge only in the sculpture of Western France can anything comparable to the Cluniac development be found. The archivolt sculptures of Blasimon (Gironde) and Saint-Aubin of Angers (Maine-et-Loire) provide two notable examples.²⁸

The genealogy of points of view can be traced further to the early Gothic sculpture of Senlis (west portal archivolt; c. 1170), Reims (archivolt of the "porte romane;" c. 1180), and beyond.²⁹ In works such as the Last Judgment pillar of Strasbourg (c. 1230) and Claus Sluter's Moses Well from the charterhouse of Champmol (1395-1405)—where freely articulated figures were loosened from their architectural support—points of view had their richest expression in medieval art. To derive from this, however, a linear descent from Cluny to Gothic sculpture requires a leap of faith that the current state of knowledge does not support.³⁰

Conclusion. At this juncture, it is possible to advance preliminary conclusions as to the sources, method, and original reception of a little-known phenomenon.

Various roots were proposed here, both in ancient and contemporary art (Romanesque sculpture, Mosan metalwork, and Burgundian developments). With points of view, these elements fused to create a new aesthetic. Despite their many continuities, however, Burgundian and Cluniac sculpture were not synonymous, as shown in the contrast between Autun and Vézelay (Figures 1-5). This dichotomy is all the more striking as Gislebertus of Autun probably trained in a Cluniac atelier.³¹

Furthermore, many of the sculptural ensembles displaying points of view (e.g., Vézelay) do so in a sporadic way. On the other hand, points of view also occur in different regions, such as Western France. Therefore, the phenomenon is neither unique to a single workshop tradition, nor consistent within that tradition. It developed in the early-twelfth century in a Cluniac context, with Burgundian roots, but had parallel manifestations elsewhere whose interrelationships and chronology remain unclear.

As has been seen, all architectural members were subject to innovative reinterpretations of their functions. Consoles and capitals were attacked from an angle, lintels and tympana were hollowed out: in every instance the ground was transformed. This transformation was accompanied by an animation of figures which resulted in constant reorientations of direction. If we think of the sculptured surface as a picture plane, the figure depicted is always turned at an angle to us, captured in mid-movement. A basic formula of three principle views was devised. The type of architectural support affected the images' visibility: figures carved at the corner of a capital allowed for a wider arc of vision than those on a single side.

Points of view also offer a new way of assessing the relationship between the work of art and its audience. Over the past decade, reception theory has attracted considerable attention among medievalists.³² The phenomenon studied here expands on the type of evidence produced, by introducing arguments of a technical nature; at the same time, it shifts the focus by examining the methods employed by the creator to reach his audience.

The principal precondition for points of view may indeed be the changed status of the artist, no longer a craftsman, but a professional. Subjectively, this can be sensed in the subtlety of form, the gradations in relief, or the mastery of composition, among other features. The emergence of the professional sculptor is also consistent with a broader historical context in its reflection of the division of labor, arguably the signal achievement of the Romanesque period.³³ In this light the virtuosity implicit in points of view can be interpreted as the product of a different type of worker.

Corresponding to this new sculptor was a new observer; the "virtuoso" found his counterpart in the "connoisseur."³⁴ Thus the implications for the spectator must be addressed, too. Despite the emotional power of much Romanesque sculpture, there is nothing in the sculpture itself which invites a viewer to approach it from different angles. The standpoint is dictated from the outset. Points of view elicit a more participatory response from the spectator, who had to circulate around the image to comprehend it fully.

Indeed, no art was more public than sculpture, particularly the church portals designed to reach the whole community. Manuscript illumination, by contrast, was the preserve of the few. Church treasures were available to all, but on rare occasions. Frescoes, mosaic, and stained glass were also eminently public. When images were possessed by spirits good or evil, however, they tended to be sculptures—doubtless because,

being more corporeal, they seemed more lifelike.³⁵ Sculpture braved even the Bible in its injunction against idolatry ("non facies tibi *sculptile*," in the Vulgate's wording of the Second Commandment, Ex. 20:4).

The appeal of sculpture was thus immediate and public to an extent no other art could rival.³⁶ Points of view reflect this cultural context by directly engaging the audience in the act of

looking. The emotional charge of Romanesque art, often poised between threat and promise, joy and anguish, offered another means toward achieving the same end.

The emergence of points of view is not just another transformation in style, then; it is the perception of the possibilities of sculpture which has changed.

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My thanks to Laura De Prest and Stéphane Chrétien for lending a critical ear.

¹ Henri Focillon, *L'Art des sculpteurs romans: recherches sur l'histoire des formes* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1931).

² Jurgis Baltruaitis, *La stylistique ornementale dans la sculpture romane* (Paris: Leroux, 1931).

³ Louis Grodecki, "Problèmes de l'espace dans la définition de la sculpture gothique," *Archives de l'art français* 25 (1978): 77-85. The same opposition between Romanesque frontality and Gothic diagonality is common in architectural theory. See Paul Frankl, "Der Beginn der Gotik und das allgemeine Problem des Stilbeginnes," in *Festschrift Heinrich Wölfflin: Beiträge zur Kunst- und Geistesgeschichte zum 21. Juni 1924 überreicht* (Munich: Schmidt, 1924) 107-25; id., *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries*, trans. Priscilla Silz (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1960) 792-826; id., *Gothic Architecture*, trans. Dieter Pevsner, Pelican History of Art (Baltimore: Penguin, 1962) 10-14. On this problem, also see Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (Stockholm: Almqvist, 1960) 60-62; and Jean Bony, "Diagonality and Centrality in Early Rib-Vaulted Architectures," *Gesta* 15 (1976): 15-25. Erwin Panofsky, *Die deutsche Plastik des elften bis dreizehnten Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Wolff, 1924) 17 defined Romanesque style as "massenmäßig aufgehöhte Flächenform."

⁴ Over time Focillon's theories have of course been challenged. The only frontal attack, however, was developed by Joseph Gantner, *Romanische Plastik: Inhalt und Form in der Kunst des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: Schroll, 1941). Gantner's thesis has had little influence among non-German scholars.

⁵ For Mannerist sculptors, see especially the work of Cellini and Giambologna, who executed the first sculptures truly designed in the round, i.e., capable of offering equally successful views from many angles. For Gothic sculpture, see Robert Suckale, "Die Bamberger Domskulpturen: Technik, Blockbehandlung, Ansichtigkeit und die Einbeziehung des Betrachters," *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 3rd ser., 37 (1987): 27-82.

⁶ For a fuller exposition of the evidence on dating, see my upcoming dissertation: "The Romanesque Sculpture of Montceaux-l'Etoile: Crossroads of Cluny and the Brionnais," diss., NYU (Institute of Fine Arts), 1994.

⁷ Friezes and archivolt are excluded because they were less common in Burgundy. The frieze at Perrecy-les-Forges and the Cluniac-style archivolt of Anzy-le-Duc (nave portal) show the same approach, however.

⁸ This unification was visual and contrasts with other means that were more intellectual in nature. For instance, the sides of capitals might be linked in terms of their iconography, turning heads, gesture, or other means.

⁹ Also cf. the angel in the Sacrifice of Isaac capital from Cluny.

¹⁰ For more on this type of capital, see Georg Weise, "Vorbemerkungen zu einer Formengrammatik der vegetabilischen Grundmotive romanischer Kapitelldekoration," in *Das Werk des Künstlers: Studien zur Ikonographie und Formgeschichte: Hubert Schrade zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Hans Fegers (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960) 72-100.

¹¹ The merging of capitals and consoles on the nave portal of Perrecy-les-Forges can be interpreted in the same light.

¹² Wilhelm Vöge, *Die Anfänge des monumentalen Stiles im Mittelalter: eine Untersuchung über die erste Blütezeit französischer Plastik* (Strasbourg: Heitz, 1894) 58ff. Also cf. Panofsky, *Renaissance* 60f; and Raymond Oursel, *Floraion de la sculpture romane*, vol. 2 (La Pierre-qui-vire: Zodiaque, 1976) 387f.

¹³ For a recent interpretation of these capitals, see Peter Diemer, "What Does *Prudentia* Advise?: On the Subject of the Cluny Choir Capitals," *Gesta* 27 (1988): 149-173.

¹⁴ Mandorlas rarely appeared on lintels. One exception was the church of Saint-Pierre-le-Puellier at Bourges (Cher).

¹⁵ Several medieval examples are illustrated in Günther Binding et al., *Der mittelalterliche Baubetrieb Westeuropas*, 32. Veröffentlichung der Abteilung Architektur des Kunsthistorischen Instituts der Universität zu Köln (Cologne: U of Cologne, 1987). On medieval eurythmy, see Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, trans. Hugh Bredin (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1986) 65f. For Renaissance technique, see Marie-Thérèse Baudry et al., *La sculpture: méthode et vocabulaire*, Inventaire général des monuments et des richesses artistiques de la France: Principes d'analyse scientifique (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1978) 156.

¹⁶ Important collections of Gallo-Roman sculptures survive in the museums of Autun and Dijon. See Simone Deyts, *Sculptures gallo-romaines mythologiques et religieuses, Dijon, Musée Archéologique* (Paris: Musées nationaux, 1976).

¹⁷ On classicism in Burgundian art, see Rudolf Kautzsch, "Werdende Gotik und Antike in der burgundischen Baukunst des zwölften Jahrhunderts," *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg 1924-25*: 331ff; Jean Adhémar, *Influences antiques dans l'art du moyen âge français: recherches sur les sources et les thèmes d'inspiration*, Studies of the Warburg Institute 7 (London: Warburg Institute, 1939) 241-248; and Willibald Sauerländer, "Abwegige Gedanken über frühgotische Architektur und 'The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century,'" in *Etudes d'art offertes à Louis Grodecki*, eds. Sumner McK. Crosby et al., International Center of Medieval Art, Association des Publications près les Universités de Strasbourg (Paris: Ophrys, 1981) 170ff.

¹⁸ Some exceptions include Saint-Gilles-du-Gard (Gard), east end, capital representing an angel; and Saint-Trophime of Arles (Bouches-du-Rhône), cloister corbels #69 and 75 (numbering of author).

¹⁹ There were also heraldic capitals in Burgundy, including some at Vézelay. Other conventions of Romanesque sculpture, which may have influenced the development of points of view, include the frieze capital and the three-quarter view. In the former, the composition is predicated on the viewer's physical displacement, e.g., a Passion sequence from the cloister of La Daurade at Toulouse. The figures, however, remain embedded in their respective sides; what movement there was resulted from a succession of static forms.

Another convention arose from the need to suggest space in an aesthetic inimical to naturalistic representation. One approach was to create three-quarter profiles, as on the tympanum of Conques

(Aveyron). The figures can thus be perceived from various angles; yet only one view, parallel to the picture plane, remains effective. The back sides of the figures are artistically neutral.

²⁰ For the roots of this conception, see the classic article of Wilhelm Koehler, "Byzantine Art in the West," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 1 (1940): 61-87.

²¹ E.g., the Portable Altar of Liborius and Kilian by Roger of Helmarshausen (c. 1100), illustrated in Hanns Swarzenski, *Monuments of Romanesque Art: The Art of Church Treasures in North-Western Europe*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1967) fig. 234.

²² The problem of the sculptural ground has long interested scholars. See for instance, Emanuel Loewy, *The Rendering of Nature in Early Greek Art*, trans. John Fothergill (London: Duckworth, 1907), 34-44; Alois Riegl, *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Oesterreichische Staatsdruckerei, 1927) chapter two; Willibald Sauerländer, *Gothic Sculpture in France 1140-1270*, trans. Janet Sandheimer (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972). On the ground in Burgundian Romanesque sculpture, see Martin Gosebruch, "Über die Bildmacht der burgundischen Skulptur im frühen XII. Jahrhundert: Beiträge zu einer Bestimmung des Stiles," diss., U Ludwig-Maximilian, 1950; Wilhelm Messerer, *Das Relief im Mittelalter* (Berlin: Mann, 1959) 52-59; id., *Romanische Plastik in Frankreich*, DuMont Dokumente, part I, Kunstgeschichte (Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1964) 37-42; Meyer Schapiro, *The Parma Ildefonsus: A Romanesque Illuminated Manuscript from Cluny and Related Works*, Monographs on Archaeology and Fine Arts 11 (n.p.: College Art Association of America, 1964) 56; Bernhard Kerber, *Burgund und die Entwicklung der französischen Kathedralskulptur im zwölften Jahrhundert*, Münstersche Studien zur Kunstgeschichte 4 (Recklinghausen: Bongers, 1966) 15ff.

As far as I know, scholars have not examined the interesting solution of the nave facade of Charlieu (Loire; c. 1094?), where the top molding of the lintel was cut back at its center, possibly to enhance the visibility of Christ in the tympanum for those passing under the portal. Equally unorthodox is the *Majestas Domini* portal, where figures in the tympanum project beyond those in the lintel.

²³ Neil Stratford, "Le portail roman de Neuilly-en-Donjon," *Congrès Archéologique de France* 146 (1988): 332.

²⁴ For a dating of the "séries brionnaises," which include hieratic capitals, to a pre-Clunian phase of sculpture, see Eliane Vergnolle, "Recherches sur quelques séries de chapiteaux romans bourguignons: I. Le bloc et son décor," *L'Information d'histoire de l'art* 20 (1975): 55-79. For early examples of the calligraphic line, see the capitals of Saint-Germain-des-Prés of Paris (now in the Musée de Cluny in Paris). For the experimentation with grounds, see the "crypt" capitals of Saint-Bénigne of Dijon (1002-1018), which already employed deep undercutting.

²⁵ On the dating of Vézelay (nave facade), see Francis Salet, "La Madeleine de Vézelay et ses dates de construction," *Bulletin Monumental* 95 (1936): 5-25; id., *La Madeleine de Vézelay* (Melun: d'Argences, 1948) 40; Peter Diemer, *Stil und Ikonographie der Kapitelle von Ste.-Madeleine, Vézelay*, diss., U Ruprecht-Karl (Heidelberg), 1975, 33ff; Lydwine Saulnier and Neil Stratford, *La sculpture oubliée de Vézelay: catalogue du Musée lapidaire*, Bibliothèque de la société française d'archéologie 17 (Paris: Arts et métiers graphiques, 1984) 76f.

If there were multiple viewpoints, there was, however, no coordinating standpoint. At Montcaux-l'Etoile, for instance, Christ is the most plastic figure, followed by the angels surrounding him, and finally by the figures in the lintel. Many of the angles so carefully conceived by the sculptor(s) were subsequently obscured by a projecting impost block. The same phenomenon occurred at Perrecy-les-Forges.

²⁶ Jochen Zink, "Zur dritten Abteikirche von Charlieu (Loire), insbesondere zur Skulptur der Vorhalle und ihrer künstlerischen Nachfolge," *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 44 (1983): 128 dates this campaign to the second

third of the twelfth century. A brief summary of earlier opinions is given in Elizabeth Read Sunderland, *Charlieu à l'époque médiévale* (Lyon: Lescuyer, 1971) 52.

²⁷ On the iconography of these figures, see Zink, 77ff.

²⁸ Pierre Dubourg-Noves, *Guyenne romane* (La Pierre-qui-vire: Zodiaque, 1969) 300 dates Blasimon to c. 1160-70. Jacques Mallet, *L'art roman de l'ancien Anjou* (Paris: Picard, 1984) 146 dates Angers to c. 1180. Whether these pieces were influenced by Burgundian sculpture—as suggested by their "starched folds" and sinuous line—remains an open question. If so, points of view may have been imported, too. On the other hand, it is possible there was no direct influence, only a set of similar conditions. For instance, the placement of figures on archivolt, i.e., at a corner, recalls the Clunian approach to capitals. Other examples of points of view outside Burgundy include the Three Maries capital of Mozac (Puy-de-Dôme) and several capitals from Nazareth.

²⁹ The dates given here for Senlis, Reims, and Strasbourg are adopted from Sauerländer, *Gothic Sculpture*.

³⁰ Kenneth J. Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture 800 to 1200*, Pelican History of Art, 2nd ed. (revised) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987) 185ff made a similar claim for the Clunian roots of Gothic architecture.

³¹ Denis Grivot and George Zarnecki, *Gislebertus: Sculptor of Autun* (London: Trianon, 1961) 174f; Saulnier and Stratford, 34, 172f.

³² Major contributions to the literature of medieval art and its public include Hans Belting, *Das Bild und sein Publikum im Mittelalter: Form und Funktion früher Bildtafeln der Passion* (Berlin: Mann, 1981); and Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989). For Romanesque sculpture, more specifically, see Walter Cahn, "Romanesque Sculpture and the Spectator," in *The Romanesque Frieze and its Spectator*, Lincoln Symposium Papers, ed. Deborah Kahn (London: Miller, 1992), 44-60.

³³ Cf. Jacques Le Goff, "Métiers licites et métiers illicites dans l'Occident médiéval," in id., *Pour un autre moyen âge: temps, travail et culture en Occident*, Bibliothèque des Histoires (Paris: Gallimard, 1977) 97 (originally published in *Etudes historiques, Annales de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes de Gand* 5, 41-57): "Une révolution économique et sociale se produit dans l'Occident chrétien [entre le XIe et le XIIIe siècle], dont l'essor urbain est le symptôme le plus éclatant, et la division du travail l'aspect le plus important." The rise of the professional sculptor has yet to be studied in a systematic way by art historians.

³⁴ Cf. the comments of Theophilus in his *De Diversis Artibus* (preface to book three), cited and discussed in Conrad Rudolph, *The "Things of Greater Importance": Bernard of Clairvaux's Apologia and the Medieval Attitude Toward Art* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1990) 66: "For the human eye is not able to consider on what work first to fix its gaze: if it looks at the ceilings, they glow like brocades; if it considers the walls, they are a likeness of paradise; if it regards the profusion of light from the windows, it marvels at the inestimable beauty of the glass and the variety of the most precious craftsmanship." Also see Meyer Schapiro, "On the Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art," in *Art and Thought: Issued in Honor of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday*, ed. K. Bharatha Iyer (London: Luzac, 1947) 130-150.

³⁵ A systematic study of possessed statues in Romanesque Europe has yet to be made. The phenomenon, better known in Byzantium, was recently examined by Liz James, "Gods, Demons, and Antique Statues in Byzantine Constantinople," CAA Convention, Seattle, Feb. 1993.

³⁶ On sculpture as public art, see Willibald Sauerländer, "Romanesque Sculpture in its Architectural Context," in *The Romanesque Frieze* 16-43.



Figure 1. Autun, Saint-Lazare: south nave arcade, pier 6, east face (frontal). Two Virtues and Two Vices.



Figure 2. Autun, Saint-Lazare: south nave arcade, pier 6, east face (from left). Two Virtues and Two Vices.



Figure 3. Vézelay: nave facade, S.XI. Saint Michael and the Devil.



Figure 4. Vézelay: nave facade, S.XI (corner view). Saint Michael and the Devil.



Figure 5. Vézelay: nave facade, S.XI (from rear). Saint Michael and the Devil.



Figure 6. Perrecy-les-Forges: narthex capital (frontal). Foliage.



Figure 7. Perrecy-les-Forges: narthex capital (from left). Foliage.



Figure 8. Cluny: capital #7 (from right). Fourth Tone.



Figure 9. Montceaux-l'Etoile: tympanum (frontal). Ascension of Christ. Detail.



Figure 10. Montceaux-l'Etoile: tympanum (from left). Ascension of Christ. Detail.



Figure 11. Perrecy-les-Forges: lintel (from above). Betrayal of Christ (Arrest). Detail.



Figure 12. Arles, Musée d'art chrétien: "Imago" sarcophagus. Detail.

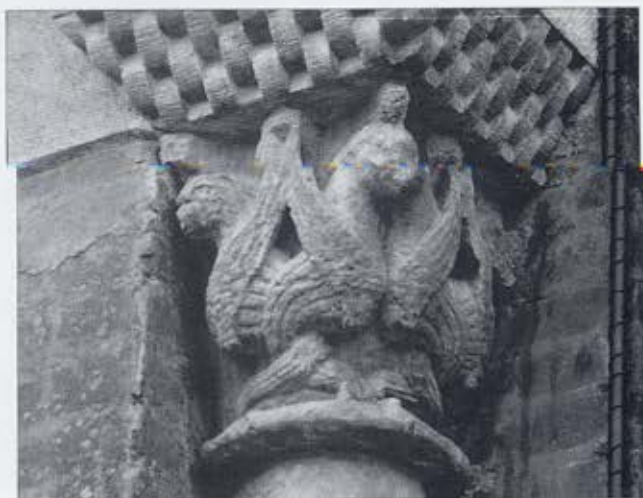


Figure 13. Saint-Rustice: apse capital.



Figure 14. Renier of Huy, Baptismal font (Liège, Saint-Barthélemy). John baptizing the publican. Detail.

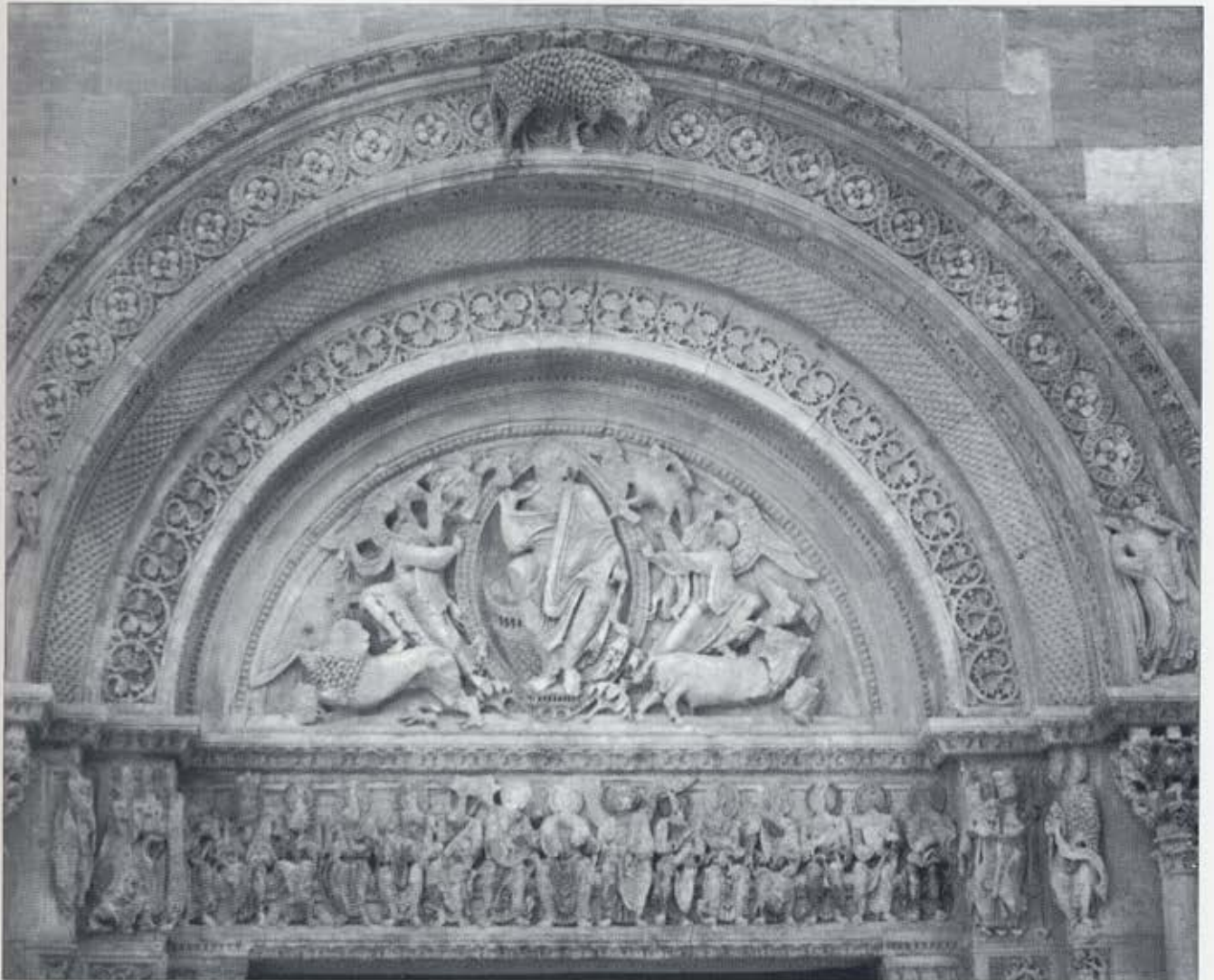


Figure 15. Charlieu: narthex portal. *Majestas domini*, apostles, King David, John the Baptist, King Boso, St. Stephen?, Bishop Ratbert, St. Fortunatus?

An Examination of Miniatures of the Office of St. Louis in Jeanne de Navarre's Book of Hours

Tania Mertzman

Historians agree that in the second quarter of the fourteenth century an elaborate Book of Hours (Paris, B. N., MS. n. a. lat. 3145) was executed for Jeanne de Navarre. This book includes the unusual addition of an Office dedicated to St. Louis. Marcel Thomas suggests that Philippe VI was this manuscript's patron and assigns the miniatures a date between 1332 and 1333.¹ Both the date and the patronage of Thomas' hypothesis are erroneous, and can be proven so in an examination of the illuminations of St. Louis' Office. Heraldry, subject matter, and iconography of this miniature cycle suggest a very different set of circumstances for the manuscript's commission. This article will show that the date of the manuscript was later than Thomas argues, and that Philippe VI is an unlikely patron. Further, it will show that Jeanne de Navarre is not only the recipient of the Hours,² but also a possible patron.

For an analysis of the Hours' miniatures, it is important to understand elements from the life of the person for whom they were designed, Jeanne de Navarre. She plays a very important and unfortunate role in the development of the Salic Law. After her father Louis X, and her half-brother John, died, the eight year old Jeanne was a possible heir of the French throne. However, her father's brother Philippe IV ascended the throne. After he was crowned King, a general assembly decided that although a woman could inherit other titles and properties, the royal line was unique: "only a man could be fit heir to St. Louis and Charlemagne."³ This law was later called the Salic Law.⁴

Jeanne had difficulty inheriting lesser properties as well. On his deathbed, her father had expressed his wish that his daughter receive properties he had acquired from his mother: Navarre, Champagne, and Brie.⁵ Though there was a precedent for female regency of these properties and Jeanne was the legal heir, Philippe became King of Navarre in addition to France. His succession ignored the laws of that region which recognized women as rulers.⁶ Jeanne was twice denied her rightful succession by Philippe IV.

When Philippe died without a son, his younger brother, Charles, became King of both France and Navarre. When he died also without a male heir, there was a struggle in which many men claimed the French throne. Philippe VI won this struggle and was crowned as King of France. Once King, Philippe elaborated the Salic Law to ban women from transferring the rights to the French crown to their descendants. He did this to invalidate the claims of the powerful Edward III of England to the French throne. However, Edward could do more than the eight year old Jeanne when dealt with in this

manner, and this event sparked the conflict that became the Hundred Years War.

Philippe VI was not politically agile enough to inherit Navarre. The Cortes (the people of Navarre) rejected him as their ruler.⁷ Jeanne was crowned, but because the Cortes thought she was too French, she acted only as regent until her son reached twenty-one.⁸

Much of Jeanne's problem attaining lands and title may have been due to questions about her legitimacy. In 1314, Jeanne's mother, Marguerite of Burgundy, was accused (probably falsely) of adultery.⁹ This scandal resulted in doubts about Jeanne's legitimacy and became an important obstacle to her claims of succession.¹⁰ These themes can be identified in the iconography of the illuminations of the Office of St. Louis in her Book of Hours.

The Hours of Jeanne of Navarre can be understood in terms of the concerns of Jeanne as a dubious Capetian and disappointed heiress. The iconography of the illuminations of the Office of Saint Louis suggests that Jeanne is a worthy and direct descendant of Louis IX who should not be denied her place in the Capetian lineage and succession.

The miniatures appear in chronological order and only show the first thirty years of the saint's life. The subjects of the eight miniatures of the Navarre Office have an unusual concentration on the saint's kingship which the other illuminated or textual portrayals of the saint's life do not share. The subjects are as follows:

Matins:	The Education of Louis*
Lauds:	Louis as a Child at the Mass
Prime:	Louis and His Mother Blanche Traveling to Reims for His Coronation
Tierce:	The Coronation of Louis IX: the Unction
Sixte:	The Coronation of Louis IX: the Support of the Crown
None:	St. Louis Carrying the Relics of the Crown of Thorns
Vespers:	St. Louis, Sick, Deciding to Go on Crusade
Compline:	The Preaching of the Crusade by the Legate, Eudes de Châteauroux

Instead of showing the pious works and miracles as earlier cycles of St. Louis, the Navarre miniatures concentrate on the events of Louis' early years of education and events of his reign as king of France. Three of the eight illuminations show events of Louis' coronation and two others portray events before his first crusade. The miniatures' emphasis on the kingship of

Jeanne's ancestor may reflect the princess' personal interest in dynastic succession.

The illuminations themselves further emphasize Jeanne's ancestry and continue to allude to the character she and her son inherited from them. Her ancestry and character are offered as support of her legitimacy and her place within the Capetian lineage. Two illuminations of the Office make the personal nature of the cycle's iconography clear: the first, which decorated the Matins, and the third, illuminating the Prime.

The first illumination in the Office of Saint Louis begins the prayers of Matins. It shows the education of the young St. Louis (Figure 1). Louis' mother, Blanche of Castile, sits in a throne pointing at her son. The boy's tutor sits on a stool and directs his student's attention to the book held by the young prince. In his other hand the teacher holds a whip, ready to discipline his student, if need be. Louis sits on the floor, uncrowned with a halo. He has not yet become king. Hierarchically, he is humbled, but the halo suggests his saintly nature. Blanche is represented as a Queen, carefully watching her son, raising him to be a good ruler under the guidance of a monk's discipline. This picture emphasizes the role of a woman in the raising of a ruler.

The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux includes an illumination of St. Louis being disciplined by his confessor (Figure 2), which has a composition similar to the Navarre education scene. The compositions of both the Navarre education and the Cloisters' manuscript scene of discipline recall the *topos* of Grammar common in medieval art. The Navarre Hours artist borrowed this *topos* of Grammar to illustrate the education of Louis. However, the Navarre Hours artist has altered the familiar portrayal of Grammar by including the child's mother in the scene. Blanche's presence would not have been important to a simple scene of education. The Queen was a purposeful addition which expanded the meaning of the traditional motif, but the addition of Blanche was not unique to the Navarre Office.

Marcel Thomas discusses a similar scene of the education of St. Louis illuminated in Guillaume de Saint-Pathus' *La vie et les miracles de monseigneur saint-Louis* (Figure 3).¹¹ The illuminations of both *La vie* and the Hours follow the words of Guillaume de Saint-Pathus.¹² They describe how the young king

was placed in the guardianship of the noble Madame Blanche his mother...who watched him very diligently. The King was always with his teacher who taught him letters...and his teacher never hit him for cause of discipline.¹³

Both illuminations generally follow *La vie's* description of Louis' education. Under Blanche's supervision, Louis is given a lesson by a teacher who directs the boy's attention to his studies. However, there are important differences between the two interpretations of this event. In Jeanne's Hours, the monk holds a small whip absent from *La vie*. Louis is at his teacher's feet instead of sitting on a stool as shown in the *La vie* education scene. The differences between the two compositions

show that the Grammar *topos* was an important source for the Hours artist. To compose the Navarre Hours' education miniature, the St. Pathus education scene that includes Blanche is combined with the Grammar *topos*.

The Hours miniature also changes the chronological placement of the education scene within Louis' life. In *La vie*, the event follows the coronation. It comes after a passage describing the regency of Blanche because although Louis was crowned, he was still too young to rule. In the Navarre Hours, this scene is well before those of the coronation; Louis was still only a prince in his father's kingdom. This lesser status may also help to explain why Louis' position at his teacher's feet was preferable to his sitting on a stool as in the St. Pathus miniature.

By altering the education's chronological placement in Louis' life, the Hours miniature also changes the event's meaning. In the scene from *La vie*, Blanche's appearance emphasizes her status as Regent for the young King, but in the Hours, she was not yet the boy's official guardian. In this light her role is different. This miniature portrays the queen's importance in raising heirs to the throne. Blanche appears here as a model or a parallel of Jeanne, a Spanish queen raising a future king. This scene almost seems to be one from Jeanne's life; the illumination from *La vie* has clearly been modified to accentuate the similarity of their situations.

Dynastic issues are involved in the miniature's emphasis on intergenerational parallels. After Louis' canonization, his descendants were eager to prove they inherited his character. Andrew W. Lewis showed that by the fourteenth century St. Louis' holiness had become a dynastic trait:

partially under the stimulus of dynasticism, the two basic models of legitimacy—the blood-right and worthiness or sanctity—were brought into close association, and sometimes fused, in royalist circles before the end of the thirteenth century.¹⁴

Holy qualities implied direct Capetian lineage. Actions paralleling ones by St. Louis and indications of his saintly character were effective evidence of direct Capetian descent. By paralleling the lives of Jeanne and her son with that of Blanche and Louis, the Navarre Office miniature suggests that Jeanne is following the example of her esteemed ancestors to raise her son well. This miniature intimates that the young Charles may become like his great-great-grandfather. Such an implication would certainly have pleased his mother, Jeanne. The parallel would also suggest the boy's legitimacy and possible claim to the throne.

The third illumination of the Office of St. Louis (Figure 4) decorates Prime. It shows Blanche of Castile and Saint Louis riding in a carriage to Reims for the ceremony. Nobles on horseback surround the carriage. Other contemporary manuscripts do not illuminate or describe this event.¹⁵ It is a peculiar event for the illuminator to choose. Since only eight illuminations show Louis' life in a Book of Hours, the scenes were chosen carefully. A transitional picture, such as this seems to be, is difficult to explain.

This illumination represents a peculiar incident in the life of Louis IX. His transportation to Reims was different from that of other French kings on their way to their coronations. Louis was so young that he was not strong enough to make the entire trip on a horse, so he rode in a carriage while the nobles rode their horses behind the prince. For his actual entrance into Reims, he descended from the carriage and mounted a warhorse.¹⁶ By including this scene in the illuminated cycle, the Navarre Hours emphasizes the youth and weakness of Louis instead of his strength and power, much as the first illumination humbled the saint by seating him on the floor.

To further emphasize Louis' youth and weakness, it is not the arms of the soon to be King, but the Coat-of-Arms of Blanche of Castile which decorates the carriage. Marcel Thomas notes that the heraldry and the presence of the Queen Mother underscores the fact that Blanche acted as regent for Louis, ruling his kingdom while the King was too young.¹⁷ On his deathbed, Louis VIII stipulated that Blanche was to be regent for his son. In view of Jeanne de Navarre's life, this event is a precedent for female rule of France, and therefore asserts Jeanne as the legitimate heir to the throne.

Because in the miniature Blanche rides in the carriage with her son, this scene emphasizes the maternal relationship between mother and prince. This scene may also parallel Jeanne's rule of Navarre after the death of her husband while she raised her son Charles. Indeed, when the miniature stresses the mother's legitimacy and the relationship of mother and son, it is also an argument for her son's position within the Capetian lineage.

Together, the iconography of these two illuminations throw doubt on Marcel Thomas' theory of the manuscript's patronage. Thomas suggests that Philippe VI commissioned the Hours and gave them to Jeanne.¹⁸ This hypothesis hardly seems likely considering the iconography of the Office of St. Louis. The King of France would not have commissioned a set of illuminations that portrays the king as weak, while asserting the power and position of a woman, Blanche. Thomas' theory is even less acceptable when one considers that Philippe VI was one of the kings who ascended the throne after Jeanne was denied it. Finally, this manuscript seems to argue for the legitimate dynasty of the Capetian line. The ascension of Philippe VI to the French throne ended the rule of the Capetians. Philippe was the first Valois. All these aspects of the manuscript argue against Philippe's involvement in the commission of this Book of Hours, especially as a gift to Jeanne de Navarre.

Thomas tries to date the Hours of Jeanne de Navarre around a certain crusade of Philippe VI. Since the Hours depicts Louis' crusade as not yet begun, Thomas assumed that the fourteenth-century crusade had also not begun. He thus dated the manuscript to a period between 1333 and 1334. Not

only does Thomas' suggested date ignore the iconography of the manuscript which throws doubt on Philippe's involvement, but it also overlooks the heraldic evidence. The coat of arms of Champagne does not appear in the Book of Hours. Jeanne de Navarre was Countess of Champagne until 1336. If the Book of Hours had been executed before that, the arms of Champagne should appear in the manuscript. Since they are absent, the Book of Hours could not have been executed before 1336.

If this manuscript was completed after the death of Jeanne's husband many anomalies in the manuscript would be understandable. The first few illuminations of the youth of Louis might represent the youth of Jeanne's son Charles. He was heir to the throne of Navarre and France (before the institution and elaboration of the Salic Law), and the most direct male descendent of Louis. If his father died before the execution of the illuminations, the absence of a strong male king would be explained. The prominence of the Queen without the King may portray her role as regent for her son after the death of her husband. Though she was Queen of Navarre, she and her husband were only allowed to rule until their son reached twenty-one; her position paralleled that of Blanche as a queen who was very conscious of her role in raising a future king whose early years and coronation are illuminated in the first five Office miniatures.

There is no reason to believe that Jeanne could not have been the patron of her Book of Hours. Her family had a history of manuscript collection, especially by women. She also had the monetary resources required to pay for such an elaborately illuminated manuscript. She and her husband controlled large and prosperous territories. While Philippe spent most of his time on crusade or fighting in the war against France, Jeanne was in charge of administration of their properties and of directing their assets.¹⁹ With her control of their money and her business experience, she could have easily directed the manuscript's commission herself.

In conclusion, Marcel Thomas' theory concerning the date and patronage of Jeanne de Navarre's Book of Hours is not supported by the information in the illuminations. Heraldic evidence suggests a later date, and the patronage of Philippe VI is unlikely due to the miniature's iconography. The illuminations continually undermine the king's power and often assert that of a woman. The emphasis on Jeanne and her son's legitimacy would not likely be a part of a book commissioned by one of the kings who kept her from the French throne. The iconography of the miniatures is very personal, and its intimacy also suggests that Jeanne may have been the patron. She had the resources and experience to accomplish such an expensive project, and there is no reason to ignore her as a possible patron of her own Book of Hours.

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¹ Marcel Thomas, "L'iconographie de Saint Louis dans les *Heures de Jeanne de Navarre*," *Septième centenaire de la mort de Saint Louis* (Paris: C.N.R.S., 1970) 230.

² Cockerell long ago proved that Jeanne II de Navarre was the manuscript's original owner and the person for whom the manuscript was designed. A short prayer on folio 151 recto describes the owner of the manuscript

as a Queen named Jeanne who ruled Navarre, "pro ancilla tua Johanna navarre regina." S. C. Cockerell, "Horae of Jeanne II Queen of Navarre," *A Descriptive Series of Fifty Manuscripts (nos. 51 to 100) in the Collection of Henry Yates Thompson* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1902) 155-6. Cockerell was able to identify this queen as Jeanne II of Navarre by study of the heraldic devices in the manuscript. The arms of France, Evreux (this set of arms belonged to Jeanne's husband, Philippe d'Evreux), and Navarre decorate the Book of Hours. Jeanne II was the only Jeanne of Navarre who was entitled to all three coats of arms.

³ Andrew W. Lewis, *Royal Succession in Capetian France: Studies on Familial Order and the State* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press, 1981) 154.

⁴ Rachel Bard, *Navarra: The Durable Kingdom* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1982). Also see Elizabeth M. Hallam, *Capetian France 987-1328* (London and New York: Longman, 1980) 284. Hallam also mentions that the next few kings of France strengthened the Salic Law which they claimed was based on laws of the Salian Franks. Much of the history of the Salic Law was falsified to give it more strength. For the history of the Salic Law, see Ralph Giesey, "The Juristic Basis of Dynastic Right to the French Throne," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s. 51 (1961), pt 5: 1-47.

⁵ Bard 66.

⁶ Bard 66.

⁷ Bard 67.

⁸ Bard 68.

⁹ Hallam claims that several chroniclers believed that Isabella of France, wife of Edward II of England, brought charges of adultery against all of

her sisters-in-law (Blanche of Burgundy was charged with adultery; Joan of Burgundy was charged with keeping their secrets). Some suggest that she meant to discredit them to help her recently born son attain the throne of France. Her son, Edward III of England, came close to the throne, and his struggle for succession with Philippe of Valois began the Hundred Years War.

¹⁰ Hallam 283. Also see, C. T. Wood, "Queens, Queens and Kingship; An Enquiry into Theories of Royal Legitimacy in France and England," *Order and Innovation in the Middle Ages: essays in honour of J.R. Strayer*, eds. W. C. Jordan, B. McNab and T. Ruiz (Princeton, 1976) 385-400.

¹¹ The connection of this illumination to the same scene in the Navarre Hours was made by Thomas (211).

¹² Thomas 211.

¹³ Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, *La Vie et miracles de monseigneur saint-Louis*, transcribed by M. C. d'Espagne (Paris: Les Editions du Cèdre, 1971) 26.

¹⁴ Lewis 125.

¹⁵ Neither the research of Marcel Thomas nor my own has uncovered any comparable scenes. Thomas 215.

¹⁶ Margaret Wade Labarge, *Saint Louis: Louis IX, Most Christian King of France* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1968) 34.

¹⁷ Thomas 215.

¹⁸ Thomas 230.

¹⁹ Bard 69.



Figure 1. Unknown, *Education of St. Louis*, from the *Hours of Jeanne de Navarre*, 1336-1349, glair and gold on vellum, 7" x 5 1/4", Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS n.a. lat. 3145, fol. 85v.



Figure 2. Jean Pucelle, *St. Louis Disciplined by His Confessor*, from the *Hours of Jeanne d' Evreux*, 1336-1349, grisailles on vellum, 3 5/8" x 2 3/8", New York, the Cloisters Collection, 54.1.2, fol. 103.



Figure 3. Unknown, *Education of St. Louis*, from *La vie et les miracles de monseigneur saint-Louis*, early 14th century, glair on vellum, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 5716, fol. 16.



Figure 4. Unknown, *St. Louis and Blanche of Castille Riding to Reims for the Coronation*, from the *Hours of Jeanne de Navarre*, 1336-1349, glair and gold on vellum, 7" x 5 1/4", Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS n.a. lat. 3145, fol. 97.

Controlling Images: Portraits of Charles V as Representations of His Political Agenda in Fourteenth Century France

Jennifer L. Fields-Crow

The Valois dynasty in fourteenth century France was an entire family of art patrons. King John's four sons—the Duke of Berry, the Duke of Burgundy, the Duke of Anjou, and the Duke of Normandy who succeeded him as Charles V—patronized many artistic projects, but it can be shown that Charles utilized his artistic patronage to bolster his political position. In particular, he used his portrait image in the illuminated manuscripts he commissioned to emphasize specific aspects of his political ambitions and specific traits of his own personality as a ruler. Through recognizable portraits in various settings, Charles V offered himself to his contemporaries as a just leader of a properly and intellectually organized government. However, scholars have not considered how these many portraits served to build an ideology of kingship.

Charles was responsible for the translation of many texts on subjects ranging from philosophy and religion to history and government. Even more exceptional, he organized his books into a lending library, from which, as we will see, his ideas could be effectively disseminated.¹

In particular, he made these texts his own by including his portrait in them, the aspect of the illuminations on which I will focus. Portraiture was increasing in popularity and in a manuscript served as a mark of ownership, distinguishing the owner as would initials or a written name. Charles controlled these manuscript portraits for two purposes: to record the ideal "good government" in France under his reign, and to demonstrate that he was personally capable of directing this government. These two purposes were symbolically illustrated through references to monarchical rule, to history and to the personality traits of the ruler.

We are fortunate to have a detailed eye-witness description of Charles' facial features. He is noted by contemporaries as having had a thin face, long nose, high forehead and defined cheekbones.² This description can be compared easily to the many portraits of Charles.³ A distinct move is made here, and in all portraits of Charles, away from a generic royal figure in a crown to a specific, recognizable face. Although portraiture in general is moving from the vague to the specific, we should not assume this has no political meaning in Charles' case. Portraiture is used here to particular effect, Charles' face is repeated over and over, and textual descriptions reiterate its specificity. Such a specific portrait was needed in order to link forcefully the particular visual image with the ideology of government.

Many of the manuscripts Charles had translated had never before been illustrated. Brigitte Buettner argues that under-

standing historical fact at the time was largely molded by the way these miniatures portrayed past events.⁴ I would add that Charles gave a personal context to the understanding of these images by constantly referring the content of the manuscripts back to his patronage as king by the inclusion of his portrait.

In the fourteenth century, French kings, who had previously had little interest in manuscripts, began to commission a number of literary productions with an emphasis on new texts or translations.⁵ John II commissioned manuscripts even while captive in England and Charles inherited this penchant from his father. Charles achieved his historical appellation "le sage" through the number, and especially the variety, of the texts that he commissioned. Charles is most often pictured on the frontispiece and dedication page which are among the few illustrations in his manuscripts.⁶

A number of books that Charles commissioned were on subjects that specifically supported monarchy. However, the manuscript most favorable to monarchical power and Valois legitimacy was the *Coronation Book of Charles V*, completed in 1365. In an effort to reaffirm the authority of the monarchy and his dynastic legitimacy, Charles decided to be crowned on Trinity Sunday as had his Grandfather, Philip of Valois. The *Coronation Book* documents the ceremony in detail and was a way for Charles to put into tangible form the beginning of his reign over France.

Charles' clerics revised the earlier coronation ceremony to support a stronger monarchy which in turn increased the impression of the power and control of the king.⁷ The miniatures in the 1365 manuscript function as supplementary information to the text and help to decipher the complex ceremony.⁸ For example the illustration of the King receiving the kiss of his peers documents the nobility's acceptance of Charles as their new ruler (Figure 1).

Charles was one of the first French princes to note the political importance of the great ruler Charlemagne. As documented in the *Coronation Book*, a statuette of the enthroned Charlemagne decorated the scepter of Charles at his coronation, illustrating his desire to imitate this model ruler (Figure 2).⁹ Not only was Charlemagne an ideal model in the realm of administration, since his military conquests were de-emphasized, but he was also a saint which represented the idea of a "Christian royalty."¹⁰ Charles owned Raoul de Presles' translation of St. Augustine's *City of God*, which contained a long passage on Charlemagne in the prologue, and a series of biographies of Charlemagne as well.¹¹ This image of Charles as a new

Charlemagne was seized upon rather quickly by contemporary historians. However, it is important to recognize that Charles began this politically astute association of his reign with the historically important image of Charlemagne during his coronation and in addition documented this special relation in his *Coronation Book*.

Many of Charles' manuscripts seek to depict certain aspects of his personality. Spirituality, chivalry, and intellect are especially important to a ruler and are illustrated through the miniatures as attributes of Charles by their association with the texts they illustrate and document.

In demonstrating his spirituality, Charles was careful to balance the images of his devotion with the images of divine right to rule. He commissioned many religious texts, such as a *Bible historiale* in 1371 (Figure 3). The frontispiece of the Bible shows Charles taking possession of the work from Jean de Vaudetar, Charles' *valet de chambre*, and depicts him simply as a pious man with few of the trappings of his high station. However, although he does not wear a crown, he does wear a *béguin* or cap to preserve the anointing he received at the Ceremony of the Uncion at his Coronation, another subtle reference to his power.¹² The oil for the Uncion was presented to the Archbishop of Reims from a heavenly source at the baptism of Clovis and, therefore, this cap signifies Charles' royal power through the blessing of the church, illustrating in an understated, humble way and making specific reference to the divine origin of his power.¹³ This image equates the piety of a wise ruler with the act of receiving his religious text in a simple and devout manner.

In addition to his image as a man of devotion, Charles wanted to exploit further his image as God's chosen ruler. His *Très beau bréviaire de Charles V* shows him in the context of Psalm 109 (Figure 4).¹⁴ God is seated on His throne motioning for Charles to come closer, emphasizing the close relationship between God and His monarch, the theocratic concept of royal power.¹⁵ Donal Byrne argues that Charles V and his court did everything possible to underline the "supernatural connection" between God and French monarchy.¹⁶ This relationship helped to solidify the divine right to rule, illustrated in this image. Therefore, along with accepting religious responsibility to rule, a king must also possess the divine right in order to control his nation effectively. Charles alludes to spiritual aspects of his position as ruler by directly associating his recognizable face with these ideas of divine right and piety.

Although all commissions by Charles for informative texts for the betterment of his people must be considered royal guides, Charles' library contained specific instructive books on the government of princes and kings. A proper king, like any of the nobility, would be aware of the customs that guided everyday manners and procedures. A king must set an example in the areas of virtue and chivalry. *Ordene de chevalerie*, a text from c. 1250, existed as an instructional manual, and was consulted at the time for proper royal and noble actions.¹⁷ Charles commissioned *L'information des princes* in 1379 as an instructive guide (Figure 5). We are presented with a portrait that is not

idealized, for the King has aged in this representation created only one year before his death. The illustration of Charles in this manuscript is a dedication scene staged in a royal reception area receiving the translation from Jean Golein. It emphasizes Charles' royal persona, in contrast to his depiction as a simple man in his 1371 Bible, in order to demonstrate that the King was to set the example of virtue and chivalry. With the dedication of this manuscript, Charles was not only a daily example of virtue to his contemporaries but also set an example that could be transmitted by this image through many generations.

In addition to adhering to the expected rules of nobility and chivalry, Charles charted new ground in the intellectual realm. Known as the most intelligent of the sons of John II, he was associated with the scholars at the University of Paris.¹⁸ While images relating to his intellectual endeavors vary from manuscript to manuscript, the representations are there to stress his own intellect and to show how this intelligence assisted him to rule over France. Claire Sherman has noted that the most important step is the "transfer of an iconographic type previously reserved for authors and scholars to the representation of a specific historical personality;" in this way evolution of king into scholar is complete.¹⁹

The scientific text, *Le livre des neuf anciens juges d'astrologie*, was created in 1361 for Charles while he was still Dauphin (Figure 6). This manuscript is an astrological treatise showing Charles' interest in science; during the middle fourteenth century wisdom and astrology were considered synonymous.²⁰ The King at times consulted the stars prior to major decisions, a fact noted by the contemporary historian Christine de Pisan. In the miniature, the Dauphin is shown addressing Aristotle, one of the ancient intellects who was to answer his questions.²¹ It is no coincidence that one of the first recognizable portraits of Charles shows him addressing a sage of the past. It should be noted that Charles began his program of associating his image with an important scientific treatise while ruling for his captive father.²² During this time he faced many trials, and must have realized the importance of projecting a positive, intelligent image.

An interest in social science and government lead to the commissioning of Denis de Foulechat's translation of *Le polycratique de Jean de Salisbury* as part of the King's system to make important writings favorable to monarchical power available in French (Figures 7 and 8).²³ The first illumination from this manuscript develops the ideals of the King in a setting of scholarly ambience complete with lectern and books. The *Polycratique* puts forward a contrast between virtue and folly that is represented in another image from the manuscript. Charles is in one of four small partitions, while Christ blesses the virtuous King and other sages on the upper level, while the courtiers and hunters below are representations of folly.²⁴ Being set apart as the only single figure and depicted alongside historical figures of sagacity only strengthened the impression of intellect and wisdom possessed by Charles V.

Why would Charles need such a program of illuminations? A consideration of the situation in France just prior to and during

the rule of Charles V demonstrates the relevance of such a propagandistic display. Charles needed to stabilize the country upon assuming the throne, and to confront the challenge that the Hundred Years War presented against the Valois succession to the throne of France.²⁵

The previous reign of the Valois dynasty from the time of its first king, Philip VI, through the reign of John II, had been inept at best. The devastation of France resulting from the battles of Crécy and Poitiers left France with a host of social, political, and economic problems. It was becoming clear that governmental direction in the economic domain was necessary to correct situations over which an individual would have little control.²⁶ It was during this period that Charles was developing his administration and concurrently striving to create a public image illustrating sound and benevolent government.²⁷

While literary and visual artists helped Charles V promote his interests and embody them with his image, the nobility, helped to disseminate these images of Charles interlaced with wisdom and knowledge. His library in the Tour de Fauconnerie in the Louvre contained approximately nine hundred manuscripts and became the basis for the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Contemporaries describe the library as well equipped for research with candles and a "guardian of the books" or librarian. Charles lent books to his nobles for personal use, he helped in the establishment of other libraries, and he commissioned works to be translated into French for the betterment of his people.²⁸ Through these strategies he was able to circulate certain images among his people to show that he was responsible for the greatness of France through his astute governmental policy.²⁹ The control that Charles exhibited over images and texts created the image of him that existed at that time, and still exists today.

Those most affected by the King's control of images were the contemporary historians, and chief among them was Christine de Pisan. In 1404, twenty four years after his death, Christine de Pisan, wrote *Le livre des fais et bonnes meurs du*

sage roy Charles V. This biography was written at the request of his brother, Philip of Burgundy, to commemorate Charles and to be a guide for future rulers. It combines Christine's own firsthand recollections of Charles with additional information supplied by members of the Valois family and court. While much of what Christine relates are generalities about an ideal ruler, many topics included specifics. For example, she states that the ideal ruler would want to receive instructions from intellectuals of his time and it is known that Charles often met with Nicole Oresme, a noted scholar. She also emphasized the association of Charles with Charlemagne as illustrated in his *Coronation Book* and connected his wisdom to his understanding of astrology. This blending of the ideal with the specific is a trait of most images of Charles, whether verbal or visual. Charles always controlled his image and, thereby, kept a tight rein on the image of his government.

Brigitte Buettner muses that it still remains to be understood how images could define national and class identities and at the same time be kept in privately owned manuscripts.³⁰ However, I propose that for Charles, these "private images" were not kept private, but were deliberately loaned during his lifetime to affect the opinions of his contemporaries and to influence the historians who would transmit them to the future. By controlling an image's creation, circulation, and destiny, Charles V was able to exploit his personal association with specific political and personal ideas. The miniatures showed the spirituality, virtue, and intellect which enabled him to rule, and in turn, lead to the image of good government in France under the reign of a wise king. The collective effect of many recognizable portraits associated with certain types of texts consciously circulated for viewing is Charles' original contribution to his history and to the history of his reign.

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¹ Claire Richter Sherman, "Representations of Charles V of France (1338-1380)," *Medievalia et Humanistica* ns 2 (1971): 86-87. Charles' interest in learning included the development of other libraries by donating some of his books to them.

Brigitte Buettner, "Profane Illuminations, Secular Illusions: Manuscripts in Late Medieval Courtly Society," *Art Bulletin* 74.1 (1992): 89. The large number of manuscripts acquired by the Valois demanded a record keeping system that included records of the circulation of the manuscripts.

² Claire Richter Sherman, *The Portraits of Charles V of France (1338-1380)* (New York: New York University Press, 1969) 10. Quoted from Christine de Pisan *Le livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*, I, Paris, 1927, p. 48-9.

De corsage estoit hault et bien formé, droit et lé par les espauls, et haingre par les flans. Gros bras et beaulz membres avoit, si correspondens au corps qu'il convenoit; le visage de beau tour, un peu longuet, grant

front et large avoit, sorcilz en archiez, les yeulz de belle forme, bien assis, chastains en couleur et arrestez en regart, hault nez assez et bouche non trop petite et tenues levres. Assez barbu estoit et ot un pou les os des joes haulz, le poil ne blond ne noir, la charneure clere brune; la chiere ot assez pale, et croy que ce, et ce qu'il estoit moult maigre, lui estoit venu par accident de maladie et non de condicion propre.

³ For a complete description of the types of portraits of Charles V in different media see Sherman, *The Portraits of Charles V of France*.

⁴ Buettner 78, 80 discusses the roles of images as conveyors of ideas from the past to the present and the creation of these images for the first time during this period.

⁵ For details of Charles' library see the exhibition catalogue *La Librairie de Charles V* (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1968) Charles V commissioned an enormous number of manuscripts, so many that his library became the basis for the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. His personal library contained works of various disciplines: among these were histories like the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, political treatises such as *Le Songe du Verger*, the patristic text of St. Augustine's *City of God*, Aristotle's *Ethics and Politics*, and a number of liturgical texts including Guillaume Durand's compilation, *Rational de Divines Offices*, as well as

current events, such as his own *Coronation Book*.

- ⁶ Buettner 75. For a discussion of the libraries of Charles V and his brothers see, Mariel Hughes, "The library of Philip the Bold and Margaret of Flanders, first Valois duke and duchess of Burgundy," *Journal of Medieval History* (1978).
- ⁷ Claire Richter Sherman, "The Queen in Charles V's *Coronation Book*: Jeanne de Bourbon and the 'ordo ad Reginam Benedicendam,'" *Viator* 8 (1977): 265. Clerics were likely sources for the men who translated old and wrote new texts favorable to monarchical power. See also, P.E. Schramm, "Ordines-Studien 2: Die Grönung bei den Westfranken und den Franzosen," *Archiv für Urkundenforschung* 15 (1938) 42-47.
- ⁸ Sherman, "Queen" 264.
- ⁹ Regine Lambrech, "Charlemagne and his Influence on the Late Medieval French Kings," *Journal of Medieval History* 14 (1988): 285. "For Charles V's coronation in 1364, the royal goldsmiths created a scepter of massive gold which sparkled with precious stones and was surmounted by a statuette of Charlemagne sitting on a throne. An inscription which encircles the bottom of the throne reads: *Sanctus Karolus Magnus Italia Roma Galia et Alia* (Exposition Catalogue 1981:249)."
- ¹⁰ Lambrech 285.
- ¹¹ Einhard and Notker the Stammerer, *Two Lives of Charlemagne* trans. Lewis Thorpe (Middlesex: Penguin, 1968) 78. Charlemagne was noted by Einhard as having taken great pleasure in the books of St. Augustine and especially *The City of God*.
- ¹² Sherman, *Portraits* 26.
- ¹³ Richard A. Jackson, *Vive le Roi! A History of the French Coronation from Charles V to Charles X* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984) 31-32. The legend of the Holy Ampulla was solidified in the ninth century by Hincmar, archbishop of Reims. According to Hincmar, Saint Remigius, archbishop of Reims was attempting to baptize the Frankish king Clovis to Christianity when the cleric that was bringing the consecrated chrism was prevented by the large number of people in the church. Saint Remigius prayed for help, and his prayer was answered by a dove descending from heaven bearing a small ampulla of chrism. Clovis was baptized with this special chrism and therefore the French consider themselves the only royalty "anointed with oil sent from heaven."
- ¹⁴ Psalm 109: 1-2. "Do not be silent, O God of my praise. For wicked and deceitful mouths are opened against me, speaking against me with lying tongues." Considered a prayer for deliverance from personal enemies and during this time the enemy must be the English. See also, Jackson 28.
- Psalm 110: 1. "The Lord says to my lord 'Set at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.'" Although the image of Charles and God illustrates Psalm 109, it might be more appropriate for Psalm 110 in which the Lord promises victory to a king. A consideration of this time period and the events occurring with the English will be considered by this author in the future.
- ¹⁵ Francois Avril, *Manuscript Painting at the Court of France. The Fourteenth Century (1310-1380)* (New York: Braziller, 1978) 112.
- ¹⁶ Donal Byrne, "Rex imago Dei: Charles V of France and the *Livre des proprietes des choses*," *Journal of Medieval History* (1981): 108.
- ¹⁷ Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) 6.
- ¹⁸ James Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art* (Englewood Cliffs, 1985) 42. Besides the creation of his library, and development of other libraries, Charles kept himself current on the scholarly situation of his day by employing "the outstanding intellects of his time;" men such as Philippe de Mézières, tutor to the Dauphin Charles VI, Raoul de Presles, a legal and Augustinian scholar and Nicole Oresme, the most learned scholar in France, who translated Aristotle and wrote a treatise for the King on the subject of money. See also, Sherman, "Representations" 85.
- ¹⁹ Sherman, "Representations" 89.
- ²⁰ L. Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, III (New York, 1934) 585; quoted in Sherman, "Representations" 85.
- ²¹ Sherman, "Representations" 88. "Chier sire de vos questions verres cy nos ententions," reads the banner between Aristotle and Charles V.
- ²² Sherman, "Representations" 88. The characteristics of representing Charles in the period before the accession to the throne are the short forked beard and the mantle with the three strips of ermine at the shoulder.
- ²³ Sherman, "Representations" 88. Also in the area of government, Charles commissioned Nicole Oresme, in 1370, to translate three treatises by Aristotle: *Ethics*, *Politics*, and *Economics*. *Ethics* emphasizes that political action and contemplation are the ways a person lives a life of "well being." This living well is an activity of the soul in conformity with reason and excellence. The illustrations in *Ethics* underline areas of concern for an enlightened monarchy. The presentation scene of folio 2v illustrates Charles receiving his manuscript as well as his concern for the education of the future of the Valois dynasty shown by the inclusion of his children in the miniature. See also, Claire Sherman, "A Second Instruction to the Reader from Nicole Oresme, Translator of Aristotle's *Politics* and *Economics*," *Art Bulletin* 61 (1979) 468+. And, Claire Sherman, "Some Visual Definition in the Illustrations of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* in the French Translation of Nicole Oresme," *Art Bulletin* 59 (1977): 320+.
- ²⁴ Sherman, "Representations" 89.
- ²⁵ Early in this conflict the English had captured his father, John II, and Charles began his rule during his father's captivity.
- ²⁶ Maurice Keen, *A History of Medieval Europe* (New York: Praeger, 1967) 203. Along with economic peril, there was the question of the well-being of the king's subjects. There was always the possibility of a peasant uprising; and if there were any other factors, such a war or plague, the possibility for revolt was greater. The plague caused severe reactions within the general population and the ruling authorities as well. Since the effects of the plague were pervasive, governments often reacted more strongly than necessary by issuing ordinances to help control labor, prices and wages.
- ²⁷ Sherman, "Representations" 83, states that the images which develop the notion of Charles V as a wise ruler "were directed towards the practical goal of reviving the power and prestige of the monarchy."
- ²⁸ See n. 1 above.
- ²⁹ While Dauphin, Charles was faced with a host of problems, beginning with his embarrassing behavior at the battle of Poitiers (1356) when he fled from the attack. He was almost forced to flee Paris by peasant revolt and conspiracy. In 1360 the French were defeated and lost the southwest part of France to England. But, by the time of his death, Charles had removed the English from French territory, France controlled the Channel, and Charles was in the process of rebuilding many fortifications. Additionally, the financial situation of France was stable.
- ³⁰ Buettner, 76, states "What remains to be understood is the role played by images in this process of defining national and class identities, and at the same time the significance of enshrining thousands of privately owned manuscripts whose restricted access could not satisfy the same political and institutional needs as monumental art."

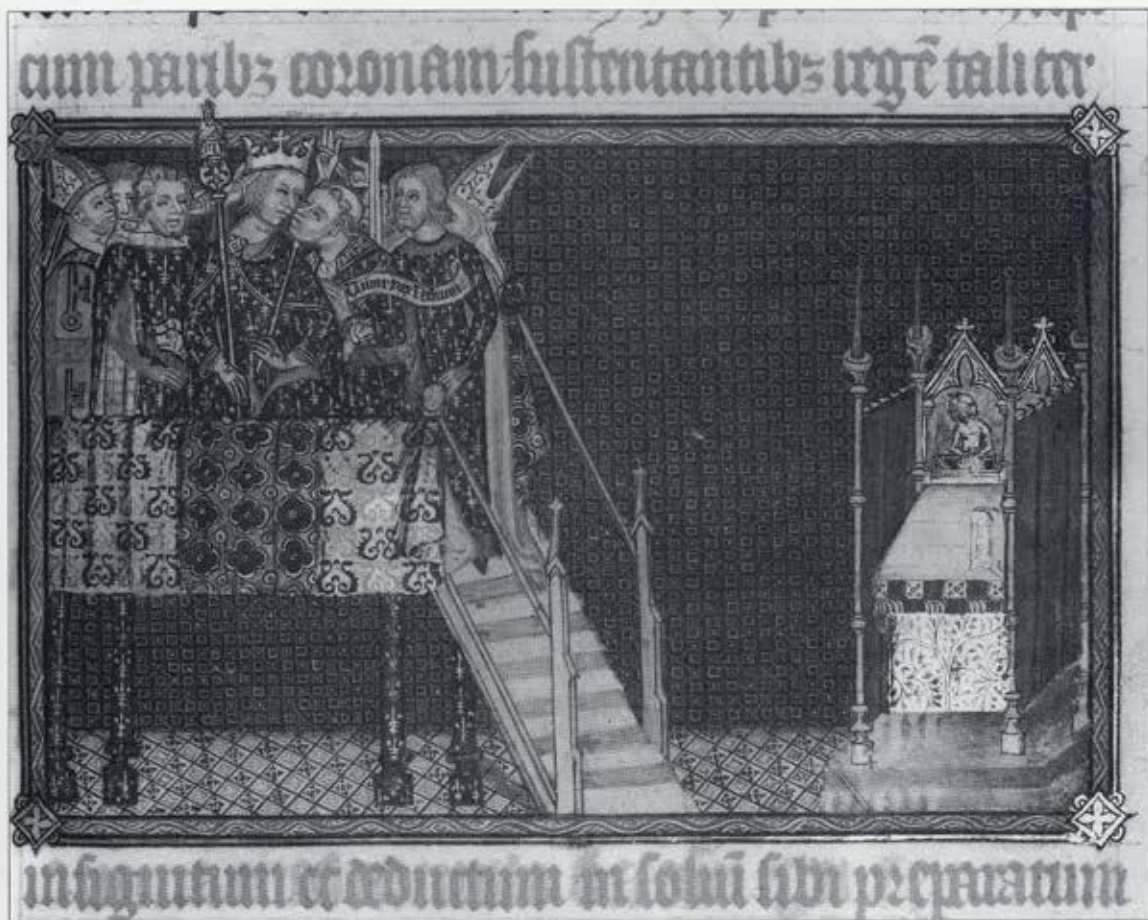


Figure 1. *King Charles Receives the Kiss of His Peers.* *Coronation Book of Charles V*, 1365, London, British Museum, Cottonian MS Tiberius B. VIII, fol. 64. Photo by permission of the British Library.

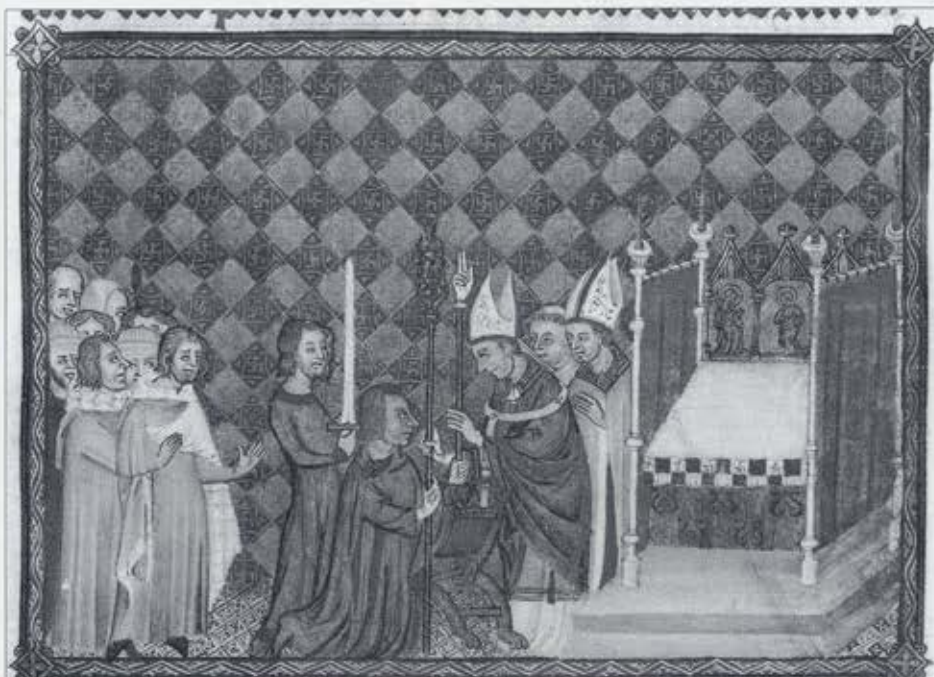


Figure 2. *The Delivery of the Scepter and the Hand of Justice.* *Coronation Book of Charles V*, 1365, London, British Museum, Cottonian MS Tiberius B. VIII, fol. 54 v. Photo by permission of the British Library.



Figure 3. Jean Bondol, *Charles V Receives the Book from Jean de Vaudetar*. *Bible historique*, 1371, The Hague, Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum, MS 10 B 23, fol. 2.



Figure 4. *Charles V Praying to God*. *Très beau bréviaire de Charles V*, 1370, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 1052, fol. 261.



Figure 5. *Charles V Receives the Translation from Jean Golein*. *L'information des princes*, 1379, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 1950, fol. 2.



Figure 6. *The Future Charles V Disputes with the Nine Judges of Astrology*. *Le livre des neuf anciens juges d'astrologie*, 1361, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 10319, fol. 3.



Figure 7. Charles V in His Study. *Le polycratique de Jean de Salisbury*, 1372, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 24287, fol. 1.



Figure 8. Charles V, Fathers of the Church, Pagan Philosophers and Solomon (above). Courtiers and Hunters (below). *Le polycratique de Jean de Salisbury*, 1372, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 24287, fol. 12.

Mantegna's *Minerva Overcoming the Vices* Reconsidered

Gail A. Kallins

Andrea Mantegna's painting *Minerva Overcoming the Vices* (Figure 1) is one of his more enigmatic works. There have been ongoing disputes about the identification of its many figures and their relationships to each other and to the whole theme of the painting. To come to a better understanding of Mantegna's *Minerva*, one must consider several factors and their interrelationship. The painting was commissioned by Isabella d'Este for her *studiolo*, a room usually reserved for male Italian Renaissance rulers "with aspirations to learning."¹ Such a room also served as a retreat from the world and a place to store a collection of books and art. Isabella was the first woman of the Italian Renaissance known to have a *studiolo* for her private use. Because she aspired to be the epitome of good taste and humanistic knowledge, Isabella's personality and background, as well as her choice of advisors used in planning the decoration of her *studiolo* and the demands she may have made of Mantegna, become critical considerations in examining this painting and the other paintings and objects she placed in the room. Above all, *Minerva's* relationship to Mantegna's first painting for the room, his equally famous *Mars and Venus* (Figure 2), must be taken into account when attempting an iconographical study of the *Minerva*, for in some ways the two are companion works. Although many of the figures in the *Minerva* have been satisfactorily identified, several remain problematic. In addition, not much attention has been paid to details depicted in the background and how they relate to the general theme of the work. As important, a vertical reading of the painting that arises from the action of the figures in the foreground offers a more coherent reading of the painting and, in fact, corresponds to Isabella's notion of the functions and necessity of a humanistic education.

Isabella was a princess from the court of Ferrara. In 1490 at age sixteen, she married Francesco Gonzaga and moved to Mantua to live in his estate. Her extensive patronage of the arts earned her the tribute the "tenth muse."² Through the humanistic education that she received in Ferrara, she developed a keen sense of enjoyment for the classics, music and the arts. Although these interests partially explain her appropriation of a room for a *studiolo*, her decision was most unusual for a woman. In contrast, her mother, a more typical Renaissance patroness of the arts, spent her money on religious foundations and altarpieces. Becoming the first Renaissance woman to collect antiquities in a serious way, Isabella used her income to buy art, especially classical art.³ Her passion for collecting art and accumulating knowledge perpetuated her reputation as an intel-

lectual, a reputation she managed to win in childhood.

Not only did she involve herself in intellectual endeavors, Isabella also believed she was a person gifted with an acute sense of quality⁴ and sought to possess objects that no one else had. For example, if Isabella invented or was the first to model a hat or to use a fabric, a woman wanting to copy her was required to ask Isabella for her permission. When she gave a buyer instructions for black cloth to be bought for a mantle, she wrote that it should be "without a rival in the world," and "if it is only as good as those which I see other people wear, I had rather be without it!"⁵ This desire to exclusively own unique objects must be kept in mind when interpreting the *Minerva*.

Isabella began to decorate her first *studiolo*, located in the Castello di San Giorgio, in 1491, a year after her arrival in Mantua, and she worked on it for almost fifteen years.⁶ It would be helpful to know who developed the program of her *studiolo* and of the paintings in it. Poets and learned people often helped artists and patrons plan not only the *invenzione*, the literary idea that a painter revealed in works of art, but also the *istoria*, "the most appropriate form for a given content."⁷ There has been much debate about who advised Isabella for the first two paintings installed between 1497-1502, either Mario Equicola, who was employed by Isabella's family in Ferrara, or Paride da Ceresara, who was in Mantua and was regularly employed by Francesco, Isabella's husband. Perhaps what matters more is to know what humanistic literature existed at the time, how mythology was interpreted in such literature, and how Mantegna used mythology in his other works. Since no surviving contract exists, which would have probably included an *invenzione*, no one knows how much direction Isabella gave to Mantegna or how much he was allowed to invent. Considering that these were the first two paintings Isabella commissioned and remembering her penchant for innovation, quality, and exclusiveness, how could she have not had the general theme and some definite ideas about its illustration already planned?

A description of the painting's iconography and a discussion of the possible meanings of its various parts will reveal how well Mantegna's painting is an expression of the "fine meaning" that Isabella required.⁸ The painting appears to be a confusion of figures, over thirty-five of them arranged in various poses and at different levels, moving and making eye contact in different directions. Beginning on the left as the "heroine" of the picture, Minerva (Figure 1a) appears as the goddess of wisdom, learning and poetry. Although she also taught the arts to humankind, she was especially associated with the feminine arts of

tapestry, weaving and embroidery.⁹ She is the perfect symbol for the themes of the picture and for adorning the walls of a woman's *studiolo*. Mantegna paints her as a formidable adversary. He catches her as she is just about to take the next vigorous step. One can feel the thrust of her left, shielded arm as her upper body twists forward in space. Her parted lips suggest her determination to charge ahead and swing the broken lance in her right hand. Lightbown argues that her broken lance signifies a score and is a symbol of victory according to the code of the chivalric tournament battle.¹⁰

Minerva seems to be responding to the cries of the anthropomorphic tree to the left of her that has swirls of banners wrapped around its body. Written in Latin, Greek and Hebrew is the following:

AGITE PELLITE SEDIBVS NOSTRIS
FOEDA HAEC VICIORVM MONSTRA
VIRTVTVM COELITVS AD NOS
REDEVENTIVM DIVAE COMITES
(Come, divine companions of the Virtues
who are returning to us from Heaven, expel
these foul monsters of Vices from our seats).¹¹

The use of the three languages of the ancient world is meant to show Isabella's breadth of knowledge, for she could read Latin and had an interest in Greek and Jewish texts.

The tree has imprisoned Daphne, a symbol of chastity. Lightbown asserts that Mantegna painted an olive, the tree of Minerva, rather than a laurel, the tree into which Daphne was transformed while escaping Apollo, and argues that Mantegna deliberately created the motif in order to unify learning and the arts with chastity.¹² However, the tree is indeed a laurel,¹³ and according to Mirella Levi d'Ancona, a laurel already signifies "the idea of union" because it is associated with poetry, prophetic gifts, triumph and chastity.¹⁴ Daphne with her message frames the painting on the left. On the right another banner stuck in the stone wall, to which Minerva may also be responding, pleads

ET MIHI VIRTVTVM MATRI SVC-
CVRITE DIVI
(And you, o Gods, succor me, the Mother of
the Virtues).¹⁵

It is the Vices who have captured the Mother of the Virtues, and who apparently have her imprisoned in the wall. The numerous Vices inhabit a triangular space to the right of Minerva. Of the group on the shore of the pond, many seem to represent evil in general, while others refer to lust. The first Vice, a beautiful satyress (Figure 1a), who holds three infant satyrs to her chest, looks back fearfully at Daphne. Above the satyress flies a band of Amores. According to Lightbown, the eyes in their wings represent inconstancy,¹⁶ but eyes are also associated with evil.¹⁷ Two Amores carry bows; one grasps a yellow sash; a fourth, arrows and a quiver; a fifth, a broken net of gold. In the front of them four more companions hover. They are smaller, and three have animal heads, one a bird, another an owl and the third a monkey, while the fourth's head has a human shape. Lightbown surmises that the owl may be associated with

the sloth caused by love, for the owl was the emblem of Somnus, the classical god of sleep.¹⁸ However, owls are also the emblems of the night and of evil.

The next set of Vices stands below the rest in an opaque pool of water, as if to indicate that they are even more vile in nature. Mantegna has resorted to identifying some of them by lettering the name of the vice for which they stand on white bands around their heads. Idleness (OTVM), a female with small breasts and a rotund head, has according to Lightbown "stumps of arms, signifying her reluctance to toil,"¹⁹ or have they atrophied from disuse? Inertia leads her by a rope that is tied around Idleness' waist. Beside Idleness is written line 139 from Ovid's *Remedia Amoris*, a poem that describes the cure of love, OTIA SI TOLLAS PERIERE CVPIDINIS ACRUS (If you do away with idle hours, Cupid's bows have already perished).²⁰

To the right of Idleness and Inertia, a black-brown hermaphrodite with a monkey's head moves to the right but turns in body to look at Minerva. The monkey, whose breasts differ in sexual attributes, is a combination of sexes and vices as indicated by a white scroll wrapped around his left arm. The scroll is inscribed with the words Immortal Hatred, Fraud, and Malice. Four bags, labelled evils, worse evils, the worst evils, and seeds of discord hang from the monkey's body.

To the right of the center of the picture stands Venus on a Centaur, a creature of lust (Figure 1b). Standing provocatively with her left hip thrown to one side, she is the most tranquil figure amidst the rest of the confusion and fear. This Venus, then, is *Venus vulgare*, the Venus of sensual love. Her counterpart is *Venere celeste*, the Venus of celestial glory who is represented in Mantegna's first painting for the *studiolo*, the *Mars and Venus*.

Other vices flank Venus on her left. A satyr with an apish face carries an animal skin over its left arm indicating the beastly nature of lust.²¹ He cradles a golden-haired Amor in his arms. The Amor's wings have been cut off in battle, and he holds them in his left hand. The next three are identified by their labelled headbands. Ingratitude, a woman with a pointed nose, and Avarice help carry Ignorance. Ignorance is a fat, crowned, and blind woman. For Mantegna, ignorance is always the enemy of virtue. In a letter to Marchese Francesco dated January 31, 1489, the learned painter wrote, "*Virtuti semper adversatur ignorantia*."²² Isabella's possible thoughts on this subject must also be considered. As an educated woman, she would have deemed ignorance an anathema.

Some figures have been omitted from the discussion so far because of the controversy that surrounds them. Two women in front of the beautiful satyress rush to the right. The one in blue carries a bow and quiver, and the one behind her has a wooden torch. Lightbown identifies them as nymphs of Venus whose beauty deceptively pleases those who are entrapped by love.²³ On the other hand, Verheyen interprets the two women as goddesses who are rushing with Minerva to the right to rescue the Mother of the Virtues, who lies trapped in the wall. Most

likely, the women are associated with Venus, based on their fearful facial expressions and their hair waved like that of the female satyr's. They are dressed more like Minerva, but they may be in disguise, as in Prudentius' *The Fight for Mansoul*, a *psychomachia* in which the Vices disguise themselves in deceptive garb in order to confuse the Virtues and win the advantage.²⁴

The two garlanded women on the bank between the centaur and satyr are also problematic figures. One holds a bow and the other has lowered her eyes. Lightbown speculates that the first may be a simulation of a chaste nymph of Diana, the latter False Modesty.²⁵ Verheyen simply identifies them as maidens of Venus and thinks that the bow belongs to the defeated Cupid in the arms of the male satyr.²⁶ What is more interesting about them is that they are dressed more like the Cardinal Virtues than any other figures. Like the running maidens, they too may be posing as virtuous women.

In front of them, standing on the satyr's shoulder, is another Amor with two flaming torches. Perhaps the torches represent his capacity to light love's fire, as Lightbown surmises. However, the torches also function as pointers to an alternate route out of the garden. They, like the inverted V-shaped lines formed by the bodies of the centaur, satyr, and Avarice and Ingratitude carrying Ignorance, draw attention to the three ill-defined women, identifiable as Vices, in the background (Figure 1c). The three women look very similar to Ingratitude, Avarice, and Ignorance. The seated woman is almost a twin of Ignorance—fat and crowned, but now carrying a scepter—and she looks entrenched there, as though she were on a throne. The woman to the right urges her on. The profiled breast and the skeleton-like musculature are reminiscent of Avarice's. Another figure behind the hedge at the lower left is too sketchy for a more definite comparison to Ingratitude, but they both seem to share such facial features as a pointed nose and jutting chin. Although they are not in the typical configuration, they resemble portrayals of the Fates and of bewitched Graces. If anything, these figures show how far the Vices have penetrated into this world, as though there are always other Vices in the background, ready to come to the forefront. This idea of the continuity of evil, the ongoing battle, is also suggested by the baby satyrs in the arms of the female satyr and by the bag labelled "Seeds of Discord" hanging on the monkey.

Before describing the top half of the painting, the religious side of Isabella's life must be taken into account. Some of her friends and correspondents were the "most learned and eloquent friars of the day."²⁷ In 1492, she so impressed Fra Mariano da Genazzano, a popular Augustinian whose oratory made him a rival of Savonarola, that he wrote to Isabella's mother extolling her daughter's intelligence and devotion. Also, she had a close relationship with a Dominican nun, Osanna dei Andreasi, considered the protectress of Mantua. The nun's fame extended to the Queen of France, and people believed she had received the stigmata and was capable of foreseeing the future. Isabella often turned to Osanna in times of trouble and credited her with saving her life from a dangerous illness.²⁸

Isabella's piety, even if one describes her as "convention-

ally but not exceptionally pious,"²⁹ did not conflict with her humanism, for the pagan myths functioned as a vehicle for philosophical thought in the Renaissance.³⁰ Humanists, besides finding a concealed morality, discovered the Christian doctrine within classical mythology. As the lines between the Bible and mythology began to blur, "Christian dogma no longer seemed acceptable in anything but an allegorical sense."³¹

The confluence of Christianity and humanistic thought is evident in Mantegna's *Minerva*, which contains a mixture of mythological and Christian figures. No one has emphasized the verticality of the painting and its connection to a possible underlying spirituality. In the upper left, several towers of rocks slide to the right, compositionally leading to a grey cloud containing two definite male profiles and perhaps a ridged forehead of a third (Figure 1d). Lightbown sees no symbolic importance in these cloud faces and describes them as mere ornamentation. However, in an allegorical work as complex as the *Minerva*, it is hard to imagine that these faces would bear no meaning. More important, Isabella would have expected them to have a part in the overall *invenzione* of the painting.

If seen as three faces, the clouds correspond to the notion of three cosmic principles, the geniuses of light, time and earth on the second rung of a theological organization of the universe.³² Above the faces, the exploding rock and sky represent the highest level of the hierarchy, the seat of the *Primum Mobile* and *Prima Causa* in the Empyrean. To the right of the face cloud, three of the four cardinal virtues, who are also associated with the second rung of the organization, stand in an oval mandorla of a cloud that hovers over toward the right side of the frame, balancing the weight of the rocks to the left. These Christian virtues, forming a trinity, are encased in a form usually reserved for the Ascension of Christ or Last Judgment. Justice typically bears her sword, while Temperance carries her vessels. Looking the most concerned, Fortitude, a virtue which can only be displayed in the trials of life,³³ peers down to the commotion in the garden below.

The garden is defined by seven tall, narrow arches set at a diagonal to the left and a pergola of four wider arches that cut the picture in half and help to define the shallow depth of the foreground. In the corner of each arch, Mantegna has placed citrus trees of a type that recurs in several of his other works. Not only do they add color to the overall darkness created by the dark green of the leaves, the trees also protrude into the sky, directing the viewer's gaze upward and in effect reconnecting the two parts of the picture split by the arched walls. Orange and lemon trees are symbols of chastity, purity, and the Virgin Mary, but also fertility and lust.³⁴ Since the trees are rooted in the arches of the garden and extend into the heavens, they dwell partially in a space populated by lustful creatures, but their fruited branches extend into the purity of the heavens.

Within the confines of the garden Lightbown identifies a row of white rose bushes fenced by a low trellis that lines the bottom part of the pergola.³⁵ White roses have both pagan and Christian meanings. They are Venus' flower, symbolizing pride and triumphant love, but they also denote the Virgin Mary and

represent the joyous mysteries of the rosary.³⁶ Like the citrus trees, the roses encompass both meanings. The Vices have been triumphant in the past, but the garden is going to be made pure again. The garden itself indicates the Vices have been holding court for awhile. Daphne has been entrapped in the tree long enough to grow a short cap of leaves. The previously well-trimmed arches of the pergola have leggy branches shooting off in various directions. The pool's water is opaque and stagnant, contaminated by the Vices, who appear reluctant to leave because they have been lodged in the garden for some time.

Lightbown describes the land beyond the arches as a "landscape of softly-lit hills" and refers to the "tranquil beauty of the landscape."³⁷ However, in comparison to the background landscape of *Mars and Venus*, this landscape appears barren and rugged. Of the four arches, two frame jagged rocks; the far left contains the base of the mountain above, and three Vices scatter among a clearing of rocks and tree stumps in the window of the far right arch. The middle arches frame hills that are jagged and lifeless, and the viewer is drawn deep into the space by a winding river. In contrast, the hills of the background of *Mars and Venus* are fertile mounds populated by people whose presence is indicated by buildings nestled between trees. Church steeples rise from the clumps of the cities. The space indicates a thriving and harmonious environment. In Mantegna's *Minerva*, the Vices' takeover has had far reaching consequences: the result of their progress is sterility. Similarly, the moral conveyed is that people who are consumed by thoughts of lust idle away their time while their intellect withers.

A further comparison between the two paintings, which Verheyen stresses should be interpreted as a pair,³⁸ helps to explain the meaning of *Minerva*. The Venuses of both paintings wear the same bracelet with dangling jewels on their upper right arms, and they both have golden hair. These are their only similarities. The humanists took Plato's notion of distinguishing the two aspects of love and expanded it. There exists Venus, the Goddess of Lust, and, according to humanist Marsilio Ficino, Venus as *Humanitas*, one who

...is a nymph of excellent comeliness born of heaven and more than others beloved by God all highest. Her soul and mind are Love and Charity, her eyes Dignity and Magnanimity, the hands Liberality and Magnificence...The whole, then, is Temperance and Honesty, Charm and Splendour.³⁹

The purity of the Venus of *Mars and Venus* is illustrated by her flowing hair and her nude body, since nudity in Renaissance allegory is associated with morality.⁴⁰ Her spirituality is indicated by her position with Mars on the highest plane of the picture, and she is encircled by citrus trees the way the cardinal virtues are enclosed in the mandorla cloud. By contrast, the Venus of the *Minerva* has intricately curled hair and is partially clothed, indicating her false modesty and her alluring nature. Moreover, she dwells in the lower regions of the painting, that is, one step above the Vice-infested pool.

Perhaps one small detail shows both the correspondence of

the two paintings as companion pieces and helps interpret two puzzling questions: Who is the Mother of the Virtues? and Where is Prudence, the fourth Cardinal Virtue? In *Minerva Overcoming the Vices*, an Amor holds the yellow sash of the celestial Venus from *Mars and Venus* over the head of the female satyr as though the sash were a trophy. If read as a trophy of the celestial Venus, it becomes obvious that the celestial Venus is the Mother of the Virtues who is trapped in the wall and crying for help. In the *Mars and Venus*, the Muses dance, Apollo plays his lyre, the hills are green and flourishing, the water in the pond is transparent, the expansive blue sky has wispy tiers of high white clouds: the world is beautiful and flourishing. With the celestial Venus imprisoned, the Mother of the Vices, the Venus of Lust triumphs. The world has shrunk to a prison-like garden, guarded by a lustful queen and her troops who have defiled it and stripped it of its beauty. Instead of the sweet music of Apollo's lyre, the shouts and clamor of battle reign. "Love and Charity, Comeliness and Modesty, Dignity and Magnanimity, Charm and Splendour," the qualities of Venus of *Humanitas*, are missing.

Lightbown, however, surmises that the Mother of the Virtues trapped in the wall is Prudentia because Prudentia was often shown as the queen of the Liberal Arts and that the other virtues could not be acquired unless she were present.⁴¹ But why would Prudentia be calling to her colleagues with such deference? "Come to my help, o gods—to me who am the Mother of the Virtues," she cries. Why would the other Cardinal Virtues send Minerva to rescue Prudentia while they stand back and watch? Rather, it seems to make more sense to see Minerva as a symbol for Prudentia.⁴² In fact, Paul Decharme makes that connection in his twentieth-century study of the Greek gods. He writes, "*Minerve est la Prudence, et Vénus la Beauté.*"⁴³ Prudentia is the Christian emblem for reason and wisdom; Minerva is her mythological counterpart. In a moralizing humanistic work, substituting one for the other would have been quite natural.

The murky pool, populated with figures representing lust and evil, represents the soul in its basest condition, a mass of confusion, disoriented from concentrating on the body and senses. Minerva/Prudence, has come down from the mandorla cloud to bring order through reason. According to humanist Ficino, the soul is in constant turmoil between the animal instincts and the desire for reason. Ficino writes:

Wisdom, who is born from the exalted head of Jupiter, creator of all things, prescribes to philosophers, her lovers, that whenever they desire to grasp a beloved thing they should rather aim at the top, at the heads of things, than at the feet below. For Pallas, the divine offspring who is sent from the high heavens, herself dwells on the heights which she makes her stronghold. Furthermore, she shows us that cannot attain to the summits and heads of things before having mounted to the head of the soul, the intellect, leaving behind the

soul's lowest regions.⁴⁴

Minerva, then, can turn her followers away from desires of the flesh and bring one's soul into the sphere of heavenly wisdom. However, she cannot accomplish this feat alone. If she "is sent from the high heavens," then the Divine guidance from above may be represented by the faces in the clouds and by the volcano-like mountain at the top left. The mountain bathed in a fiery orange light fits a description of the Empyrean and seems to have spewed forth its heavenly contents, the faces and the mandorla. The case for Minerva's connection to the mountain, or "high heavens" is strengthened by Mantegna's use of color. Her tunic and skirts are the same shades of orange light as the mountain. Celestial Venus' sash is golden, aligning her with the heavens, too. Ficino goes on to say that Minerva promises "that if we withdraw ourselves into that most fertile head of the soul, that is the intellect...[our own intellect] will be the companion of Minerva herself and the help-mate of Jupiter the all highest."⁴⁵

Although Minerva is not a portrait of Isabella, as in a physical resemblance, surely, viewers were supposed to make a symbolic connection between the two. After all, Isabella seemed to see herself as a champion of the intellect and of the arts. The comparison is made more clear by the fact that Minerva stands over the words inscribed next to Idleness, "Take away leisure and Cupid's bow is broken." Verheyen notes that no one "has tried to find out to what degree this line constitutes the motto of the painting."⁴⁶ Given her drive and ambition, Isabella might have considered the statement her creed, for she was a woman who pursued what she wanted relentlessly and despite all

adversities. Isabella/Minerva promotes the idea of the active life. Isabella, in fact, cultivated similar resolves in a letter to her sister-in-law Elisabetta, who was ill:

...I hope you will force yourself to take regular exercise on foot and horseback in order to drive away melancholy and grief, whether they arise from mental or bodily causes...and those who do not know how to spend their time profitably allow their lives to slip away with much sorrow and little praise.⁴⁷

Whether the line about leisure is actually the motto of the painting remains elusive. Mantegna's job was to convert a literary invention into visual form by means of metaphor and symbols that would only partially reveal the theme.⁴⁸ Isabella, who delighted in exclusiveness, fashioned the paintings to conceal their full meanings; only a chosen few within her circle of friends would have known the *invenzione*. Questions remain about the identification of many of the figures and their significance, yet despite such problems, it is clear that the *Minerva* and its companion painting served as an exemplum suitable to the function of the room. Ideally, the *studiolo* was a humanistic chapel where Isabella could withdraw from the ordinary demands of her day and aspire to higher, nobler, thoughts. If the *Mars and Venus* represents the heights to which one can soar if dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and reason, the *Minerva Overcoming the Vices* is a reminder of the depths to which the human soul can plummet if it does not vigilantly combat the Vices and avoid succumbing to the rule of desire.

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¹ David Chambers and Jane Martineau, eds., *Splendours of the Gonzaga: Exh 4 Nov 1981-31 Jan 1982* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1981) 164.

² Chambers 51.

³ Chambers 53, 55-56.

⁴ Chambers 52.

⁵ Julia Cartwright, *Isabella d'Este: Marchioness of Mantua 1474-1539* (New York: Dutton, 1932) 72.

⁶ Egon Verheyen, *The Paintings in the Studiolo of Isabella d'Este* (New York: New York UP, 1971) 9.

⁷ Verheyen 22.

⁸ Verheyen 24.

⁹ Ronald Lightbown, *Mantegna* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1986) 203.

¹⁰ Lightbown 204.

¹¹ Lightbown 202.

¹² Lightbown 202.

¹³ Horst Senger, Professor, University of Marburg, Germany, Senior Palfrey Fellow in Plant Sciences, University of Georgia, personal interview, 24 April 1991.

¹⁴ Mirella Levi d'Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance* (Florence: Leo Olschki, 1973) 202-3.

¹⁵ Lightbown 202.

¹⁶ Lightbown 206.

¹⁷ The markings of their wings are carefully differentiated and are recognizable as actual varieties of butterflies from the family Satyridae. Although named centuries after the painting, the butterflies dwell in dark woods, perhaps linking them to the evil of the satyrs. Cecil Smith, Associate Curator of the Museum of Natural History, Entomology Collections, University of Georgia, personal interview, 22 December 1991.

¹⁸ Lightbown 206.

¹⁹ Lightbown 206.

²⁰ Verheyen 34.

²¹ Lightbown 205.

²² Lightbown 205.

²³ Lightbown 206.

²⁴ Clemens Prudentius, *Prudentius*, trans. H. J. Thomson (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1962) 317.

²⁵ Lightbown 205.

- ²⁶ Verheyen 35.
- ²⁷ Cartwright 79.
- ²⁸ Cartwright 80.
- ²⁹ Chambers 56.
- ³⁰ Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Gods* (New York: Pantheon, 1953) 97.
- ³¹ Seznec 98-99.
- ³² Seznec 137-40. This theological organization comes from the so-called *Tarocchi Cards of Mantegna*. Jay A. Levenson in *Early Italian Drawings from the National Gallery of Art* notes that the *Tarocchi* may have been used as tools for Neoplatonic philosophical instruction and traces their origin to a Ferrarese artist working for Isabella's uncle.
- ³³ Lightbown 202.
- ³⁴ d'Ancona 206, 272-4.
- ³⁵ Lightbown 201.
- ³⁶ d'Ancona 330, 339.
- ³⁷ Lightbown 201, 207.
- ³⁸ Verheyen n. 34, 30.
- ³⁹ E. H. Gombrich, *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1972) 42.
- ⁴⁰ Seznec 112.
- ⁴¹ Lightbown 203.
- ⁴² Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958) 18.
- ⁴³ Seznec 86.
- ⁴⁴ Gombrich 70.
- ⁴⁵ Gombrich 70.
- ⁴⁶ Verheyen 35.
- ⁴⁷ Cartwright 67-68.
- ⁴⁸ Seznec 97.



Figure 1. Andrea Mantegna, *Minerva Overcoming the Vices*, 1502, egg tempera and oil on canvas, 150 x 192 cm, Louvre, Paris.



Figure 1a. Andrea Mantegna, *Minerva*, detail of Minerva and Daphne (left), and detail of female satyr and Vices (right).



Figure 1b. Andrea Mantegna, *Minerva*, detail of Venus and Vices.



Figure 1c. Andrea Mantegna, *Minerva*, detail of three Vices in background.

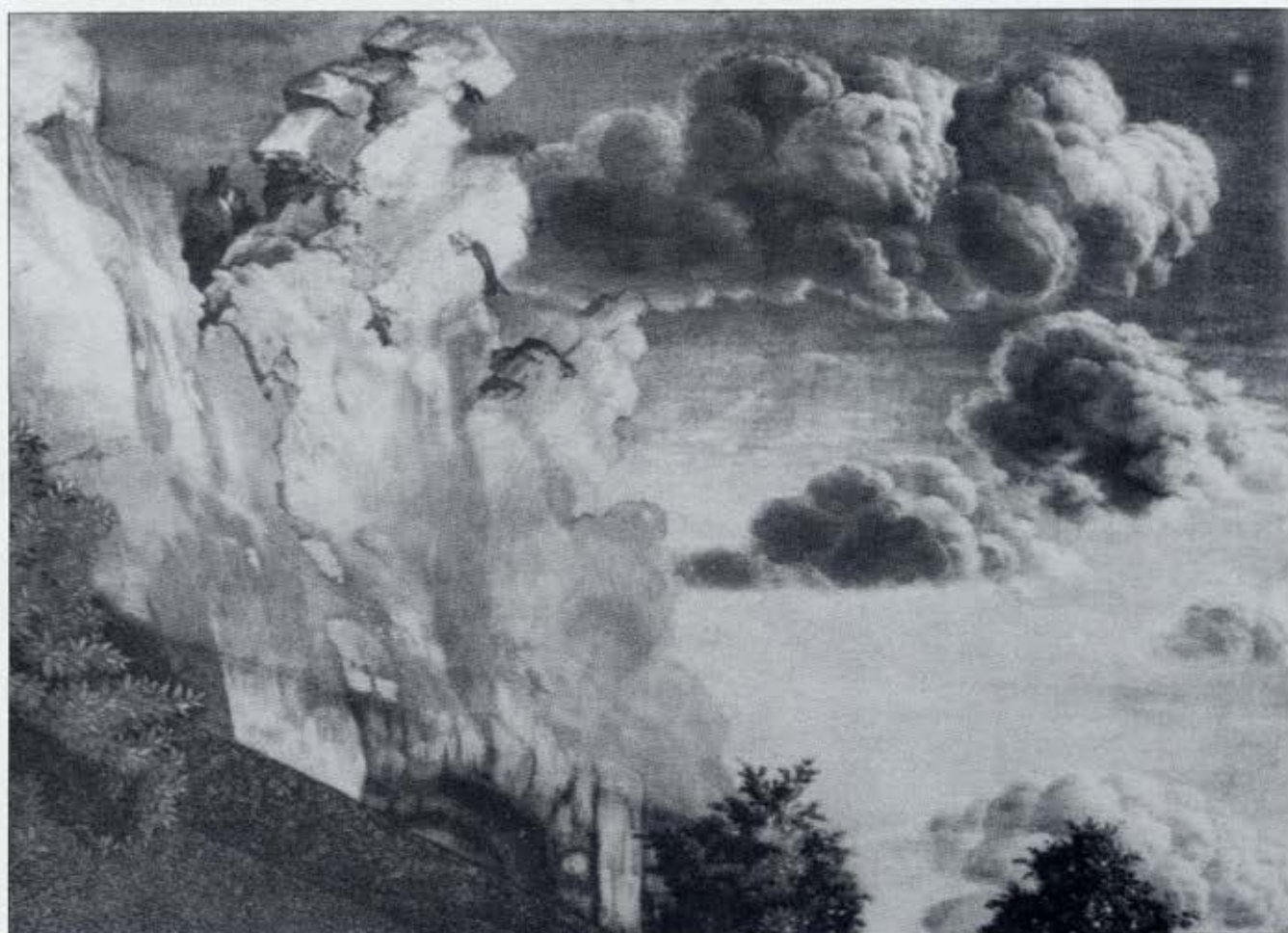


Figure 1d. Andrea Mantegna, *Minerva*, detail of gods in clouds.



Figure 2. Andrea Mantegna, *Mars and Venus*, 1497, egg tempera on canvas, 150 x 192 cm, Louvre, Paris.

The Sabbatarian Struggle of Michelangelo

John Gabriel Haddad

There is one particular day in Western history about which neither historical record nor myth nor scripture make report. It is a Saturday and it has become the longest of days. We know of that Good Friday which Christianity holds to have been that of the cross...we also know about Sunday...that day signifies...a justice and a love that have conquered death....But ours is the long day's journey of the Saturday. Between suffering, aloneness, unutterable waste on the one hand and the dream of liberation on the other...

George Steiner¹

Throughout his life, Michelangelo was tormented by the thoughts of death and his salvation in Jesus Christ. Living in a time of great religious thought and controversial change, he was influenced by the many Christian and humanist thinkers in Renaissance Florence. Although it is extremely difficult to ascertain specific influences on his faith and religious beliefs, it is obvious that Michelangelo was a deeply spiritual man and was troubled from an early age about what was to be his fate after death. Many of his creative endeavors, both his art (painting and sculpture) and poetry, shed light on his religious beliefs and his overwhelming preoccupation with a human Christ who suffered like a mortal to free man from the burden of Adam's fall.

It is well documented that Michelangelo "thoroughly enjoyed reading the Holy Writ,"² and it is apparent that his reading of the Bible, especially the Pauline epistles, influenced his ideas about the resurrection of the body, one of the central tenets of the Christian faith. God's incarnation in Jesus and consequent suffering on the cross is a striking image for Michelangelo, one that frequently reappears in his art from the early depiction of the *Risen Christ* to his late drawing of the *Crucified Christ*, culminating in his last *Pieta*, a work left unfinished at his death. This belief was upheld strongly in Papal Rome during this time, and "often the preachers conjoin the two events of the Incarnation and the Crucifixion, as in Theliatius's sermon for All Saints, 1492: '...in the Virgin's womb and on the cross he kissed us and renewed all reality.'"³

In his *Risen Christ* (Figure 1), Michelangelo has carved a figure influenced by the classical tradition, in a contrapposto pose and of perfect proportion. This may have been influenced by the feelings of St. Augustine as expressed in the *City of God*, "in the resurrection of the flesh the body shall be of that size which it either had attained or should have attained in the flower

of its youth, and shall enjoy the beauty that arises from preserving symmetry and proportion in all its members."⁴ The nudity of the figure has often been misunderstood (so much so as to have been covered by a gilt leaf) and was deemed inappropriate by many. Leo Steinberg's suggestion is well taken in this instance. He posits that the consequent robing of the genitals has had the effect of "thereby denying the very work of redemption which promised to free human nature from its Adamic contagion of shame."⁵ This image of Christ possesses a human poignancy which lies at the basis of Christian thought on the redemption from sin. Michelangelo's and the patron's choice to portray the figure nude emphasizes the humanity of Christ and suggests a life where men and women will no longer be burdened by the sin that mars their bodies on earth. The *Risen Christ* carries his *arma Christi*, the instruments of the passion, a strong reminder that the human Christ suffered, died, was buried, and rose to free the faithful from the scourge of original sin. This is only the first of many recurring occasions in which Michelangelo depicts a human Christ who suffered for man; many of the later images convey this message in a much more dramatic way. This work is also significant in that it may be the only depiction of the Risen Christ bearing the instruments of the passion, one of the many instances where Michelangelo overcomes traditional iconography to convey certain deeply felt beliefs. In order to be saved, one must understand and accept the magnitude of Christ's suffering. A verse from Paul's letter to the Romans stresses this point: "And if we are children we are heirs as well: heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing his sufferings so as to share his glory" (Rom. 8:17). Paul emphasizes the need to share in the suffering of Christ as a means to salvation.

The nature of salvation in Christ can also be observed in one of Michelangelo's grandest yet most controversial and misunderstood works, *The Last Judgment* (Figure 2), on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel. Much of the commentary on the work emphasizes a wrathful and angry Christ, condemning the sinners to eternal hell and raising the faithful to glory in heaven. Other viewpoints represent the figures not in reaction to an angry Christ, yet as pawns of fate.⁶ Although an analysis of the entire fresco is beyond the scope of this paper, a fresh examination of the central figure of Christ provides some insight into Michelangelo's feelings about salvation. Most of the controversy surrounding the work focuses on the central figure of the powerful Christ. Whereas most of the commentary describes an angry Christ (possibly taken as truth from the early accounts of Vasari and Condivi), the figure apparently is not. His expression

is calm and he glances downward in the direction of the saved. His posture is strange, not sitting or standing but stepping back from the action unfolding around him. His right arm is raised, possibly motioning for the rise of the faithful while his left arm seems to point to the wound in his side.⁷ These gestures stem from a relatively passive figure, not one involved in the active gesture of damnation. His body suggests an Apollonian model yet it evokes a sense of corporeality unseen in the proportions of the classical canons. Perhaps in the grand proportions of the nude Christ and many of the other figures in the fresco Michelangelo is exclaiming the idea of bodily resurrection, first and foremost in Christ and, because of his sacrifice, the chance for his faithful followers. Relatively speaking, in light of the subject, Michelangelo's work is one of compassion and hope. The figure of the Virgin may affirm the sentiment expressed. She is often seen as an intercessor, one who shows compassion for the damned. She draws near to Christ, sharing the holy light with her son. Since there is no active damnation, there is no need for her intercession. The fact that she shares a spot with Christ also affirms her assumption into heaven. In this drama man has made his choice to either accept or deny Christ; each man must be the judge of his own deeds. Every man has the opportunity to embrace the suffering of Christ and the idea of resurrection in his name, as a verse from Corinthians expresses: "Now if Christ raised from the dead is what has been preached, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead. If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ himself cannot have been raised and if Christ had not been raised then our preaching is useless...." (1Cor. 15:12). The belief in the resurrection of Christ is central to the Christian faith; without it man has no hope of salvation. Although man has free will, he is totally dependent upon the grace of God for salvation. It is a unique part of the Christian condition to place faith in Christ and work for him in the world yet still remain unsure of his fate, still somewhat scarred from the fall in the garden. In a sonnet written on the back of a letter from Battista Figiovanni dated November 23, 1532, Michelangelo expresses the condition of a believer unsure of his fate:

O flesh, O blood, O wood, O Ultimate Pain!
through you may be justified all of my sin
in which I was born, just as my father was.
You alone are good; may your infinite mercy
relieve my predestined state of wickedness,
so near to death and so far from God.⁸

Michelangelo understands the need for the grace of God to achieve salvation. The imagery of the Crucifixion is compelling evidence of his devotion, yet he also expresses the magnitude of his shortcomings, unsure of his fate.

During the years he worked on the altar wall, Michelangelo had become friends with Vittoria Colonna and through her was introduced to some radical theological ideas espoused by Juan Valdes and others involved in the Italian Reformation. One idea held by Valdes was that of justification by faith alone, whereby man emphasizes his attitudes of belief in relation to the sacrifice of Christ, independent of good works or the rites of the Catholic

church.⁹ However, some of these ideas did not harmonize with his beliefs because Michelangelo was a practicing Catholic and "he believed in the efficacy of prayer... the efficacy of the sacraments...the efficacy of good works, almsgiving, and charity."¹⁰ Some of the details of *The Last Judgment* affirm these traditional Catholic beliefs. Two figures are raised up into the heavenly realm, clinging to a rosary, a fairly obvious reference to the Catholic tradition of prayer. Many figures help others in their ascent, possibly alluding to acts of charity. Man remains helpless without the grace of God, yet good acts and prayer are evidence of his faith. In his book on sacred liturgies in Renaissance Rome, John O'Malley evaluated sermons preached in St. Peter's and the Sistine Chapel between the years 1450-1521. From his research he observed one aspect of the Catholic ideal of charity: "having created man in his own image and likeness and having invested him with 'agendi virtutes,' God now endowed him with even more perfect gifts. He lavished these gifts on man not that he might live in seclusion for himself alone, but that he might be active in the service of others."¹¹ This is evidence of a church that preached helping others, the ideal set by the example of Christ for the Christian community; his death was the ultimate example of charity. Typical of many scenes of judgment, the *arma Christi* appear in the sky above all of the figures, keeping in tradition with the Gospel account and again placing importance on Christ's act of mercy. In his "self-portrait" on the flayed skin of St. Bartholomew, Michelangelo may be asking for redemption:

As in Dante, of whom Michelangelo was known to be a profound expositor, the Marsyas-like portrait is a prayer for redemption, that through the agony of death the ugliness of the outward man might be thrown off and the inward man resurrected pure, having shed the morta spoglia.¹²

Michelangelo may be suggesting his hope that in death he will shed the skin of earthly torment and will be raised to heaven in salvation.

The placement of the scene on the altar wall diverges from traditional practice. It is more traditionally placed on the entrance wall, since the church is the city of God and those entering it must undergo *The Last Judgment*. In the altered placement, the church becomes the pathway to salvation.¹³ The tradition of the cross over the altar is given a subtle twist; the scene of *The Last Judgment* is proof of the incarnation and resurrection of Christ and is a reminder of Christ's suffering on the cross.

It was during his painting of *The Last Judgment* that Michelangelo's relationship with Colonna intensified and he feels purified by this holy woman who is "the bestower of Divine Grace and the mediator between the Divinity and himself."¹⁴ For Michelangelo, Colonna assumes a heavenly character and through her help he can reach salvation. His descriptions of Colonna may call to mind the mercy and compassion of Mary. It was in this context that Michelangelo created for her some of his most compassionate works, emphasizing the hu-

manity and suffering of Christ. In his drawing of *The Crucifixion* (Figure 3), Michelangelo veers from traditional representation of the subject. Whereas most artists represented Christ dead on the cross, Michelangelo has depicted Christ in one of his most human and suffering moments. He is still alive on the cross beseeching his father, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" That is, "My God, My God, why have you deserted me?" (Matthew 27:46-47) Christ is suffering and feeling pain, as a human could. The choice of this poignant moment from the passion of Christ reflects Michelangelo's worship of the suffering Christ, maybe influenced by Colonna and her circle. The body of Christ is twisted and caught in an unnatural tension, struggling on the cross before his ultimate peace in death. The angels under the outstretched arms of Christ float in a sorrowful limbo, lamenting the pain of the savior, unlike their more usual position of catching the blood from Christ's side.

In another work made for Colonna, Michelangelo again depicts the suffering of Christ in a drawing of the *Pieta* (Figure 4). Whereas his earlier depictions of the subject placed emphasis on Mary and were of a more traditional composition, the drawing of the *Pieta* becomes an *imago pietatis*, the redeemer's sacrificing pity for mankind and in turn mankind's pity for the God who sacrificed for their sins. The vertical axis of the cross draws the viewer through the body of Mary down to the dead Christ. The inscription on the cross reflects Michelangelo's Dantesque influence and the magnitude of the image: "Non vi si pensa quanto sangue costa" (they think not how much blood it will cost).¹⁵ Mary with her arms outstretched in a gesture of despair and her gaze pointed heavenward, magnifies and heightens the image by forming a cross with her gesture.

In addition to the drawings, Michelangelo also wrote poems to Colonna, expressing sentiments similar to those in his art, all the while praising her spiritual purity and lamenting his own inadequacies. He alludes to his drawing of the crucified Christ in a poem: "O Lord, in my last hours, stretch out towards me your merciful arms, take me from myself and make me one who'll please you."¹⁶ He sees the sacrifice of Christ as his only means of salvation. In another poem of the same time Michelangelo expresses his spiritual indirection and search for salvation asking of Colonna, "I beg to know from you, high and godly lady, whether humbled sin holds a lower rank in heaven than sheer good."¹⁷ He seeks answers from Colonna and questions the salvation of a penitent sinner.

The late 1540s was a time in Michelangelo's life marked by health problems (kidney stones) and by reflection on his mortality, probably caused by his realization of his deteriorating health. It was during this time that he began working on the *Florence Pieta* (Figure 5). The figures all confront the viewer in a moving way, save the figure of Mary Magdalene, carved by Tiberio Calcagni after Michelangelo had abandoned the group out of frustration. As in most of his later works, the figure of Christ, limp and lifeless, soon after he was taken down from the cross, forms the central axis. The burden of his weight and his sheer physicality accentuate the gravity of the scene. The figures of the Virgin Mary and Nicodemus bear the weight of his death,

physically as they hold his lifeless body and emotionally as evidenced in the pain on their faces. It has been suggested by many scholars that Michelangelo portrayed himself in the figure of Nicodemus, bearing the weight of the great sacrifice. This is poignant in light of the interior struggle of the artist, weighted down with the sacrifice of Christ, feeling inadequate and undeserving of his mercy. It calls to mind the encounter of Nicodemus and Christ where Christ affirms the resurrection of those who believe in Him as the savior: "Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life" (John 3:16).

In a late poem of unknown date, Michelangelo expresses the suffering of Christ: "Delighted because you redeemed what you'd created from that first sin that led to his wretched fate; sad from feeling how, in harsh and intense pain, you made yourself, on the cross, the slave of slaves...."¹⁸ Christ indeed was the slave to the humanity he saved. It is interesting to note that the cords pulled across the chest of Christ in the *Florence Pieta* are reminiscent of the fetters that bound the figures of his earlier slaves. The cord or fetters echo the poet's description of Christ as the slave of slaves and also express the freedom from the slavery of earthly torment granted men by bearing the burden of the ultimate sacrifice. This imagery is used by Paul in his letter to the Philippians: "His state was divine yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave." (Phil. 2:6-7)

In his last work of sculpture, the *Rondanini Pieta* (Figure 6), still unfinished at his death, Michelangelo leaves a symbol of his own debility in old age, a strong statement of physical decay. The figures are rough and unfinished yet the intention could never have been a lifelike body similar to his earlier works. The absence of any sense of a corporeal body is a striking testimony to the extreme suffering of a human Christ. The figure echoes the condition of Michelangelo, suffering both physically and mentally, yet still focused in his devotion to the crucified Christ. In a late poem of 1555 the artist again reflected on the saving power of the crucified Christ:

...Your thorns and your nails and both of your palms and your benign, humble and merciful face, promise to my unhappy soul the grace of deep repentance and hope of salvation. May your holy eyes not look upon my past with justice alone, nor likewise your pure ear, and may your stern arm not stretch out to it. May your blood suffice to wash and cleanse my sins, and the older I grow, the more may it overflow with ever-ready aid and full forgiveness.¹⁹

In this poem Michelangelo is confessing the sins of his past in an act of repentance and pleads for a merciful freedom from his tormented earthly existence. The poem echoes sentiments expressed in an earlier poem to Colonna where he wonders if a penitent sinner is judged lower than a man of sheer good. Since man was stained with the sin of Adam, he cannot attain a purity of spirit without the gift of grace in the son of God.

Before Michelangelo finally succumbed to death, he had asked that in his last hours the passion of Christ be read to him. In his last moments, he reflected upon the ultimate sacrifice of

Jesus for man's salvation, a salvation Michelangelo wanted more than anything in his earthly realm, a final peace he surely reached.

University of Virginia

- ¹ George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989) 231-232.
- ² Robert J. Clements, *Michelangelo's Theory of Art* (New York: New York UP, 1961) 107.
- ³ John W. O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome* (Durham: Duke UP, 1979) 141.
- ⁴ Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. G.E. McCracken, W.M. Green, D.S. Wiesen, P. Levine, E.M. Sanford (London: Cambridge University Press) 22, 20. The connection between the *Risen Christ* and Augustine's notion of the resurrected body is made by David Summers in his book, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981) 395-6.
- ⁵ Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (New York: Pantheon, 1983) 18-20.
- ⁶ Leo Steinberg's article, "Michelangelo's 'Last Judgment' as Merciful Heresy," *Art in America* 63 (1975): 48-63, neatly summarizes the major scholarship concerning the figure of Christ.
- ⁷ This observation is attributed to Leo Steinberg in his article, "Michelangelo's 'Last Judgment' as Merciful Heresy."
- ⁸ James Saslow, *The Poetry of Michelangelo* (New Haven: Yale UP 1991) 162.
- ⁹ Charles De Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, vol. 5 (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1960) 51-55. For further information on the ideas of justification and more detail on the complex theological issues refer to Steven Ozment's *The Age of Reform 1250-1550* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1980) 398-418.
- ¹⁰ Charles De Tolnay, *The Art and Thought of Michelangelo* (New York: Random House, 1964) 57.
- ¹¹ O'Malley 242.
- ¹² Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1958) 188.
- ¹³ John W. Dixon, Jr., "The Christology of Michelangelo: The Sistine Chapel," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LV/3: 524.
- ¹⁴ De Tolnay, *Michelangelo* 52.
- ¹⁵ Howard Hibbard, *Michelangelo* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974) 258.
- ¹⁶ Saslow 317.
- ¹⁷ Saslow 319.
- ¹⁸ Saslow 404.
- ¹⁹ Saslow 484.

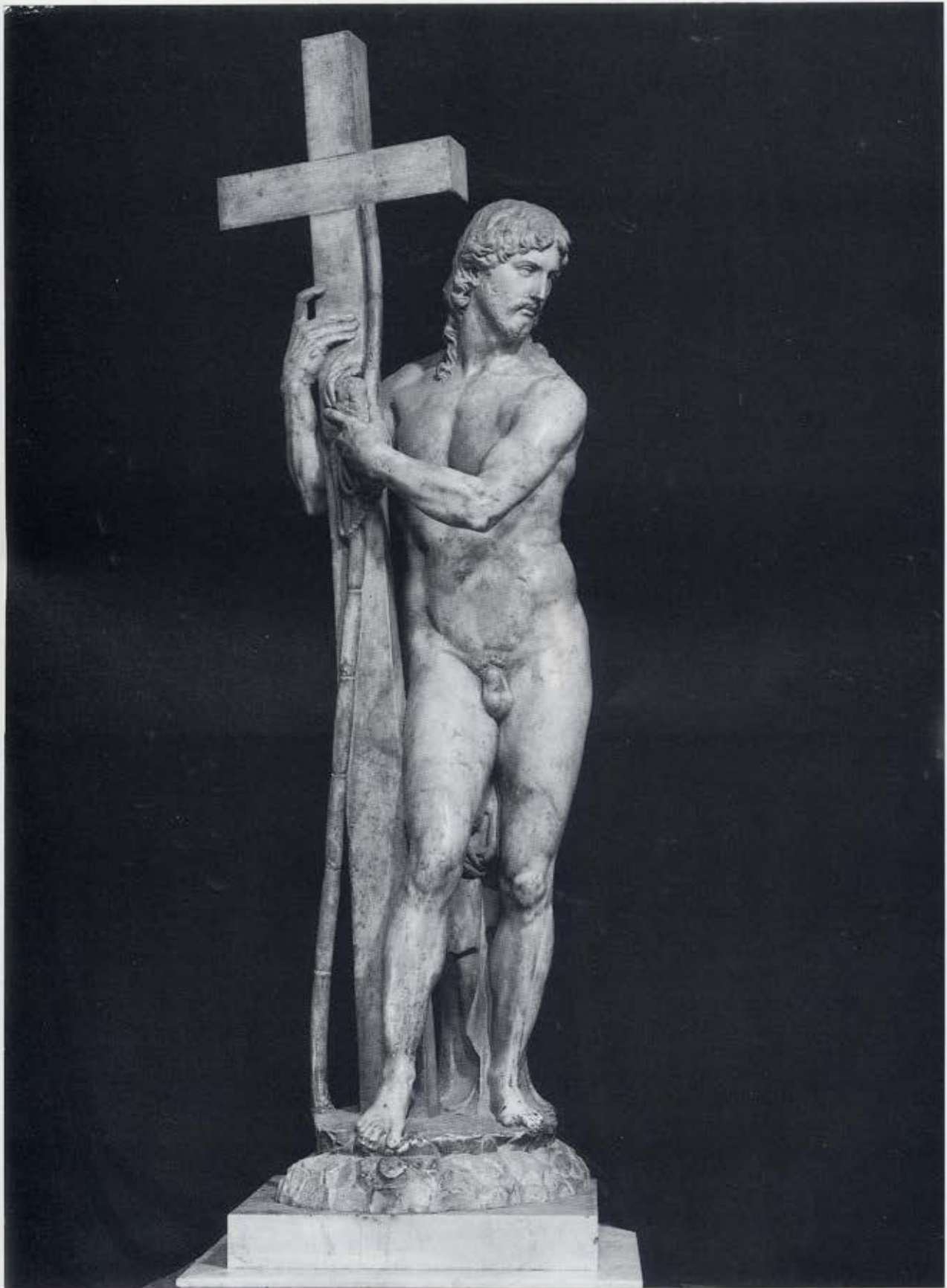


Figure 1. Michelangelo, *Risen Christ*, 1519-20, marble, height 80 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, Rome.



Figure 2. Michelangelo, *The Last Judgment*, 1534-1541, fresco, 40' x 45', Sistine Chapel, Vatican City, Rome.

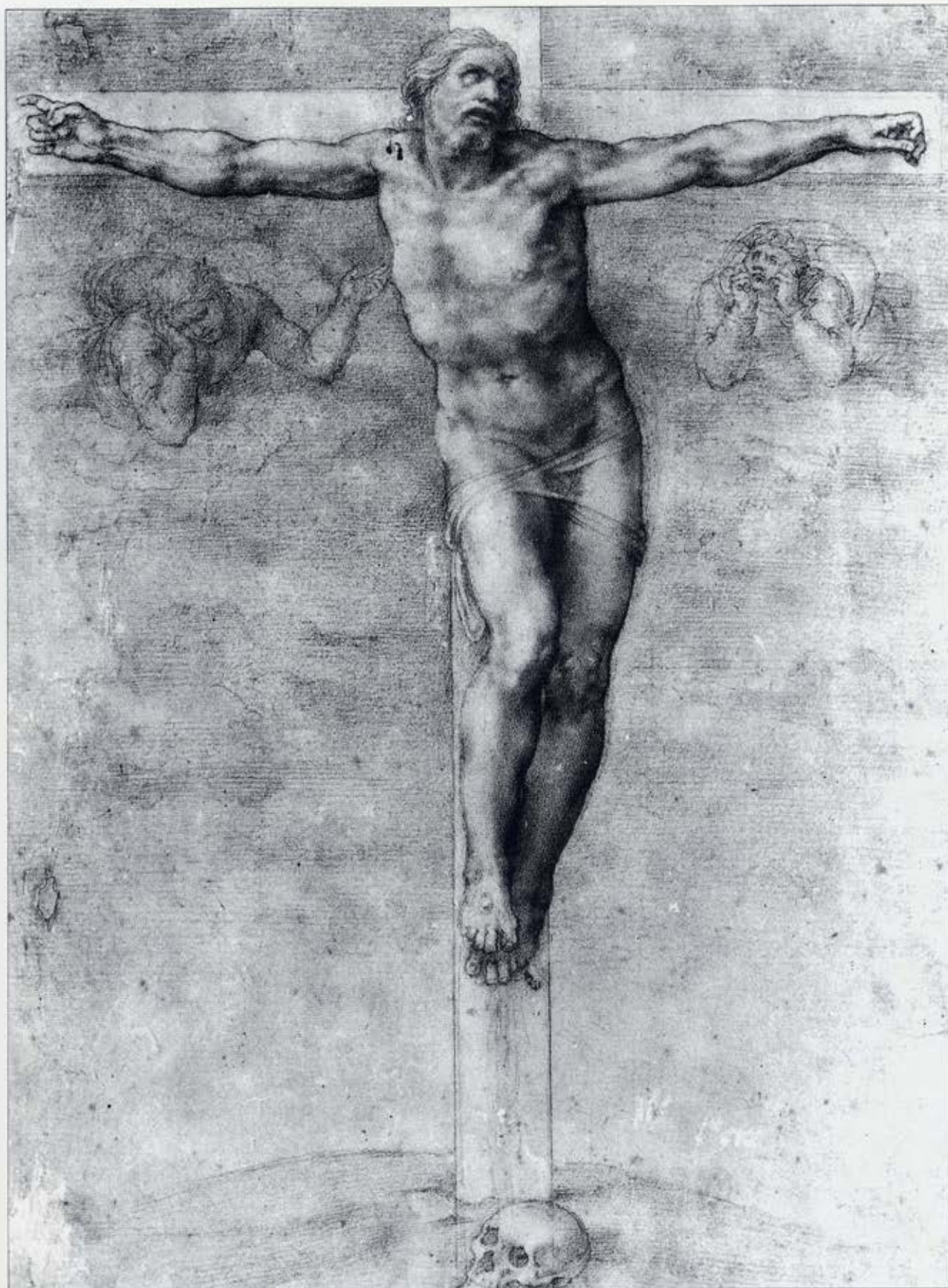


Figure 3. Michelangelo, *Crucifixion*, c. 1540, black chalk, 14 5/8" x 10 5/8", British Museum, London.

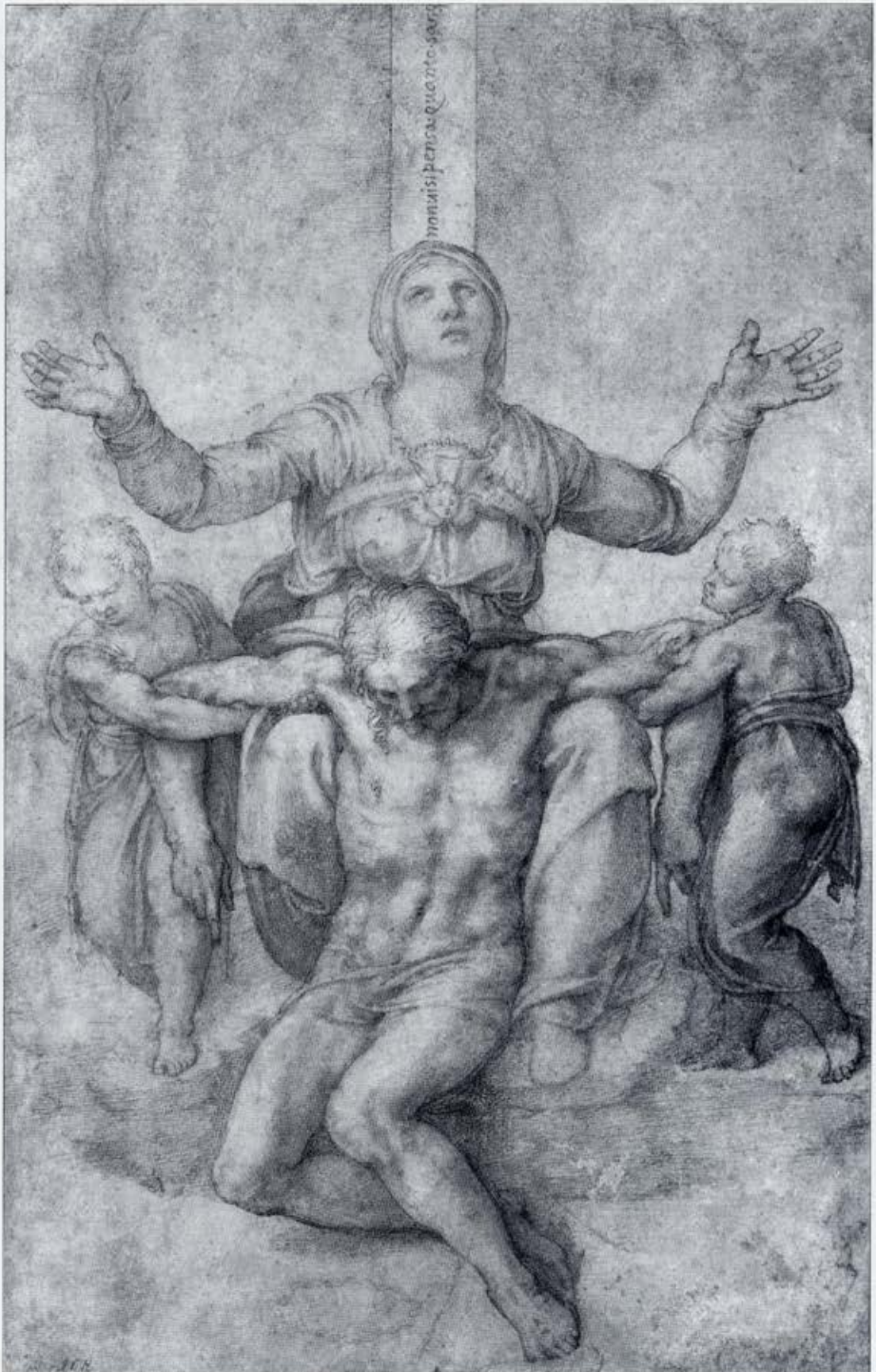


Figure 4. Michelangelo, *Pieta*, c. 1538-40, black chalk, 11 5/8" x 7 5/8", Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.



Figure 5. Michelangelo and Tiberio Calcagni, *Florence Pietà*, c. 1547-55, marble, height 89", Museo dell' Opera del Duomo, Florence.



Figure 6. Michelangelo, *Rondanini Pietà*, 1555-64, marble, height 76 3/4", Castello Sforzesco, Milan.

Socio-economic Aspects of Netherlandish Painting during the Sixteenth Century

Thomas Bayer

"Art follows wealth for its rich rewards."

(Carel van Mander 1548 - 1606)¹

The phenomenal output of paintings in the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century inspired several studies of the socio-economic conditions which facilitated this production.² Thus far, however, no explanation has been proposed for the causes of this rise in output. The highly developed art market of Holland's "Golden Age" did not come about suddenly but as a result of developments which can be traced throughout the course of the sixteenth century. A combination of historical events, economic conditions, and artistic influences during this time laid the foundation for the art industry which characterized the subsequent century. This essay will explore these circumstances and demonstrate that socio-economic aspects must be considered to understand fully the art historical developments of sixteenth-century Netherlands. I intend to show that the application of economic theory reveals that Iconoclasm and war were among the major stimuli of this increase in artists' output and that market forces were largely responsible for the changes of artists' products and production methods.

The history of the Netherlands in the sixteenth century was dominated by the drawn-out conquest of the Netherlandish provinces by Charles V which was concluded by 1549 with the formation of the Seventeen Provinces of the United Netherlands, and the subsequent rebellion against the Spanish rule culminating in the Eighty Year War of Independence (1568-1648). This virtually continuous warfare caused, in addition to the loss of lives, widespread destruction of art. Contemporary accounts specifically mention this in connection with the sacking of Antwerp during the "Spanish Fury" of 1576 and the "French Fury" of 1583.³ Besides these martial occurrences several other events are important for this investigation.

In 1566 the first Calvinist preachers arrived in the Netherlands, and by August followers of these reformers began breaking into churches demolishing images of worship, and within two weeks, iconoclastic acts were committed in almost all of the seventeen provinces.⁴ This wholesale destruction of art not only affected the churches but also private individuals, and further depleted the Netherlands' stock of art.⁵ According to Calvin, painted religious images were frivolous and false, and only things which were visibly apparent should be represented for instruction and pleasure alone; his doctrine, and the destructive effects it had on religious art, thus boosted the production of secular painting.⁶

As a result of iconoclasm a number of artists left the Netherlands for neighboring countries, particularly France which had already a small Netherlandish artists' community catering to

the growing patronal environment around the court.⁷ Charles IX, however, demanded in 1570 that all Spanish subjects who had lived in France less than two years must leave on penalty of death. This resulted in a partial dissemination of the local Netherlandish artists' community which, in turn, positively affected Netherlandish art exports to France.

The economic development of the region during this century echoed that of the city of Antwerp which, between 1493 to around 1520, had emerged as the trading metropolis of Europe largely due to an expansion of international trade. Starting in the fourteenth century and continuing through the sixteenth, the city underwent a process of rise, expansion, maturity, and decline, experiencing simultaneously a growth in population, particularly of the middle class, and stimulating general commercial growth of the whole of the northern Netherlands.⁸ This economic expansion was facilitated by a corresponding expansion of consumer credit which was vital for the stimulation of retail trade and spreading of commercial fairs.⁹

Unquestionably the economic growth of the Netherlandish cities and their urban middle class were primarily responsible for the flowering of the region's artistic production.¹⁰ Besides expendable capital, however, patronage also required an interest in the arts. The high literacy rate, liberal social structure and general national character of the Netherlands were fertile ground for the growth of patronage. The medieval definition of the function of art was gradually replaced by the recognition that everything imaginable could be described, and the dialectic between producer and consumer stimulated the exploration of this new potential.¹¹ During the fifteenth century there were very few independent paintings in middle class houses.¹² Gradually in the more affluent homes there appeared votive panel paintings and the predominantly religious subject began to move from a primary to a secondary position to allow aesthetic beauty to overshadow religious content.¹³ In order to economize the production process artists began to substitute cloth for panel.¹⁴ and other cost effective devices followed during the sixteenth century.¹⁵ Correspondingly, there occurred a change in marketing. The traditional relationship between artist and patron was being replaced to a large extent by a new system whereby painters worked for an anonymous market and attempted to sell their goods outside their workshops, either at one of the newly established markets or through a middleman, the art dealer, who began to play an increasingly important role. The risk of investing time and capital without guaranteed returns stimulated other economizing procedures which, in turn, further

fueled the market.¹⁶ By 1560 there were over 300 masters active in Antwerp competing in an international market as independent entrepreneurs—as compared to 78 butchers and 169 bakers.¹⁷

While other cities¹⁸ also had trade in art, Antwerp played the leading role.¹⁹ From 1450 to 1560 the number of artists working in this city grew twenty-fold and by the middle of the century Antwerp had become the art center of northern Europe.²⁰ The earliest records of art dealing activity in the city, dating from the 1450s, show that imports from Brussels, Ghent, Bruges, and Tournay had to supplement the limited local supply produced then by no more than one and a half dozen artists.²¹ To facilitate this, the local Dominican church leased an adjoining property to visiting artists and merchants. By 1540 the enterprise had grown to such an extent that the city decided to provide artists and art dealers with a permanent facility on the upper gallery of the Antwerp stock exchange.²² By then Antwerp had developed into the largest all-year-round art producer in Europe with up to sixteen public outlets for art²³ supplying local and international demand.²⁴

The foregoing discussion has identified the major components which led to this flourishing of artistic production. Economic expansion, appreciation of art, a high level of literacy, reduction of input costs, evolution in marketing, and a commercial hub for international distribution are clearly recognizable growth factors. There are, however, two elements which have not been recognized as contributing to this industry's expansion: iconoclasm and war. Both had in common the wholesale destruction of art, and by examining these events through a supply/demand model it becomes apparent that they were powerful stimuli for the production of supply. Demand consisted of two main groups: an increasing number of private patrons and those individuals whose livelihood was connected with selling finished works of art. The destruction of art affected both categories in terms of an overall reduction of existing stock. This, in turn, signalled the market to replace the lost stock; however, since the loss of stock also represented a loss of capital resources for middlemen and decreased the net worth of consumers by the value of the art works destroyed, it resulted in an overall reduction of the available budget. This implies that the signal to the market to replace the goods was accompanied by a signal to produce these goods at lower costs. Since production inputs relating to paintings consist of labor and material, the various cost-reducing innovations, such as specialization, collaboration, formula painting, and the switch from panel to canvas, etc., were, therefore, a direct response to market forces. Such production cost reduction lowered entry barriers and attracted resources, that is artists and middlemen, to the market resulting in an overall expansion. During periods of economic growth the expanding art market would try to meet demand and prices would rise. During phases of economic decline it would create a surplus, prices would fall and stimulate production input cost-lowering measures. While fluctuations of the economy of the Netherlands also caused fluctuations in its art market, the destruction of art works resulting from iconoclasm and war was partially responsible for its expansion.

When peace was finally established in 1648, an art market which had expanded significantly for well over a century was firmly in place.

It should be noted here that the application of this economic model addresses the art market as a whole and should not be applied in this form to individual artists. The model explains, however, many of the characteristics of the market, a few of which I will now consider in greater detail.

The first to be addressed concerns the artist as producer of the goods. As early as 1382 records show that the manufacturing of art in Antwerp was regulated according to economic guidelines.²⁵ The fourteenth century still viewed painters largely as craftsmen, and not until the sixteenth century did they consider themselves as artists. The practice of copying was comparatively rare before 1600, but then as a result of Italian Mannerist influence, it became the very basis for studying art.²⁶ This approach lent itself particularly well to formula painting and the manufacturing of "potboilers."²⁷

Business was conducted in a variety of ways. Direct commissions by patrons still existed, although in small numbers.²⁸ Most transactions consisted of purchases from existing stock of artists acting as their own retailers. To reduce inventory costs they often kept a sample selection for prospective clients who could choose an image which was executed only upon placement of an order.²⁹ Guild regulations governed public exhibition indicating that participation was an important marketing outlet.³⁰

Finished works of art, accompanied by independent appraisals, were often accepted as payment for debts, property, and the like.³¹ Such commercialization of art led to certain innovations to maximize the efficiency of production. Among them were specialization in subjects and division of labor;³² another cost-cutting device was the mechanical repetition of designs for workshop production for inventory.³³ Artists who specialized in certain themes were often hired by others to assist in the execution of subjects or sections best suited to their area of expertise.³⁴ Popular among collectors were grisailles which were among the cheapest original works painters could produce.³⁵ Artists also designed book illustrations³⁶ and, very frequently, cartoons for glass painters and tapestry weavers.³⁷ The largest production, however, consisted of engravings which were published in large numbers and sold inexpensively to the population at large.³⁸

This variety of products leaving artists' studios underscores the close connection between artists and craftsmen in the sixteenth century. The former were paid similarly to stonemasons, carpenters or smiths and the amount generally did not differentiate between heraldic or purely decorative work and panel or canvas paintings. Prices were established on the basis of labor and material costs; miniatures were valued somewhat higher, while cartoons for glass paintings or tapestries were on the lower end of the pay scale.³⁹ The view of artists as craftsmen gradually changed,⁴⁰ but it took until 1773 before artists were freed from guild membership and the fine arts became an officially sanctioned activity for noblemen.⁴¹

The entrenchment of the medieval guild system impeded the evolution of artists towards independence, but it also protected their economic interests. Guild regulations restricted the practice of painting to guild masters, and citizen's rights as well as payment of dues were a prerequisite for membership. Out-of-town newcomers were charged higher fees and imports from outside were controlled by tariffs. Such practice allowed guilds to exercise a measure of control over artistic production and its cost since they were also in charge of supplying raw materials. Guild regulations were sanctioned by civic authority and only suspended during fairs to attract outside business.⁴² By the sixteenth century the guild of St. Luke had become firmly established in Antwerp with 694 registrations of master painters.⁴³ The second half of the century saw an increase of diversity in guild composition to include persons in non-art related activities attesting to the fact that there was still no clear distinction between artists and artisans.⁴⁴ To supplement its income and to compete with general activities of art dealing, the Antwerp St. Lucas Guild, in 1508, was granted the right to conduct periodic public art auctions⁴⁵ for a 5% commission.⁴⁶ As the century wore on and the art market increased in complexity, guild regulations adjusted to the changing conditions without losing their influence within the industry.

Although guilds were permitted to sell the products of their members, most art dealing activity occurred outside these organizations. Aside from the traditional relationship between patrons and artists and as direct purchases from studios, the selling of artists' products initially took place at the numerous markets and fairs.⁴⁷ The gradual replacement of panel with cloth paintings simplified this since the latter were easier to transport, less vulnerable to weather changes, and cheaper to produce.⁴⁸ Pictures became smaller, not only to facilitate transport but also to allow for the display of a larger selection in the limited space of a stall.⁴⁹ These stalls were frequently manned by the artists themselves⁵⁰ although it must have been common for painters to consign their works to merchants or fellow artists who attended such fairs.⁵¹ Besides large, semi-annual or annual markets, there were also open markets and kirmesses in smaller cities.⁵² These events were often organized by the church which benefited from rents charged. Since the church in the Netherlands was not allowed to become an important landholder, the sponsorship of such enterprises presented a welcome source of income.⁵³ Also popular were the "Friday markets" which were established in Antwerp in 1547; they existed outside of guild regulations and were a convenient way of trading artists' products.⁵⁴ Another customary marketing vehicle was art lotteries recorded as early as 1445 in Bruges and continuing throughout the next century and beyond.⁵⁵

As the industry was getting used to trading its goods in an open market in fixed locations the establishment of regularly held and even permanent art exhibitions soon followed. This development towards marketing specialization resulted in the growing importance of middlemen. Already in the preceding century merchants in Bruges sold art in the merchant hall, but it was not until 1540 that the first year-round for-sale exhibition

was established. The "Schilders pand," as it was called, was located on the upper gallery of the Antwerp stock exchange which had been divided into separate stalls and leased by the city to artists to display and sell their works. From 1565 to 1597 the entire pand was rented by one individual, the painter/dealer Bartholomaeus de Momper. Its colorful history mirrored the period's political and economic turmoils, and its enterprising tenant was the first large-scale art dealer of modern times.⁵⁶ By 1517 until the mid-1540s there existed at least seven art-related public outlets in Antwerp which operated for specified periods during each year.⁵⁷ The most important, indeed the first, although not year-round,⁵⁸ art market in post-classical Europe to be housed in a building specifically constructed for that purpose was Our Lady's Pand operating from 1460 to 1560. It was organized by the church and, as figures indicate, it was not only the backbone of the church's fair income through much of the sixteenth century, but its principle merchandise was the preeminent growth industry among the church-sponsored fairs in general. The data also shows the elasticity of art prices with respect to fluctuations of the Antwerp economy,⁵⁹ and the development of Our Lady's Pand was both symptom and agent of the new practice of producing art on speculation for an open market.

The sixteenth century also witnessed the emergence of specialized merchants in art, the art dealers. They evolved from the ranks of merchants who had traditionally sold art products,⁶⁰ or were artists who either supplemented their income by selling others' works in addition to their own or had given up painting entirely.⁶¹ Business practices included commissioning of artists, buying at estate auctions, markets and fairs, as well as employing young artists to copy and mass produce.⁶² Their business locations were mostly small shops⁶³ or stalls at suitable markets.

Besides local and regional demand the export trade was of particular importance. Netherlandish artists' works were sold in most European countries, with France in the lead, followed by Italy, Spain, Portugal, and, of course, neighboring Germany.⁶⁴

For whom was all this effort in production and marketing expended? Records indicate that only a small percentage of Netherlandish paintings were acquired by the courts or the nobility.⁶⁵ The demand side consisted largely of prosperous townspeople, hospitals, churches, and civic authorities.⁶⁶ The mention of specific subjects of paintings recorded in inventories, beginning in the second half of the sixteenth century, indicates the emergence of a collector's mentality, and patrons began to recognize the claim of artists that their work entailed more than just simple manual execution.⁶⁷ It was not long before paintings began to be bought and sold by private consumers for purely speculative purposes, a trend which further fueled production but also added to the volatility of the market as a whole.

The foregoing analysis of the sixteenth century art market in the Netherlands is intended to provide a model rather than quantitative data. Each individually addressed topic is, by itself, a subject for further investigation. I hope, however, to have succeeded in providing information about the composition and

dynamics of the period's art market, further insight into its history, and a better understanding of the economic circumstances under which its art was produced.

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¹ Carel van Mander, *Dutch and Flemish Painters* translation from the Schilderboeck (New York: McFarlane, Warde, McFarlane, 1936) 4.

² For a recent summary of research pertaining to this subject see John-Michael Montias, "Socio-economic Aspects of Netherlandish Art from the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Century: A Survey," *The Art Bulletin* LXXII, 3 (Sept. 1990): 358-373. The main focus of this survey is the seventeenth century while the preceding two centuries are addressed only peripherally.

³ Van Mander 69, 238, 271. Van Mander describes 1584 as the year where 'Art hates Mars.' The commercial art gallery located on the second floor of the Antwerp stock exchange was completely destroyed during the Spanish Fury and its owner never fully recovered from this loss.

⁴ Peter H. Crew, *Calvinist Preaching and Iconoclasm in the Netherlands 1544-69* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) 10-26.

⁵ Van Mander LI, 174, 216.

⁶ Keith P.F. Moxey, *Pieter Aertsen, Joachim Beuckelaer, and the Rise of Secular Painting in Context of the Reformation* (New York and London, 1977) 158-9.

⁷ Van Mander 331.

⁸ Herman van der Wee, *The Growth of the Antwerp Market and the European Economy* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963) II, 5-136. The period from 1521 to 1550 was one of initial crisis followed by a renewal of industry and the Antwerp urban economy. This revival was mostly due to transit trade and industrial renewal which led to a flourishing luxury industry spreading, via Antwerp, over the entire European market. Wee states that, from around 1535 on, the position of artists and artisans, in terms of wages, improved considerably (186-7, 192). The fifties brought a period of nervous activity for the Antwerp money market and introduced the final phase of the town's financial rise (205-208). Correspondingly, this and the subsequent decade witnessed a slowing down of commercial expansion offset to an extent by industrial growth (209-234). Commerce and industry suffered severely in 1566 when the iconoclasts brought the entire city to a standstill. The arrival of Alva's army from Spain to squelch the reformist rebellion brought further financial pressures through the imposition of heavy exploits (235-241). The years 1572 to 1587 were a period of crisis and marked the final phase of Antwerp's decline, accelerated by the Spanish hardship (265-268). The remaining years of the century saw a gradual recovery of commerce and industry.

⁹ Wee 324-334.

¹⁰ Georg Friedrich Koch, *Die Kunstausstellung* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1967) 55.

¹¹ Koch 83-4. Ralph Edwards, *Early Conversation Pictures from the Middle Ages to around 1730* (London: Country Life Ltd., 1954) 11. Edwards quoted Roger Fry in *Flemish Art* (1927) 2: "...a marvelous exactitude of literal reporting and the people for whom they catered enjoyed the things of this life with so wholesome, so uncritical an appetite that they loved to find in their pictures vivid reminiscences of what was so familiar to them."

¹² Usually the walls were covered with cloth sheets which were sometimes

decorated with figures. Hans Floerke, *Studien zur Niederlandischen Kunstgeschichte* (Munich and Leipzig: Georg Muller, 1905) 2-4.

¹³ Floerke 4, 5.

¹⁴ Diane Wolfthal, *The Beginning of Netherlandish Canvas Painting: 1400-1530* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 12-13. Wolfthal points out that a clear distinction was made between artists painting on panel and the "Cleerderscriver" who painted on cloth. She also comments on the fact that cloth painting had served as a cheap substitute for tapestry and was executed in egg or glue color; only as a result of Italian influence was the medium changed to oil allowing for much finer execution.

¹⁵ Hessel Miedema, "Over Kwaliteitsvoorschriften in het St. Lucas Gilde: over 'Doodverf'," *Oud Holland* CI, (1987): 141-147. Miedema mentions a prohibition by the guild of S Hertogenbosch in 1546 against the use of panels that were not first "dead-colored" (edootverfd) which suggests that this cost-cutting device was already in use by then. Other economizing measures, such as specialization (Floerke 154), collaboration between artists etc., described by Van Mander, will be discussed below.

¹⁶ It is interesting to note that in spite of the sixteenth-century influence of Italian ideas regarding the elevated status of painting and painters, the production of art in the Netherlands still showed an identification with the medieval craft concept. Not until the end of the century can one detect a significant change. Zirk Zaremba Filipczak, *Picturing Art in Antwerp* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) 16n. 16.

¹⁷ Floerke 154, citing Guicciardini. Also Laura Campbell, "The Art Market in the Southern Netherlands in the Fifteenth Century," *Burlington Magazine* 118 (April 1976): 190.

¹⁸ Floerke 9-11, discussing art dealing activity in Utrecht.

¹⁹ Van Mander 76. "Fine art came to Antwerp because it followed wealth." Dan Ewing, "Marketing Art in Antwerp, 1460-1560: Our Lady's Pand," *Art Bulletin* LXXII, no.4 (December 1990): 559.

²⁰ Filipczak 3.

²¹ Floerke 67.

²² Floerke 8-9.

²³ Ewing 580.

²⁴ Ewing 579. Koch 64 notes the large number of sixteenth century Netherlandish paintings existing in neighboring countries.

²⁵ Koch 129, van Mander 158-160.

²⁶ Floerke 129-134, van Mander 158-160. The practice of copying also produced a profitable trade in forgeries. The Mannerist concept of building upon preexisting art implies that the original must be special, i.e. more expensive. One can easily see how this would promote selling of forgeries (Floerke 155). This practice pervaded the market to such an extent that specific legislation had to be passed to deal with this problem (333). Van Mander informs us that the painter Hans Bol gave up painting on canvas entirely during his stay in Antwerp (1572-84) because of widespread forgery of his work (Van Mander 270-72).

²⁷ Van Mander XXX, Floerke 154.

²⁸ Campbell 193-4. The terms of such arrangements were generally contractually agreed upon and registered with the guild or a civic authority. They included detailed specifications, deadlines, payment schedules, and a statement of penalty if any of the above were broken.

- 29 Campbell 195.
- 30 Campbell 194.
- 31 Floerke 30-35.
- 32 Van Mander 24, 173, 224, 261, 353, 425. Peter Moxey, "The Criticism of Avarice in Sixteenth Century Netherlandish Painting," *Netherlandish Mannerism*, ed. Corel Cavalli-Bjorkman (Stockholm: Stockholm Nationalmusei, 1985) 21-34.
- 33 Stephen H. Goddard, "Brocade Patterns in the Shop of the Master of Frankfurt: An Accessory to Stylistic Analysis," *Art Bulletin* LXVII (1985): 401-417. Lynn Jacobs, "The Marketing and Standardization of South Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces: Limits on the Role of the Patron," *Art Bulletin* LXXI (1989): 203-229.
- 34 Van Mander 125, 254, 311.
- 35 Van Mander LVII.
- 36 Van Mander 299.
- 37 Van Mander LIX, 23, 125, 170, 239, 261, 400, 411.
- 38 Van Mander 49, 52, 74, 83, 109, 290, 291, 364-5.
- 39 Floerke 160-3, 178-9, Filipczak 41.
- 40 Filipczak 30-1, mentioning Frans Floris' inscription "invenit et fecit" accompanying his signature which emphasized, in her opinion, that painting, besides manual execution, also involved the invention of an idea. She also points out that forgers could earn more money through forging of "Old Masters" than through their own work as an indication of the tendency towards non-craft pricing (44). Van Mander tells of the high price Moro received for a portrait of Count Alva's concubine (144), which further underscores this change in attitudes, as does his statement regarding expensive paintings by rich artists.
- 41 Floerke 163 n.353 refers to the edict of Maria Theresia.
- 42 Campbell 191. As van Mander informs us, these regulations were frequently challenged, as was the system as a whole.
- 43 Filipczak 12 n.3.
- 44 Filipczak 12.
- 45 Floerke 38, 42, 44. Often estate auctions were used to undermine guild regulations by adding otherwise prohibited goods to their inventory.
- 46 Koch 67.
- 47 Koch 73.
- 48 Koch 62.
- 49 Such stalls' rents were established on the basis of the amount of display space.
- 50 Floerke 15, on Adriaen Prevost showing his paintings in three stalls in Bruges in 1532 at the market of the Minorite monastery; Albert Cornelius of Bruges paid, in 1515-16 and 1522 rent for market stalls; Simon Brmnynch of Antwerp sold his miniatures at the Bruges market. Van Mander (XXVII, 60) reports that the wife of the painter Jan de Hollander travelled to the markets "making good profit" while he stayed at home.
- 51 Floerke 88-89, Campbell 196-7 discussing artists who travelled to these markets.
- 52 Floerke 12,13. See also Jean C. Wilson, "The participation of painters in the Bruges 'pand' market, 1512-1550," *Burlington Magazine* 125 (August 1983): 476-479 for more detailed discussion of this subject.
- 53 Bernard Hubertus Vlekke, "The Dutch before 1581," *The Netherlands*, ed. Bartholomew Landheer (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1943): 28. Floerke 60.
- 54 Floerke 39, 40.
- 55 Floerke 55, 56.
- 56 Floerke 60, Filipczak 21, 41. Koch 64, mentions that the art fair in the Hradschin in Prague under Rudolf II was modeled after the Antwerp Schilders pand.
- 57 Ewing 559, 569.
- 58 Ewing 569. Shortly after 1540, Our Lady's Pand shifted to year-round selling in response to competition from the newly opened Schilders pand at the Bourse.
- 59 Ewing 558-583, for corroborating data as well as a detailed discussion of the history of 'Our Lady's Pand.' The pand is also mentioned by Koch 56n.120.
- 60 Floerke 91-2, 114, 116. Merchants such as dealers in devotional objects, book dealers, jewelers, frame makers, etchers, engravers, and even junk dealers.
- 61 Floerke 86-89, van Mander 148, Campbell 196-7, Koch 66.
- 62 Floerke 85-6.
- 63 Van Mander 229. Although Ewing describes the inventory of the painter/dealer Jan van Kessel as consisting of over 600 paintings.
- 64 Floerke 74-80. Jean Adhemar, "French Sixteenth Century Genre Paintings," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 8 (1945): 192-3. Campbell 197, Koch 59 61, van Mander 79, 216.
- 65 Wolfthal 19, Campbell 188-90.
- 66 Campbell 188-90. For names of specific collectors and general comments on patronage see Floerke 164-65, 171, and van Mander 20, 55, 69, 101, 156, 173, 187, 267.
- 67 Filipczak 44-5.

"Cloth of the Spider:" Deciphering Alfred Stevens' Intriguing "Puzzle Painting," *Young Woman with a Japanese Screen*

Glenn Taylor

Young Woman with a Japanese Screen (Figure 1), a 1989 acquisition of the J.B. Speed Museum in Louisville, Kentucky, has been viewed by thousands of visitors who were unaware of its nature as a complex skein of double entendres, all in French. The provenance of this painting, completed around 1880 by Belgian painter Alfred Stevens (1823-1906), who moved to Paris in 1844, can be traced back to its sale at auction by an anonymous owner in 1940. The beauty of the work is obvious, but what makes the painting unusual is the focus it provides on Stevens' skills as a semiotician.¹ It contains what appears to be a complex visual metaphor: The *femme fatale*, represented as a spider in her web poised to enmesh her victim. This portrayal is crafted through the association of the subject with items suggestive of decadence, and the use of numerous double entendres.

The name of Alfred Emile Léopold Stevens, unlike those of Paul Gauguin, Vincent Van Gogh and Georges Seurat, is not a household word today. This is the reverse of the situation a hundred years ago. The latter three, who led lives of comparative misery and struggle for recognition, are now seen as important figures of modern painting and Stevens, the first living artist to be honored by a one-man show at the École de Beaux Arts,² is now the relative unknown. At the Paris Exposition of 1867, a remarkable eighteen of Stevens' paintings were displayed. He owned a succession of expensive houses and studios in Paris, each enclosing a fine garden within an urban courtyard. He filled his home with beautiful and exotic furnishings from Louis XIV furniture to fashionable and expensive gowns made for the models he employed in his studio. A typical painting from the high point of Stevens' success might show a woman alone in a room, deliberating over the contents of a letter she has just received, or contemplating an object of art. Among these might be included expensive decorative items such as the carved ivory elephant and the tapestry beneath it in *Le bibelot exotique* (1866),³ the depiction of whose varied surfaces he used to give his work a breadth of technique. This practice, his sureness as a draftsman, and his fine color sense contributed to his wide success.

Stevens' acclaim was international. First in Belgium, then in France, and finally in America, museums and wealthy collectors clamored for his work. An American critic of 1880 wrote: "The artist is the interpreter of the nineteenth-century woman; he records her graces, her airs, her caprices, her temper, with...infallible and sympathetic acumen...."⁴

Lest it be thought that Stevens was considered a little

unmanly for his absorption in the civilized genre of drawing room interiors, the same critic has this to say: "Alfred Stevens is broad-shouldered, with...the appearance of a cavalry colonel; but the face with its warm brown tint that matches with the hazel eye, the knitted brow...reveal perfectly the man of contemplation and action in one, the man who has lived out his art."⁵

A contemporary artist was moved to say, "Everything depends on the amount of life and passion that an artist knows how to put into his figures. When they live, as Alfred Stevens'... for example, they are really beautiful." These are the words of an unsuccessful but still discriminating artist named Vincent van Gogh, in a letter to his brother Theo.⁶

Stevens' career was linked with that of Edouard Manet. Friends for many years, they shared an early interest in the work of Diego Velázquez, and both were early collectors of Japanese prints and objects of art. Edouard Manet's *Luncheon on the Grass* was entitled *The Bath* at its first scandalous hanging in 1863.⁷ Alfred Stevens' painting of the same title, of 1867, was more conservative. Stevens' bather was still clothed in her tub. Stevens had reason to be circumspect; his career was proceeding very much to his liking at the time. He was the close friend and perhaps lover of Sarah Bernhardt. Charles Baudelaire sat in Stevens' sumptuous drawing room and read his latest translations of Edgar Allan Poe.⁸ Alexandre Dumas fils came to watch him paint. Sarah Bernhardt brought the Prince of Wales to visit. Edgar Degas, a frequent guest at his home, was the godfather of his daughter Caroline. He was friend and associate of Eugène Delacroix, Theodore Rousseau, Cōrot, Courbet, Whistler, and Berthe Morisot.⁹ Despite these remarkable circumstances, many people who hear his name today assume the reference is to his British contemporary Alfred Stevens (1817-75), portrait painter and sculptor.

Today Stevens is becoming known again as a "minor Impressionist," a term whose unjust prefix may eventually be removed. There is nothing "minor" about *Young Woman with a Japanese Screen*. Without regard to the "puzzle" aspect of the painting, which will be explained shortly, it is a fully realized masterpiece on the basis of its more conventional characteristics alone. In formal terms it is a compendium of Impressionist elements (Japonisme; a high-keyed palette; a contrast of complementary colors), built upon the framework of totally sound drawing. There is an extra dimension to the painting, however, which has remained hidden from the time of its anonymous sale over fifty years ago. It contains numerous double entendres used to reinforce a complex visual analogy.

Nearly every item in the painting is the object of a visual trope, often risqué. Before enumerating them the simple but essential fact must be noted that these double entendres are effective only in French (as should be expected), and that they are of clear and definitive nature. They establish the three essential images necessary to illustrate the theme of prostitution: "Prostitute," "Pimp," and "Brothel." Each is presented so subtly that, taken individually, they might elude our grasp or be taken as accidental. When placed in conjunction within the limited context of the picture, however, their import is inescapable. They are presented on the screen itself, the nominal defining pictorial element of the work, as the title of the painting tells us.

The first of these visual double entendres lies in the identity of the birds prominently displayed on the Japanese screen. They are cranes, the name for which in French, "grue," is also the French slang word for "prostitute."¹⁰ It should perhaps be noted that Stevens could be expected to be sufficiently familiar with the species which these birds most resemble, *Grus grus*, or the common European crane, to reconstruct it from memory. Stevens was a keen observer, and his older brother Joseph was perhaps the most important European painter of animal subjects at the time. Stevens is known to have engaged in a mock-serious competition with his brother in the depiction of animal subjects.¹¹

The second double entendre lies in Stevens' positioning of the crane at left, a male, which stands behind the young woman's right arm. Figuratively, the verb *soutenir*, to support or uphold, means to "stand behind." Its presence in this position is to establish that it is a *souteneur*, or "pimp," the homonym of the word. This positioning would have no significance singly, of course, and at this point the correspondence between the two concepts, "prostitute" and "pimp" can be viewed as coincidence.

It is when the third of these related concepts is introduced into the confined context of this screen that a pattern emerges. The wonderfully calligraphic streak at the top of the painting is the representation of a meandering river. The third double entendre lies in the fact that the area below the river depicted lies, spatially, at the side of the river. "Riverside" is, in French, *bord de l'eau*, a term whose homonym is as effective in English as it is in French.

These correspondences are sufficiently provocative to warrant a second look. A close examination of the cranes at the right of the Japanese screen reveals that they are engaged in the act of mating. Their proximity, the outstretched wings of the female at right, and the characteristic arch of the neck of the male at left make this apparent to anyone who has observed the mating dash of water birds across the surface of a pond or lake. For those who have not, it should be explained that the windpipe of the male crane is much longer than the neck, and is normally carried looped within the abdomen. In this position it acts as a sound resonating mechanism, an evolutionary adaptation which allows mating water birds to find each other in fog and mist, and accounts for the haunting power of the calls of cranes, loons, *et*

cetera. During the act of mating the windpipe extends, forcing the neck back in a seeming parody of human sexual ecstasy.¹² Those who find fault with this observation will nevertheless find it difficult to deny that the birds on the screen are positioned according to their respective roles in the mating ritual: the male emitting his call, and the female in a receptive position.

The problem of intent arises at this point, and the question — "How would one illustrate these concepts if such a program were the objective?" — can be asked. The answer might well involve attaching an identifying double entendre (crane) to the motif of the screen; placing the crane behind the young woman's arm, just as shown; and placing the entire iconographic scheme under an identifying label, "*bord d'eau*."

It is the nature of this type of verbal exercise that it does not translate well from one language to another. It is therefore significant that various permutations of the subjects actually shown on the screen — "crane," "bird," "water bird," "river-side," "stream," etc. — cannot be manipulated in any fashion to reconstruct the central concepts into an English language form. "Bordello" is recognizable, but only because it is a borrowed word. The other half of the equation, its homonym, is meaningless in this context.

Stevens, of course, would not have to use such verbally associative means to introduce the simple theme of prostitution to his painting. The identification of the young woman as a prostitute is in fact incidental to the central theme of the painting: the *femme fatale*. The key to this theme is provided by the pattern of the silk coverlet on the table. At first it is a simple flower design, but Stevens' flowers must never be passed over without notice. Stevens was particularly conscious of the effectiveness of flower themes, and used flowers and their images on various surfaces to reflect the moods and inner qualities of his subjects. "One can judge of the sentiment of an artist," he once wrote, "by the flower he has painted."¹³ In this painting his words can be precisely applied.

The surface decorated in this instance is silk, and Stevens has emphasized this fact by a contrast of surface textures. The woven cane surface of the chair back at right shows strong individual strokes whose purpose is to create textural opposition to the silk tablecloth. The contrast of materials points out the thematic note that the young woman is completely surrounded by silk: there is the screen behind her, the silk coverlet, and the elegant gown of raw silk with finished bow of hand painted silk which flows about her. Stevens used a variety of fabrics to cover and decorate his interior arrangements, somewhat in the manner of the old Dutch masters. In some (e.g. *L'Inde à Paris*, c. 1867)¹⁴ the table cover is an oriental carpet. In the similar *Le bibelot exotique*, the cover is a tapestry. *Young Woman with a Japanese Screen*, like some (e.g. *News from Afar*, mid-1860s),¹⁵ shows a silk coverlet, as the sheerness revealed by the fold at the right corner and the sheen of the fabric at the leading edge of the table indicates.

Now we come to the real point of Stevens' use of word play on the Japanese screen. It is to prepare the viewer for a more complex double entendre introduced in his treatment of the

design (Figure 2) on the silk coverlet. Stevens has emphasized the spaces between the petals of the flower, to enhance the flower's resemblance to a giant spider. Once again, the message has not survived the translation to English, and must be explained. "Spider web" in French is *toile d'araignée* ("cloth of the spider"). The young woman, seated casually, is surrounded by yards of expensive silk in the form of her gown. The spider image gives a clue as to why the young woman is virtually swaddled in this fashion. This silken assemblage is figuratively her web; her *toile d'araignée*. Stevens has gone to specifics in order to make sure we understand that this "spider" allusion is intentional. The outer legs, at second look, are not a part of the spider at all; they are the web. Stevens' real spider is poised in her nest in the interior of the "flower." Stevens' reference is to a widespread group of spiders which share similar traits, habits which Stevens would have had an opportunity to observe in any of his fine gardens.¹⁶ The female builds a round web and perches on the interior nest to await her prey, just as shown. To complete the reference Stevens has included the tiny male, at left (the smaller flower) whose hazardous mating ritual is to dash in and impregnate the female at the proper moment, without getting eaten. To assist us in distinguishing these separate elements he has given the web ten strands to differentiate it from the central spider, and has depicted the strands of the web as if drooping in response to the pull of gravity.

While it is not necessary for Stevens to know more of the habits of spiders than an observation of the common garden spider would reveal in order to create this visual analogy, the complexity of verbal connections in the painting is intriguing. One of Stevens' friends of long standing was Alexandre Dumas *fils*. The world of science was open to Stevens through his relationship with this writer of protean interests. Dumas *fils* was an important figure at the Académie Française, and one can easily imagine the conversation which might have taken place in Stevens' garden, to lead to the creation of this painting.¹⁷ It would shed light on a cryptic comment which Dumas later wrote to Stevens, upon the publication of Dumas' *La femme de Claude*: "My dear Stevens, we were both painting the monster."¹⁸

At first this pleasant little painting with its soft and harmonious palette gives no hint of its mysteries. Only the small assemblage of glass, spoon, paper, and string (Figure 3), a group of items not easily explained, stimulates the viewer to probe more deeply into the imagery of the painting. Inherent in this group of objects is a number of more general puns, such as the similar sounding words *verre* (glass) and *vierge* (virgin). The similarity is underpinned by the secondary meaning of the word *vierge* as "blank page," since a blank page is indeed shown in association with the glass. The glass has a chip in its base to show that the play upon words is ironic in intent. This still-life arrangement is the most ingenious of Stevens' word play associations. The page is part of a packet of paper which has been bound with a string (*ficelle*). The French expression for "tricks of the trade" is *ficelles du métier*, or literally "strings of the trade." The assemblage then becomes a minor seminar pointing

out that one of the tricks of the "disastrous woman" (*femme fatale*) is to advance oneself as virginal. By placing an empty glass between this opened "string of tricks" and the viewer the experienced Stevens assures us that this is a transparent ploy.

The message of this assemblage, dependant upon the understanding of a number of generalized puns, would perhaps go unnoticed were it not for their presence within the context of the painting's setting of repeated wordplay. There are other clues to the theme of decadence, however, which are more directly visual. The spoon in the glass, for instance, has a direct reference: the museum exhibits the painting with a card which remarks that the glass has been used for absinthe. More telling is the trio of horizontal stripes of brown which Stevens has so casually placed on the wrist of the young woman's upraised right arm (Figure 4). A close examination reveals that these are imperfectly healed slashes, arranged to tell their own little story: UN . . . DEUX TROIS! There is the initial hesitation mark and then two serious gashes. Stevens has delineated them beneath the cuts by directional strokes of lighter flesh color to highlight them.

The evidence of attempted suicide darkens the theme. There is a latent strength in the figure, yet the expression of this strength may not be entirely wholesome in intent. The entasis of the young woman's outstretched left forearm is well defined, and the muscle tone is good. Stevens reinforces this gesture by the thrust of the female crane's neck, for it is important. He uses it to portray his spider waiting with deceptive languor, her left hand grasping the fabric of her web, alert to the slightest touch. Stevens has depicted her only visible fingernail, that of the thumb, totally straight across at the base, emerging from the thumb like the claw of an animal. The idea is strengthened by the use, in French, of the same word, *ongle*, for both nail and claw. The single pupil visible in her shadowed eyes, the left, is elliptical, like that of a cat, a second allusion to animal vitality. Stevens evidently respected the strength of this woman, regardless of what his other feelings might have been. The mixture of tragedy and wordplay approaches the macabre, but regardless of the intellectual detachment implicit in the frequent play upon words, there is an undeniable warmth and vitality in the handling of the painted surface.

One senses from the beauty of this painting that it could hardly be the vehicle of expression of a specific animus; but rather that Stevens felt a sympathetic affection for this challenging young woman. The marks of dissolution are displayed with detachment, while the subject is treated with sensuous warmth. The blend of distance and involvement, a mixture of concern and disapproval, is consistent with the view of a dissolute lifestyle which a worldly and sophisticated man might be expected to possess. One feels that in any event Stevens was affected, consciously or otherwise, by the poignancy of the young woman's sorrowful past more strongly than he cared to admit; a testament to the underlying potency of the central theme. It is in this sense of authentic emotional involvement, as opposed to a mere manipulation of the stylish parade of poses struck by so many of his subjects, that *Young Woman with a*

Japanese Screen occupies a unique niche in the work of Alfred Stevens.

University of Louisville

- ¹ Two earlier Stevens paintings, *The Letter of Announcement* (1862) and *The Cheval-glass* (1871) serve as comparisons. The first contains a painting-within-a-painting showing a figure described as the allegory of painting (William A. Coles, *Alfred Stevens* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Museum, 1977] 13) holding a mirror. In the 1871 painting Stevens uses a clutter of personal objects in the room to create a portrait of the artist in his absence (Coles 41). Although a complex painting, this latter work features many objects whose significance would be known only to the artist and his acquaintances. In this sense *Young Woman with a Japanese Screen*, which demonstrates the ability of art to simultaneously conceal and reveal its meaning, occupies a singular position within the body of Stevens' work in its degree of complexity in dealing with the allegory of painting. (The book cited above is a catalogue of a major exhibition of Stevens' work held at the University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, September 1-October 16, 1977. It is the definitive work on Alfred Stevens at the moment).
- ² Diane Heilenman, "Two Acquisitions Enhance Speed's Impressionist Collection," *The Courier-Journal*, (Louisville, Kentucky: The Louisville Courier-Journal, Dec. 31, 1989) I, 6.
- ³ Now in the Shickman Gallery in New York. Coles 41.
- ⁴ Earl Shinn, *The Art Treasures of America*, vol. 1, Philadelphia: G. Barrie, 1880, 30.
- ⁵ Shinn 31.
- ⁶ In a letter to Theo. *Insight* (Louisville: J.B. Speed Art Museum, n.d.) 7. From Vincent van Gogh's *Complete Letters* (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1959).
- ⁷ R. H. Wilenski, *Modern French Painters* (New York: Vintage, 1860) 27. Critic Arthur Stevens, younger brother of Alfred, defended Manet in the press.

- ⁸ Philippe Jullian, *Montmartre*, (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977) 38. Although it would be pertinent to investigate the relationship of Stevens' work, particularly *Young Woman with a Japanese Screen*, to the artists of the Symbolist group, this paper is necessarily too brief a vehicle for such a discussion.
- ⁹ Coles xi.
- ¹⁰ For this key observation I am indebted to Dr. Dario A. Covi, University of Louisville Allen R. Hite Professor.
- ¹¹ Coles 9.
- ¹² The African Crested Crane, or *Anthropoides virgo*, is perhaps named in ironic reference to this evocative correspondence.
- ¹³ Alfred Stevens, *Impressions of Painting* (New York: J.W. Bouton, 1886) 11.
- ¹⁴ Coles 31.
- ¹⁵ Now in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore. Coles 27.
- ¹⁶ The largest of these species is the silk spider, or *Nephila*, found in the New World tropics. Both the Nephilids and a more extensive group, the Argiopes, spin large, radial-armed webs and sit in the middle to await prey. (Thanks are due to novelist Graham K. Watkins, who numbers among his accomplishments an MA degree in Biological Science at Duke University.)
- ¹⁷ In this regard the timing of Edgar Degas' series of monotypes depicting prostitutes on display in their brothels, done 1879-80, is also suggestive. Robert Rosenblum and H.W. Janson *19th-Century Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1984) 375.
- ¹⁸ Coles 37.



Figure 1. Alfred Emile Leopold Stevens, *Young Woman with a Japanese Screen*, c.1880, oil on canvas, 23 1/2" x 20", J. B. Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky.

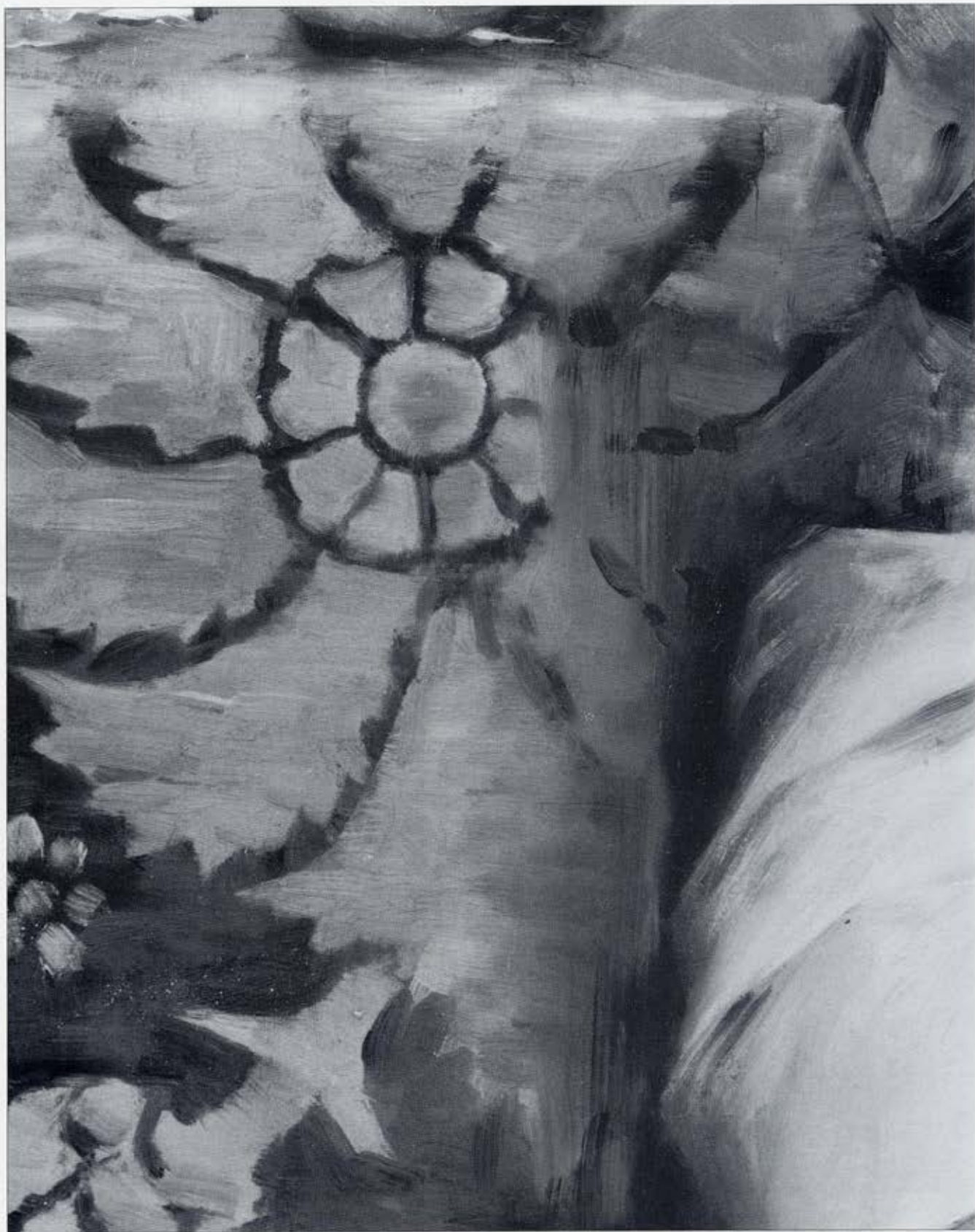


Figure 2. Alfred Emile Leopold Stevens, *Young Woman with a Japanese Screen* (detail: silk coverlet on table), c. 1880, oil on canvas, 23 1/2" x 20", J.B. Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky.

Figure 3. [right] Alfred Emile Leopold Stevens, *Young Woman with a Japanese Screen* (detail: assemblage of glass, paper, and string), c. 1880, oil on canvas, 23 1/2" x 20", J.B. Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky.



Figure 4. [below] Alfred Emile Leopold Stevens, *Young Woman with a Japanese Screen* (detail: marks on wrist), c. 1880, oil on canvas, 23 1/2" x 20", J.B. Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky.



Frederick Carl Frieseke Rediscovered

Betty Lou Williams

Historical events are sometimes rewritten over time, demonstrating a change of attitude or a justification of belief to illustrate what should have happened instead of what actually occurred. Hans Belting suggests that art history is a representation of its own, distinct from either history or art where opinion becomes representation of fact.¹ This discourse of "truth" applies to the historical research surrounding the nearly obscure artist Frederick Carl Frieseke, even though he was probably the most famous internationally known American Impressionist by 1932.² This same year Frieseke is described as

...one of the best represented...if not the best of all artists in American museums. Even the smallest of the public galleries is pretty sure to have a Frieseke.³

His track record of awards, medals and prizes is impressive from 1904 through 1915, the years which span the grand era of international and national expositions, biennials and academy shows which were held in both the United States and Europe.⁴

Frieseke's work is represented in the Art Institute of Chicago, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the National Gallery of Art, the Metropolitan Museum, the Terra Museum of American Art, the Los Angeles County Art Museum, the Huntington Library, the High Museum, the St. Louis Art Museum and countless other public and private museums and galleries in the United States. Nearly thirty years after his death in 1939, a rediscovery of Frieseke's work began with retrospectives in 1966 and 1975.

In Gardner's *Art through the Ages* (eighth edition, 1986, de la Croix and Tansey) and in Janson's *History of Art* (fourth edition, 1991), the topic of American Impressionism is neglected with only brief mention of individual American artists Mary Cassatt, James McNeill Whistler and John Singer Sargent. Frieseke's name is often omitted from books, catalogues and group exhibitions on American Impressionism in favor of other noteworthy American painters of the same period including John Twachtman, Childe Hassam, Willard Metcalf, Maurice Prendergast, Ernest Lawson, Edward Potthast, William Merritt Chase and Theodore Robinson, most of whom were members of a New York and Boston based group known as "The Ten."⁵

This paper will examine the literature regarding Frederick Carl Frieseke to date. My strategy in approaching this largely unresearched topic was to scrutinize and anticipate appropriate methodologies of art history that would help to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of this artist. There are both deficits and important contributions to the scholarship concerning Frieseke. One of the drawbacks is the nature of the literature

prior to 1966. This corpus consists of a series of reviews of exhibitions of the artist's work, inflated with superlatives and lavish praise, altogether lacking in profound insight. The other major deficiency in the literature is that there are no known books about Frieseke that have been published. One major research contribution is an interview in 1914 between the artist and *New York Times* reporter, Clara MacChesney. The other is the correspondence between Frieseke and his dealer William MacBeth. These primary sources have furnished direct access to the artist's beliefs and attitudes illustrating what Shiff identifies as the dual role of the artist who also functions as his own critic.⁶ There were only four articles about the artist that contributed scholarly insight and information. These were the two catalogs for each of the retrospectives, a 1968 article by Allen Weller for the *Art Journal*, and a discussion of Frieseke's years at Giverny in William Gerdts' recent book, *Monet's Giverny*. The nature of all four articles is historical and biographical focusing on the structures of time, place and events in the artist's life. This paper is designed to examine any clues these sources hold to help explain Frieseke's loss of fame with respect to art history and the changing twentieth century aesthetic.

Born in 1874 in Owosso, Michigan, Frieseke was trained for a brief period of time at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Art Students' League in New York. He arrived in Paris in 1898 with 500 dollars given to him by his father,⁷ thus exemplifying the trend of financially supported upper-middle to upper class American art students who went to Europe to train during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.⁸ It is interesting to note that Frieseke arrived in Paris during the final phase in this era of transatlantic migration.

In a Marxist context, Frieseke's participation in this sweeping migratory episode portrays a widely-shared class value. With a dearth of art academies in the United States, able and aspiring art students journeyed to London, Rome, Munich and Paris to study academic realism in search of a new American pictorial style.⁹ James Ackerman offers a possible explanation concerning this quest for style: "Often the art of earlier times or of foreign places offers solutions to such problems, too—it even may suggest new problems since its language is less familiar."¹⁰ Frieseke may have chosen Paris for some of the same reasons as so many others: the collection of master works at the Louvre, the flourishing art market, the activity of artistic criticism, as well as the opportunity for traditional academic training in the arts which revolved around the life study.¹¹

During his first year in Paris, Frederick Frieseke attended

the Académie Julian under the tutelage of Benjamin Constant and Jean Paul Laurens.¹² Founded in 1868, Académie Julian was the most popular private art academy in Paris among American art students. Instruction at the school, as well as the composition of the faculty, was modeled after the École des Beaux Arts.¹³ The curriculum provided instruction in drawing from casts, engravings and paintings of historical subjects in addition to drawing the life model.¹⁴

After leaving the Académie Julian, in 1898, Friesseke studied for one week with Whistler in Paris.¹⁵ In 1898, the same year that Friesseke arrived in Paris, Whistler opened his own private art academy. The encounter between the two artists occurred during the period of Whistler's decline in reputation as the result of the Ruskin Trial of 1878.¹⁶ The only comparison in the literature of the work of Friesseke and Whistler is William Gerds' contention that Friesseke's freedom from naturalistic depiction based on perception is similar to Whistler's adherence to art for art's sake.¹⁷ Nowhere in the literature on Friesseke is there any description of the similar use of artistic conventions shared by both artists: a monochrome palette, accessorizing with oriental objects, poses of women standing in front of the mantel (Figure 1 and Figure 2), or the female gazing upon her mirrored reflection.

It is not known if Friesseke ever did copywork while in the Louvre during this formative period. Friesseke is known to have visited the Louvre for purposes of "study."¹⁸ Among his favorite artists were Botticelli, Titian, Watteau, Fragonard, Lancret, and of his contemporaries Fantin Latour, and Renoir.¹⁹ No in depth formal analysis of any correlation between the works of these artists and their influence upon Friesseke has been undertaken to date. Gerds does mention the "swelling proportions, sensuous colors and caressing sunlight" which characterize both Friesseke's and Renoir's paintings of nudes.²⁰ E.V. Lucas also connects Friesseke to Renoir through identifying characteristics of Rococo style apparent in both artists' works (Figure 3).

Like Renoir, his favorite artist, Friesseke looked to Rococo art for inspiration. In *Torn Lingerie* the lacy peignoir, confectionery palette, racily exposed legs, and Directoire style chair all recall the eighteenth century 'boudoir art' of Boucher, Fragonard and their followers.²¹

This statement provides a circuitous route linking the influence of Rococo art to Friesseke through Renoir, whose work serves as an intermediary.

One of the shortcomings in the literature is that the artist is compared to many other contemporary and historical artists and conventions of style, but these issues are not clearly analyzed. A thorough iconographic study of Friesseke's work separating icon from index²² would close this gap and give this artist who overlaps and borrows from so many traditions the context his art needs to be historically understood. As Ackerman suggests, the analysis of style helps to establish relationships between various related works of art that share factors of time, place, people or group.²³

Friesseke was similar to other American Impressionists working both in the United States and Europe. Like them, his handling of subject matter emphasized the solid form of the figure rather than the effects of light and atmosphere on landscape.²⁴ It is unimaginable that his demonstrated knowledge and use of anatomy did not occur as the result of his academic training. Nevertheless, Friesseke echoed one of the central tenets of Impressionism by denying his academic training to define a break with tradition in order to better pursue nature. In the spirit of the avant garde he considered himself to be self-taught, acknowledging his formal training while downplaying its contribution to his artistic development. When asked if he perceived himself to be a true Impressionist, Friesseke responded to an interview question in 1914: "Yes, I believe I am....I laid aside all rules of painting when I began and went to nature."²⁵

The artistic climate in Paris during the *fin-de-siècle* was characterized by a variety of coexisting avant garde artistic styles.²⁶ Friesseke's arrival in Paris in 1898 occurred twelve years after the last of the eight cooperative Impressionist exhibitions held in 1886. Success came easily to the artist in the early phase of his career. By 1901 Friesseke was clearly working in an Impressionist manner, the same year he began exhibiting annually at the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts.²⁷ Friesseke adopted an Impressionist manner well after the height of this period had developed into Post-Impressionism and its various subspecies, which were soon to be followed by a rapid succession of modern movements. Furthermore, Friesseke was an artist who maintained his use of Impressionist, Post-Impressionist and Nabis artistic conventions without going through the metamorphosis of radical twentieth century stylistic changes.²⁸

Friesseke was among the second generation of American artists according to Allen Weller, or the third generation according to William Gerds, who resided in Giverny where life was remote, rural and largely uninterrupted.²⁹ In 1900 he began spending summers there, remaining until 1920, eventually renting³⁰ or purchasing in 1906³¹ the home of Theodore Robinson, which was next to the home of Claude Monet. He was separated by a wall from Monet's residence with the Epte flowing across both properties.³² Friesseke is discussed in only one of four contemporary books on Monet's life at Giverny. Mention of the artist is altogether omitted in a catalogue titled *Claude Monet and the Giverny Artists* (1960). It is unlikely that Monet and Friesseke were entirely unfamiliar with one another as neighbors, painters, or as Impressionists. One possible explanation for this void of information was the reclusive nature of both men.³³ In the literature on Friesseke the influence of Monet is largely dismissed or downplayed. This is illustrated by this comparison written by Donelson Hoopes, who describes Monet's followers, Theodore Robinson and Theodore Butler, as becoming devoted disciples, while "...Frederick Friesseke, on the other hand, developed his own impressionist idiom characterized by a penchant for bold design and astringent color."³⁴ Hoopes credits Monet as having the "most formative influence" upon Friesseke's style but does not specify the nature of this influence. Instead, Hoopes identifies characteristics of

Post-Impressionism in Frieske's use of "strong, flat color and design," especially in his interior subjects.³⁵ Frieske's work shared many similarities with Monet's, including the use of subject matter, composition, and multiple paintings contained within a series (Figure 4 and Figure 5). Both artists illustrated images of leisure removed from profound social realism. Weller characterizes Frieske's life as happy and uneventful, receiving numerous awards and attention in the early and middle stages of his career.³⁶ It is precisely this uncomplicated idyllic tranquility in the artist's work which may have contributed to its later demise. His subject matter and handling are devoid of any suggestions of socio-political issues, nor are they of a profound psycho-symbolic or scientific nature.

Frieske's repertoire of subject matter includes five basic themes: 1) interiors with women; 2) garden scenes with women; 3) female nudes (usually outdoors); 4) the mural projects; and 5) pure landscape (without figures). In the United States he is predominantly known for his interior scenes (Figure 6): kitchens, the boudoir, or the living room with females gazing at their reflections, reading a book, sewing, serving tea, examining birds in cages or quietly daydreaming. The artist, similar to the Impressionist landscape painters, in general, reserved working indoors for periods of inclement weather.³⁸ The second category, the garden scenes with women (Figure 7), generally reveal a shallow landscape space with reclining, seated or standing females quietly meditating, graciously reading, serving tea, or posed under a Japanese parasol. The third category (Figure 8) includes close-up, full-length views of the nude painted outdoors, characterized by prismatic flesh tones reminiscent of Renoir's dappled use of color. The fourth category of the artist's work encompasses the murals commissioned for Wanamaker's Department Store in New York City, for a series of hotels including the Shelbourne in Atlantic City, and for private patrons.³⁹ The range of subject matter in the murals is not clearly stated in the literature. Although Frieske did not especially enjoy the laborious aspects of the mural projects, these commissions provided an important contribution to the artist's popularity and early financial success.⁴⁰

The common theme in these first four subject categories is the celebration of the feminine spirit.⁴¹ There is no feminist literature currently available on Frieske. His use of the female as a central theme is compatible with Carol Duncan's description of the Symbolist portrayal of women. "They are always more driven by instincts and closer to nature than man, more subject to its mysterious forces."⁴² Frieske continued to paint interiors, garden scenes and nudes throughout the majority of his early and middle career until approximately age 68. At that time he suddenly turned to landscape subjects (Figure 9) perhaps in an attempt to restore his declining marketability.⁴³ Previously, in 1914, the artist revealed that although he preferred being outdoors, his use of the landscape was intended only as a "background for figures."⁴⁴ Eighteen years later Frieske turned to pure landscape devoid of figures. There is little information about this fifth category and final phase of the artist's career.

The range of subject matter in Frieske's work has created

a central paradox and discrepancy affecting this artist's international reputation.⁴⁵ Due to censorship and puritanical restrictions, Frieske's nude subjects were seldom exhibited in the United States.⁴⁶ Conversely, these were the artist's most popular subjects among European audiences.⁴⁷

Moussa Domit suggests that a more thorough analysis of this artist's subject matter could result in a revision of scholarship concerning Frieske.

He simply did not find the market in this country and thus the exposure for the kind of painting which really interested him and might have earned for him an entirely different reputation....⁴⁸

Thus we witness the profound and lasting effects of connoisseurship upon the identity and reputation of this artist.

Frieske's commercial exposure in the United States was facilitated by William MacBeth. MacBeth became highly influential in the American art market. In 1892 he operated the first commercial gallery in the United States to exhibit contemporary American art.⁴⁹ Frieske had his first one man show featuring seventeen paintings at MacBeth Galleries in New York in 1912.⁵⁰ The correspondence between the artist and his dealer began the year they met in 1911.⁵¹ The content of these letters is referred to extensively by Allen Weller in his 1968 article for the *Art Journal*. His research reveals the ongoing disputes and difficulties between Frieske and MacBeth in negotiating over suitable material for the American market. These letters provide a major source of historical information that lay unexplored until 1966. This correspondence reveals the financial, emotional, and personal relationship between the artist, his dealer and the times.

William MacBeth was not only Frieske's most reputable promoter but MacBeth also functioned in part as Frieske's adversary. In 1908 MacBeth Galleries held the first exhibition of "the Eight," popularly known as the Ash Can School.⁵² By 1907, the seeds of an opposition to American and European Impressionism were taking root. The members of this movement gradually redirected the subject matter of American art towards social realism, depicting images of contemporary urban life.⁵³ The leader of the group, Robert Henri proselytized for a more authentic form of American art to replace derivatives and imitations of European art, which had previously dominated.⁵⁴

There were two other key events that permanently altered the future of American art. One of these was the series of exhibitions of European modern masters held at the Stieglitz Gallery from 1910 until 1917,⁵⁵ and the other was the landmark Armory Show of 1913, which showcased sixteen hundred European and American works representing "The evolution of modern art since the romantic period."⁵⁶ "From 1913 onward there was to be no turning back for American art into the comfortable sanctuaries of the established academies of painting."⁵⁷ This explanation of development echoes the sound of Wölfflin and Riegl who believed in an evolutionary model of art history.⁵⁸

With the advent of Modernism, Impressionism was

overcome by 1920.⁵⁹ By the mid 1920s, Friesseke's sales drastically declined and the artist's work received "disparaging reviews with unfavorable comparisons to more recent trends and basic rejection of his works as outmoded and unduly conservative."⁶⁰ Friesseke's hardest years were the decade that followed. By 1932, the year of his last exhibition, the artist was living in Switzerland.⁶¹ Four years later Friesseke temporarily stopped painting because of personal confusion and uncertainty over his work.⁶² At the invitation of MacBeth, Friesseke came to the United States in 1937 in an attempt to relocate permanently and reactivate his career. After one year the artist returned to France.⁶³ He developed neuritis in his right arm but resumed painting before his death two years later in 1937 in Mesnil-sur-Blangy, France.⁶⁴ A psychoanalytic and Marxist investigation of this final phase in the artist's career would reveal personal and financial hardships that were the direct results of both the depression as well as the changing contemporary aesthetic.

Perhaps the ethnic dichotomy of this artist contributed in part to his loss of acclaim by the mid 1920s. In March 1937, Friesseke wrote with insight to MacBeth:

I remember years ago MacMonnies telling
me don't stay too long in France, the best

consideration you can ever expect from the French is, concerning your work, "Not bad for an American...and you will lose touch with America." And this has happened.⁶⁵

In 1909 Charles Caffin projected the future of Frederick Friesseke. He noted that American artists who remained in France became criticized in America for not contributing to the progress of American art. They are taken to be, in the author's words "selfishly interested in themselves, rather than fighters in a common cause."⁶⁶ Caffin remarks that although this belief was commonly shared it may not be entirely truthful. I believe that because Friesseke was too far away from the United States to maintain a foothold in American art and because the French exhibit a particularly strong variety of ethnocentricity, neither country has seen fit to claim ownership of this artist. The page was turned on Friesseke, his story mostly forgotten in both languages, and the chapter on modern art took over. It is my hope that someday this very private man will return to the public arena to resume the place in history he once occupied; then the facts concerning Friesseke will not be "as much 'invented' as 'found.'"⁶⁷

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¹ Hans Belting, *The End of the History of Art?* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987) 58.

² William H. Gerds, *American Impressionism* (Seattle: The Henry Art Gallery, 1980) 86.

³ "Friesseke, at 68, Turns to Pure Landscape," *The Art Digest* 6. 15 (1932): 12.

⁴ Moussa M. Domit, *Frederick Friesseke, 1874-1939* (Savannah: Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1974) 10.

⁵ Donelson F. Hoopes, *The American Impressionists* (New York: Watson Guptill Publications, 1972) 16.

⁶ Richard Shiff, "On Criticism Handling History," *Art Criticism* 3.1 (1986): 60, 61.

⁷ Domit 8.

⁸ Michael Marlais and Marianne Doezeema, *Americans and Paris* (Maine: Colby College Museum of Art, 1990) 8.

⁹ Hoopes 8.

¹⁰ James Ackerman, *Art and Archaeology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1963) 176.

¹¹ Marlais 9 and Doezeema 36.

¹² E. A. Taylor, "The Paintings of F. C. Friesseke," *International Studio* 53 no. 212 (1914): 256.

¹³ Marlais 9.

¹⁴ Belinda Thomson, *Vuillard* (Oxford: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1988) 10.

¹⁵ Allen S. Weller, "Frederick Carl Friesseke: The Opinions of an American Impressionist," *Art Journal* 28.2 (Winter 1968): 160.

¹⁶ Richard J. Boyle, *American Impressionism* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1974) 71.

¹⁷ William H. Gerds, *Monet's Giverny: An Impressionist Colony* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1993) 174.

¹⁸ Clara MacChesney, "Interview with Friesseke," *New York Times* 7 June 1914: 7.

¹⁹ MacChesney 7.

²⁰ Gerds 176.

²¹ Amy Fine Collins, *American Impressionism* (New York: Gallery Books, 1990) 80.

²² Shiff 64.

²³ Ackerman 164 and 165.

²⁴ Gerds 85.

²⁵ MacChesney, *Interview* 7.

²⁶ Marlais 10.

²⁷ Allen S. Weller, *Frederick Friesseke 1874 - 1939* (New York: Hirsch and Adler Galleries, Inc., 1966) 1.

²⁸ Gerds 174.

²⁹ Weller, *1874-1939* 2, and Gerds 172.

- 30 Domit 29.
31 Weller, *1874-1939* 2.
- 32 Weller, *Opinions* 161.
- 33 MacChesney, *Interview* 7.
- 34 Hoopes 17.
- 35 Hoopes 122.
- 36 Weller, *Opinions* 161.
- 37 Domit 12 and 13.
- 38 MacChesney, *Interview* 7.
- 39 Gerds 86.
- 40 Clara MacChesney, "Frederick Carl Frieske—His Work and Suggestions for Painting from Nature," *Arts and Decoration* 3.1(1912): 15.
- 41 Gerds 86.
- 42 Carol Duncan, "Virility and Domination in 20th Century Vanguard Painting," *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary D. Gerrard (New York: Harper and Row, 1982) 295.
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- 66 Charles H. Caffin, "Some New American Painters in Paris," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 118.704 (1909): 264.
- 67 Kenneth J. Gergen, *The Saturated Self* (New York: Basic Books, 1991) 109.



Figure 1. Frederick C. Frieske, *Jeanne*, reproduced in *International Studio*, v. 53, no. 212.



Figure 2. James McNeill Whistler, *The Little White Girl: Symphony in White, No. 2*, 1864, oil on canvas, 29 7/8" x 20 1/4", The Tate Gallery, London.



Figure 3. Frederick C. Frieseke, *Torn Lingerie*, 1915, oil on canvas, 51 1/4" x 51 3/4", St. Louis Art Museum purchase.



Figure 4. Frederick C. Frieseke, *On the River*, c. 1911, oil on canvas, 26" x 32", Private Collection. Courtesy Barry-Hill Galleries, New York, N.Y.



Figure 5. Claude Monet, *The Boat at Giverny*, c. 1887, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France. Courtesy Giraudon/Art Resource, New York.



Figure 6. Frederick C. Frieseke, *The Yellow Room*, 1902(?), oil on canvas, 32 1/4" x 32 1/4". Bequest of John T. Spaulding. Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 7. Frederick C. Frieseke, *Lady in a Garden*, c. 1912, oil on canvas, 31 7/8" x 25 3/4", Daniel J. Terra Collection, 1.1982. Courtesy Terra Museum of American Art, Chicago. © All rights reserved.



Figure 8. Frederick C. Frieseke, *On the Bank*, c. 1915, oil on canvas, 102.9 x 146.1 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago. © All rights reserved.



Figure 9. Frederick C. Frieseke, *Apple Blossoms*, 1924, oil on canvas, 26" x 32". Courtesy Nicholas Kilmer.

Picasso's Influence on Jackson Pollock's Late Black and White Paintings

Verlon Cary

Jackson Pollock's reorganization of Picasso's motifs and compositions in such paintings as *Male and Female*, *Magic Mirror*, *Birth*, *Guardians of the Secret* and *White Angel* has been critically analyzed primarily from a Jungian point of view.¹ This criticism, along with Pollock's early sketch books, provides a firm foundation for establishing a relationship between Pollock's early figurative work of 1938 to 1946 and the work of Picasso from this point of view.² Critical analysis which used a pictorial model in place of the psychological one, favored by Elizabeth Langhorne and Jonathan Welch, to explain the strength of Pollock's early artistic dependence on Picasso found expression in the writing of both William Rubin and Jonathan Weinberg.³ Rubin, in a compositional analysis and comparison of the dog figures found in Pollock's *Guardians of the Secret* and Picasso's *Three Musicians* of 1921, offered Pollock's explanation of his dog figure, "the dog is a father figure inhibiting access to the 'secret.'" This dog, Rubin asserted, symbolized Picasso. Rubin, in the same 1967 article which appeared in *Art in America*, again pointed to Pollock's 'Oedipal struggle' against Picasso, illustrated by Pollock's frequent depiction of Picasso's Minotaur motifs which were published in issues of the *Cahiers d'Art* and *Minotaur* during the late 1930s and early 1940s, as well as Pollock's use of figurative references to the studio such as chairs, palettes, tables and ladders.⁴ Also noting Pollock's "struggle with Picasso throughout his work," Weinberg lists the Picasso motifs of masks, bulls, horses and masks found fragmented in much of Pollock's early work, learned from the many Picasso exhibits held in New York during the 1930s including the 1939 MOMA exhibition *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art*. No doubt, Picasso's application of animal and primitive imagery to the enunciations of 'high art,' first introduced to Pollock by Lee Krasner and John Graham, resonated with Pollock's personal youthful western experiences and provided him with the visual language necessary to express the contemporary artistic interest in primitivism found also in all of the work of Pollock's abstract expressionist friends.⁵ However, scant attention has been paid to the possibility of a similar relationship existing between Picasso's work and the figurative paintings of Pollock's last years. Two scholars, Rubin and Weinberg, have suggested that such a connection may exist. Rubin saw the expressionistic qualities of Picasso manifested in Pollock's paintings up to 1946 and to a lesser extent thereafter, while Weinberg found Picasso to be a possible source for Pollock's 1953 *Portrait of a Dream* in a comparison between that painting and Picasso's *Painter with a Model Knitting*.⁶

This paper will address the influence of Picasso found in several of Pollock's late black and white figurative paintings. Through a comparison of some of Pollock's late works to works by Picasso illustrated in the 1940 MOMA catalog *Picasso, Forty Years of His Art*⁷ and a formal analysis of composition and motif found in, among others, such paintings as *Shadows*, *Echo*, and *Number 32*, I will explore Pollock's continued interest in Picasso, even after the 1947-51 drip paintings which Pollock claimed were created in order to refute Picasso's claim that high art could not be made without figuration.⁸

Following the media-celebrity which accompanied his initial artistic breakthrough with the drip paintings, Pollock, facing a creative impasse, searched for a direction that would lead to his next and last major artistic step, the black and white paintings in which he would once more 'unveil the image,' consequently producing ultimate proof of his abilities as a draftsman both to the critics and himself, and conclusively, dispelling from his own mind his long-held 'guilty secret' of being a painter incapable of producing 'good' drawing.⁹ In the winter of 1951 Pollock, noted the staining effects of poured ink on successive pages of rice paper and used this method to produce black ink drawings on paper that were later translated, enlarged in scale, to canvas. These works he called, "drawing on canvas in black."¹⁰

Lee Krasner later published Pollock's statement concerning the black and white paintings of 1951 and linked the 1951 paintings to the work of the early to mid-1940s, whose motifs critics have previously shown were derived from Picasso. She stated, "They come out of the same subconscious, the same man's eroticism, joy, pain....Pollock chose not to veil the image in the black and whites."¹¹

While most critics felt that Pollock's return to the figure represented a step backward, Clement Greenberg, who, early on, had championed Pollock's art, wrote:

Like some older masters of our time he develops according to a double rhythm in which each beat harks back to the one before the last. The anatomical motifs and compositional schemes sketched out in his first and less abstract phase are in this third one clarified and realized.¹²

As Greenberg suggests, Pollock's career may be properly divided into three main phases: figuration, abstraction and in the final phase, an attempt to fuse these two earlier concerns. Thus, the movement of ritualistic dance, the basis of composi-

tion for the drip paintings as suggested by Robert Motherwell, continued to be a thematic concern pursued by Pollock in some of his late black and white figurative work. Although it has been noted that Pollock sought inspiration for this last phase of his career in the pen and ink drawings on paper that were executed during the winter of 1951, the works *Cut-Out*, 1949, and *Shadows*, 1949 (Figure 1), show Pollock to have begun his last figurative explorations two years earlier. *Cut-Out* contains a figure defined by actually cutting out a section of the painted web to reveal the board-ground and bears a marked similarity in composition to Picasso's, also single-figured, *The Swimmer*, 1929.

Figures in *Shadows*, composed of basic signs and gesture, are created of flat areas of poured black paint set against a web that is similar to that found in *Cut-Out*, though less dense, and, illustrate Pollock's struggle to generate new development in his art by attempting to unite the figure, ground and web-abstractation. In *Shadows*, the webbed ground creates a sense of atmosphere behind the ritualistic dance-like action of these figures whose femininity is denoted by their small triangular shaped heads. This triangular motif was used previously by Pollock in such paintings as *White Angel* and *Sleeping Woman* to denote a female figure. It is part of Pollock's pictorial vocabulary derived from Picasso's *The Dream and Lie of Franco*, 1937, and also from *An Anatomy* of 1933.¹³ From the standpoint of theme, composition and motif, one finds in *Shadows* a strong resemblance to Picasso's *Three Dancers*, 1925, (Figure 2) which was exhibited in the 1939 MOMA Picasso retrospective. In *Three Dancers*, three figures are positioned frontally across the picture plane and connected by a diagonal of extended arms behind the central figure. Pollock implies the diagonal in his similarly arranged grouping.

Both paintings share the theme of ritualistic dance. However, in the Pollock, the title of which may come from the shadow of a man who is presented on the left in *Three Dancers*, cubist language has been employed in an even more abstract way. While each artist has used primitive geometric shapes to create their dancers, Picasso locates his dancers within a contemporary interior. In Pollock's *Shadows*, not only can the painting be read as a 'shadow' of some long forgotten ritual, but also, as a 'shadow' cast by the earlier Picasso *Dance*.

Number Thirty-Two, 1950, by Pollock, represents an attempt to combine the pure action of the earlier drip paintings with figures again involved in a primitive ritual dance. More successful in merging figure and ground than *Shadows* was, *Number Thirty-Two* not only recalls Picasso's *Dance*, but also Matisse's *Dance* of 1909. In *Number Thirty-Two*, Pollock has expanded the format to include numerous figures swirling across the canvas. Lines delineating action and figure have been incorporated in such a way that allows the line and the figure to function in a dual capacity while retaining formal abstract qualities. Here Pollock displays his unique ability to create line that is simultaneously volumetric and calligraphic. Singled out by the critic Robert Goodnough, writing in *Art News*, *Number Thirty-Two* is praised for its "open black rhythms...dance in

disturbing degrees of intensity, ecstatically energizing the powerful image in an almost hypnotic way."¹⁴

Number Twenty-Seven, 1951, is divided into two clearly demarcated zones against a white ground. On the left a large seated figure that is fragmented in gestural strokes is balanced by two stacked shapes on the right. One, a double-portrait, a well-known Picasso motif, appears on the bottom while above is a head. In its ferocity, flattened planes and pose, Picasso's *Seated Bather*, 1929, exhibited in the 1939 MOMA Picasso show, suggests a likely inspirational source for the seated figure.

The double-portrait motif in the lower right is one which Picasso often used, in, for example, *The Girl Before a Mirror*, a work which had inspired Pollock in the earlier phases of his work, having been seen by Pollock in the 1939 MOMA exhibition, along with the small Picasso etching of a double-portrait entitled *Woman*, 1922-3. Picasso produced this etching for the first fifty-six copies of a book by Zeroes entitled *Picasso, Oeuvre 1920-6*. Pollock could have seen this work in a copy of *Cahier d'Art* of 1926, and also, in the 1939 New York show. The third shape, the one in the upper right of *Number Twenty-Seven*, is similar to Picasso's *Portrait of a Woman* of 1938, also in the same exhibition. Pollock has repeated in gesture the overall triangular shape of the figure and its profile. Through the juxtaposition of these three feminine motifs, Pollock seems to be once more exploring the theme of primeval woman.

Pollock continued to explore the archaic theme of primitive woman in *Black and White Number Five*, 1952. Here, he created a monumental seated nude framed by a vertical band of small ovoid shapes on the right and a shorter band on the left. This figure is clearly related in the sense of fragmentation, curve-linear shapes, pose and command of the format to a series of seated nudes by Picasso which presents a similar theme. This series, shown in the exhibition *Picasso, Forty Years of His Art*, included *Woman in an Armchair*, 1929, *Figure in a Red Chair*, 1932, *Dancer* of 1907-8, and his *Demoiselles Sketches*.

Pollock's *Black and White Painting*, 1951, depicts a format filled with a commanding figure posed as an orant. Three Picasso paintings can be cited which contain similar figures, all part of the same Picasso 1939 New York exhibition: *Crucifixion*, 1930; *Guernica*, 1937; and *Danseuse nègre*, 1907. Similar figures based on studies of Picasso have been found in Pollock's sketch books. Picasso's *Bullfight* of 1933, included in the 1939 New York exhibition of his work is reflected in the similar, though fragmented, motifs, movement and line of Pollock's *Number Fourteen* of 1951 and *Number Eight* of 1952.

Echo, 1951, has been recognized as one of Pollock's most successful late black and white figurative paintings. Its unification of figure and ground is nearly complete in an easy exchange of line and shape, still allowing the figures to maintain their sense of integrity. On the right stands a male artist facing a standing female on the left. His arm is extended to a rectangle in the center. The same composition was used in Picasso's *The Studio*, 1928. Pollock has used an ovoid shape to indicate the male's head similar to the artist in *The Studio*.

Portrait of a Dream, 1953, is a transitional painting for Pollock that reintroduces color into his late work and marks an end to his black and white figure explorations. As Weinberg pointed out, this painting contains obvious references to Picasso's *Painter with a Model Knitting*, 1927. Similarities between the two paintings are found in the shared compositions, the Picasso-like mask in the Pollock, the shape of the heads seen in both paintings, and the shared gestural abstractions, one depicted on the easel in the Picasso and the other filling the left half of the Pollock. Weinberg surmised, correctly, that Pollock's choice of composition and motif for *Portrait of a Dream* indicated Pollock's desire to solve his problems of artistic growth and content as a working artist.

This same desire on Pollock's part is reflected in his use of long-worked and thoroughly assimilated Picasso motifs in his late black and white paintings reviewed here. In his return to the figure, Pollock also returned to the lessons learned from Picasso's late cubist figurative solutions, choosing images first derived by Pollock in his early career from Picasso's late cubist phase. By incorporating his new staining painting method, express primitive themes in an even more abstract way than in

developed more fully through the black and white paintings, with Picasso's graphic solutions, Pollock found the means to his earlier work, solve compositional problems, fragment the figure and incorporate gestural line with the ground. This is seen most successfully in *Echo* and *Number Thirty-Two*. As Lee Krasner stated, these black and white paintings came from the same source as Pollock's earlier work.

By incorporating traditional artistic themes and his interest in primitivism with the figure, Pollock's late black and white paintings, like his famous drip paintings, whose relationship to traditional European art was pointed out by William Rubin, are also placed directly in line with traditional European art. With the exception of *Echo*, the number titles of these paintings after 1951 suggest that Pollock considered them to be a series of early experiments which synthesize the two dimensional surface and fragmentation of Abstract Expressionism and the figuration of Cubism. In what direction he might have developed these ideas, one can only guess. Even though Pollock's death in 1956 prematurely ended his career, these black and white paintings proved to be a long noted major influence on later color-field painters.

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¹ Andrew Kagan, "Improvisations: Notes on Jackson Pollock and the Black Contribution to American High Culture," *Arts Magazine* 3 (1979): 96-9. Elizabeth L. Langhorne, "Jackson Pollock's *The Moon Woman Cuts the Circle*," *Arts Magazine* 3 (1979): 128-37. "Pollock, Picasso and the Primitive," *Art History* .3 (1983): 66-92. Jonathan Weinberg, "Pollock and Picasso: The Rivalry and the 'Escape,'" *Arts Magazine* 61 (1987): 6-10. Jonathan Welch, "Jackson Pollock's *The White Angel* and the Origins of Alchemy," *Arts Magazine* 3 (1979):138-43.

² Stephen Pulcari, "Jackson Pollock and Thomas Hart Benton," *Arts Magazine* 3 (1979): 123. Pulcari notes Pollock's absorption of Picassoid form, derived from *Girl with a Cock* and *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, into Pollock's *Birth* of 1938-41.

³ William Rubin, "Pollock as Jungian Illustrator: The Limits of Psychological Criticism," *Art in America* 11 (1979): 104-23. Weinberg 42-8.

⁴ Rubin 110.

⁵ John D. Graham, "Primitive Art and Picasso," *Magazine of Art* 4 (1937): 236-9, 260. William Rubin, "Jackson Pollock and the Modern Tradition, Part I," *Artforum* 2 (1967): 14-22. Pollock also considered Albert Pinkham Ryder, Miro, Orozco, Sequerias and Reveria important to the development of his art. It is notable that the motifs which Pollock retained throughout his painting career and which appeared in both his first and last periods were the primitive references used by both Orozco and Picasso.

⁶ Rubin, *Pollock as Jungian Illustrator* 104-23. Rubin, *Modern Tradition*

Part I 14-22. William Rubin, "Jackson Pollock and the Modern Tradition, Part II," *Artforum* 3 (1967): 28-37. "Part III," 4 (1967): 18-31. "Part IV," 5 (1967): 28-33. Weinberg 48.

⁷ Alfred H. Barr, Jr., ed., *Picasso, Forty Years of His Art* (Museum of Modern Art, N.Y. 1939).

⁸ Weinberg 47. Weinberg deals only with Pollock's *Portrait of a Dream*.

⁹ Stephen Naifeh and Gregory White Smith, *Jackson Pollock. An American Saga*. (New York: Harper Collins, 1989) 667-8.

¹⁰ Naifeh and Smith 664. David Rubin, "A Case for Content: Jackson Pollock's Subject was the Automatic Gesture," *Arts Magazine* 3 (1979): 103-9.

¹¹ Rubin, *A Case for Content* 103.

¹² Irving Sandler, *The Triumph of American Painting. A History of Abstract Expressionism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970) 117. Dore Ashton, "Jackson Pollock's Arabesque," *Arts Magazine* 3 (1979): 142-3. Ashton points to references to 1938-41 vocabulary of bulls, horses, Picassoid distortion, and vertical configurations as references to the sentinel-like figures painted in the early 1940s seen in the 1951 exhibition of Pollock's black and white paintings held at Betty Parson's gallery.

¹³ Welch 139. Welch notes that Picasso's *An Anatomy* was reproduced in the first issue of *Minotaure* in 1933.

¹⁴ Naifeh and Smith 657.



Figure 1. Jackson Pollock, *Shadows*, 1949, oil, 32" x 26", Private Collection, New York.



Figure 2. Pablo Picasso, *Three Dancers*, 1925, oil, 84 5/8" x 56 1/4", Tate Gallery, London.

The Art of Bessie Harvey: Her Gift of the Spirit

Diana McClintock

"*Zibula makuta wa mambu*: with open ears hear their matters of the spirit."¹ This Kongo phrase, quoted in another context by Robert Farris Thompson, provides wise advice for viewers confronted with the complex and evocative wood and found object sculptures of Tennessee artist Bessie Harvey. Her work has been characterized as "root spirit art," and compared to Yoruba cosmology, because of stylistic similarities with West African root sculpture and the undeniable power or presence which her sculptures seem to exude. Remarkably, the sexagenarian artist had never seen African sculpture until after she began making her art in 1974. The tendency among art historians and critics to associate Harvey's work with West African art on the basis of formal affinities obscures the more immediate and fundamental context from which the art of Bessie Harvey emerges: the culture and spirituality of Afro-America.

Bessie Harvey was born in Dallas, Georgia, in 1928. Her father died when she was very young, leaving her mother alone to raise nine children. Her mother's strength of character enabled her to overcome obstacles including extreme poverty and her status as a female member of a minority, as Harvey has explained: "she was a good woman, and a very smart woman... and she wasn't just a hand-me-down."² Harvey married at fourteen and moved to Alcoa, Tennessee, a small town in the foothills of the Smoky Mountains, where she almost single-handedly raised eleven children. The artist considers her large, healthy family, which now includes thirty-two grandchildren and four great-grandchildren, as a blessed gift from God. Providing for her growing family, however, was a struggle which consumed all of her creative and intellectual powers, as she explained to Shari Cavin Morris:

I really didn't become truly human until my youngest was half grown. I was a little better than an animal trying to scrape together food and shelter for them. Later, that's when I began to develop my mind and question the spiritual nature of my life.³

Exhausted after a long day of caring for her family, in the evenings she would speak to God in quiet meditation. In 1974, the year that her mother died, Harvey explains that "the art came...and it's just a thing that was planned for me since before the foundation of the world:"

There was a time that I felt that I wasn't nobody, and I felt forlorned and lost for His love in the earth, because of my life. And I talked to God, and I said to God, I said I don't want to live in your earth, all these years, and

leave and not leave a gift. So would you give me a gift to leave the earth? [11/17/91]

Her "gift" is the art which God directs her to produce. According to Harvey, "God creates the pieces through nature.... And He give me the vision to see...and I add to, to bring out what nature has already done in the wood. And He is the artist." [11/17/91] Hers is an augmentative process, enhancing and revealing her eidetic forms without challenging God's role as ultimate creator. Harvey believes that her art has the potential to change people's attitudes, and to reach into people's hearts and convey the message of God. Her "gift" has enabled her to rise above poverty and racial discrimination in order to spread God's word and prophecies for the future of mankind. Aspects of her art fit within black American folk traditions; other aspects can be understood in the terms of Afro-Baptist traditions which include elements of both white Christianity and black spirituality.

Broadly speaking, Harvey's art can be understood in the context of African-American culture, a creolized culture which is a separate but nonetheless integral part of American culture. Judith McWille has cogently analyzed the retention of African aesthetic and spiritual elements in the work of African-American artists:

Today the assimilation of African aesthetic and spiritual resources in the South is a cross-cultural phenomenon that continues to mold the consciousness of African-Americans and Euro-Americans, alike.... Creolization develops spontaneously, on a communal level, across several generations, in cultures characterized by a plurality of traditions, as in the Americas...the creolizing process retains and compounds the meaning of its sources since there is first-hand experience of them.⁴

Harvey's over-lifesized, double-sided sculpture of *Adam and Eve* (Figure 2) embodies the mixture of African and Euro-American traditions characteristic of African-American spirituality and culture.

Adam and Eve presents a rather unorthodox reinterpretation of the first man and woman, in which the bright scarlet flash of the forbidden fruit figures prominently as female genitalia against the dark ebony stained wood of the figure's trunk, and Adam's penis assumes the form of the slippery tongued serpent which winds upward to whisper its deception into Eve's ear (Figure 3). Despite the traditional account of Adam and Eve found in Genesis, with which Harvey is thoroughly familiar, the burden of guilt for the Fall of Mankind rests with Adam as much

as (if not more than) with Eve. Harvey has further twisted, or "troped" the traditional story of Adam and Eve by representing them as black Africans, as she explains:

The first man He made was an African man...Well then, who was the first man in the earth? Who was the man in the garden?...Then we [the black race] shouldn't continue to look down! We should dance every day, all day before our God! He loves us so very much, and we have let the world and mankind poison us against our heritage. [11/9/91]

Aware that the earliest known archaeological remains of a human were found in Africa, Harvey asserts that Adam and Eve were Africans. God, by extension, is black, because according to scripture He made Adam in his own image.

Harvey's interpretive freedom with the biblical text can be compared to the "improvisational dynamics" of black music and preaching which has been identified by Thee Smith of Emory University. According to Smith, black preachers traditionally have interpreted Biblical scripture with greater freedom and creativity than white Christian fundamentalists. This tendency towards improvisation can also be identified in African-American musical performances.⁵ Smith states:

Crucial for Black spirituality in its aesthetic manifestations is this 'will to transformation.' Its intentional character consists in an extreme reluctance to passively transmit previously received instruments, artifacts, cultural practices or cognitive materials.⁶

The "transformation" Smith refers to involves a rhetorical strategy known as "signifying," which Claudia Mitchell-Kernan has identified as a mode of speech employed in many black communities: "Signifying...refers to a way of encoding messages or meanings which involves, in most cases, an element of indirection."⁷ This practice, derived from the Signifying Monkey tales of black folklore (which have their origin in West African tradition), involves the reversal, or troping of conventional meanings, and the implication of meanings which are never made explicit.⁸ Smith asserts that "in black social figuration we find a use of biblical texts that serves to respond to, reverse, and 'trope' the conventional 'texts' and structures of racial domination operating in American culture."⁹

Viewing Harvey's reinterpretation of the Biblical text in these terms allows her work to be placed not only in the context of the Afro-Baptist church, but more generally within the cultural context of African-American spirituality and folklore traditions. By making the first man and woman—and by implication, God's self—black, Harvey is establishing the black 'race' as God's chosen people. This affords a certain status to the black people which is unobtainable by the dominant class of whites, and symbolically inverts the power structure of American society. Like the animal trickster tales which were first told by black slaves, the weaker character (or group) achieves a more desirable position with regards to its adversary. This symbolic inversion of power has been identified as a central feature of black consciousness and culture since the early days of slavery in the Americas.¹⁰ Harvey's portrayal of the Serpent as Adam's

penis shifts the blame for the Fall of Man to the first man himself, revealing another manifestation of visual critical signification.¹¹

For *Adam and Eve*, Harvey arranged the natural materials revealed by God with a certain amount of intentionality. One of Harvey's largest and more intricate pieces, *The Cross-Bearers* of 1988 (Figures 4-6), reveals conscious manipulation of forms and materials to a greater extent than in her previous work. The base is formed by the bulky stump of a tree cloaked in a naturally woven mantle of thick, dried vines. Several large pieces of trunks and branches have been assembled on top of the vine-covered base, over which fantastic creatures, composed of painted and ornamented sections of branches and bark, tumble and intertwine in the continuous flux of nature's forces. The summit unfolds into the form of a phoenix which spreads its white-tipped wings as if preparing to soar heavenward.

According to the artist, the vines covering the base represent chains in which unbelievers are bound without hope. The central, rounded opening in the upper trunk section (Figure 6), which has been painted blood red and adorned with a gold cross composed of costume jewelry, represents the heart. Harvey explains that the nail in the center of the cross

represents the pain of the believer...because of the unbeliever...And the bird in the top represents the freedom of being a believer, because if you are a believer, you will be lifted up, because you have hope that there will be a better day. And if you don't have hope, you are doomed. [11/9/91]

Unlike previous work, in which Harvey used paint and additions of glitter, fabric, beads, shells, and other materials to enhance the forms which God was said to reveal to her, for *The Cross-Bearers* Harvey has deliberately sought out specific configurations of wood and vines to best convey her vision of God's word. The disbelievers, who "just live for today and ...don't have any hope for tomorrow," are ruining the world created by God. The non-specific figures which seem to emerge from the flux of natural forms on the upper section of the sculpture are, in Harvey's words, "the cross-bearers, meaning that they do believe the story of Jesus." [11/9/92]. The believers are shedding tears, because they realize the truth of Harvey's prophesy: if people don't believe, then there will be no hope for a better day ("and if you don't have hope, you are already doomed!").

Although *The Cross-Bearers* displays a conscious manipulation of forms and a degree of intentionality which may at first seem contradictory to her claim that God is the true artist, recent works such as this are consistent with Harvey's self-proclaimed role as a "prophet" similar to the prophets in the Old Testament. Through the making of her art, Harvey becomes the conveyor of God's message to mankind and the facilitator of God's work, as suggested in the following episode which she recounted concerning a clay model of a large wooden sculpture titled *Tribal Spirits*, 1988 (Figure 7):

...and this young woman saw it, and she was just drawn to it...and she said to me 'you know, my first baby died, and I've had five miscarriages.'...but she kept talking

about how she was drawn into this little clay *Tribal Spirits*, and she carried it home....And she's got a beautiful little girl now, strong and healthy....She said that, you know, like the piece just kind of give her a peace of mind, and she could just pick up the pieces of her life and go on again. She just stopped worrying about it. And then she conceived and gave birth to this little girl. [11/9/91]

This description suggests that the clay sculpture which Mrs. Harvey created possessed a miraculous, even magical power which was able to both physically and spiritually heal the young woman. Such healing properties recall the black folk tradition of conjuration, in which natural and physical objects become conveyors of magical effects, although in the case of conjuring the object is usually created with specific healing properties in mind.¹² Albert J. Raboteau has noted that "Christian tradition itself has always been attuned to special gifts (charisms) of the Spirit as they are manifested in prophesy, healing, and miracles."¹³ The early black American Baptist church accepted and emphasized folk prophesy and healing as spirit gifts. In the episode involving her clay model of *Tribal Spirits*, Mrs. Harvey's attribution of magical healing properties to her sculpture is consistent with this Baptist church tradition, and emphasizes her role as facilitator of God's work through the making of her sculpture. In this context, her intentional manipulation of forms and materials in *The Cross-Bearers* and in other recent work does not contradict her earlier assertion that God is the artist who directs her to reveal his message through the natural forms of his creation. It also reveals a degree of personal empowerment which Harvey has attained through the making of her art.

Harvey's sculpture has been associated with root-work, or with West-African derived *minkisi* charms, defined by Robert Farris Thompson as "strategic object[s] in black Atlantic art, said to effect healing and other phenomena."¹⁴ Although such labeling of Harvey's work may be over-emphasized in such a way as to obscure its more fundamental context within Afro-Christian tradition, the identification of "Africanisms" in her sculpture can contribute to a more complete understanding of her art. An examination of Harvey's conception of the significance of trees, the source of her principal material, will illustrate the value of identifying both African continuities and African-American traditions in Harvey's sculpture.

Harvey cites the book of Psalms in the Bible for the origin of her view that "trees is soul people... I have watched the trees when they pray and I've watched them shout and sometimes they give thanks slowly and quietly...."¹⁵ Although not found in Psalms, a passage from Isaiah 55:12 applies to Harvey's use of trees in her work: "The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, and all the trees of the field will clap *their* hands." The sacred tree has also been a central image in Christian tradition from its earliest days. According to Peter McKenzie, "[t]he cult of the tree influenced Christianity at many points and even furnished it with its central and characteristic symbol of the wooden cross."¹⁶ In addition to the "Tree of Knowledge" from the Book of Genesis and the trees of "Life" and "Truth" found throughout the Old Testament, McKenzie notes references to the spirits of trees in the Hebrew Scriptures. The tree of the cross on which Christ was crucified became a significant symbol in Christian sacred history in the same way that the sacred fig-tree under which the Buddha received enlightenment played a significant role in the subsequent spread of Buddhism.¹⁷

In Yoruba tradition, Thompson has noted that some trees are thought to be the incarnation of *ashé*, defined as "spiritual command, the power-to-make-things-happen, God's own enabling light rendered accessible to men and women."¹⁸ Certainly the trees which Harvey has used in her sculpture possess a spiritual power similar to *ashé*. Through her sculpture, Harvey has been able to communicate the message which she receives from God, in spite of and because of significant obstacles including her marginalized status in American society due to race, gender and social class. Although Harvey's art is not Yoruban, it possesses *ashé*; although her wood sculptures do not move, they convey the hand-clapping shouts of joy of the trees referred to above in the quotation from Isaiah in the Bible. To completely deny the Africanisms in Harvey's work would be the same as denying the history of her African-American heritage. To ignore the traditions of black Christian spirituality would obscure the fundamental context in which Harvey's work must be understood: the creolized culture of Afro-America. Only in this way can we truly open our ears, to hear her "matters of the spirit."

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¹ Robert Farris Thompson "The Circle and the Branch: Renascent Kongo-American Art" *Another Face of the Diamond: Pathways Through the Black Atlantic South* (New York: INTAR Latin American Gallery, 1988) 27.

² Unless otherwise indicated, all direct quotations are taken from tape-recorded interviews with the artist at her studio on 11/9/91, over the telephone on 11/17/91, or from notes written during a visit to her studio 5/5/92.

³ Shari Cavin Morris, "Bessie Harvey: The Spirit in the Wood," *The Clarion* 12 (Spring/Summer, 1987): 44.

⁴ Judith McWillie, *Another Face of the Diamond: Pathways Through the*

Black Atlantic South (New York: INTAR Latin American Gallery, 1988) 5-8.

⁵ Thee Smith, "The Spirituality of Afro-American Traditions," *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern*, edited by Louis Dupré and Don E. Saliers in collaboration with John Meyendorff (New York: Crossroad, 1989) 390. See also Henry Mitchell, *Black Preaching* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979) 113, 198.

⁶ Smith 391.

⁷ Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, "Signifying," *Mother Wit: From the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of African-American Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (New York: Garland, 1981) 311.

- ⁸ Mitchell-Kernan 319. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has termed this practice "critical signification," and traced it to the Yoruba trickster God, Esu-Elegbara, emphasizing its Pan-African origins. See *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the Racial Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 48-49.
- ⁹ Mitchell-Kernan 394.
- ¹⁰ See, for example, Lawrence W. Levine's discussion of "The Meaning of Slave Tales" in *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) 81-135, especially pp. 83-121. See also Ana Maria Alonso "Men in 'Rags' and the Devil on the Throne: A Study of Protest and Inversion in the Carnival of Post-Emancipation Trinidad" in *Plantation Society in the Americas: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Tropical and Subtropical History and Culture* 3 (1990): 73-120, for the use of similar inversion strategies in the Trinidad Carnival.
- ¹¹ The conflation of the forbidden fruit with Eve's genitalia represents the artist's admonition against oral sex (another example of "signifying"), as she explained: "to me, the Spirit says, that oral sex was a sin....God had already established male and female to go forth and 'plenish the earth. Think about it — if every male and female of the earth had had oral sex, and not such as God planned for them to have sex, there wouldn't be no babies!" (11/9/91)
- ¹² See Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1983), especially pages 117-132.
- ¹³ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, paperback edition, 1980) 287.
- ¹⁴ Thompson quotes a Mu-Kongo man from the turn of the century who explained that "nkisi" (singular of *minkisi*) is "the name of the thing we use to help a person when that person is sick and from which we obtain health; the name refers to leaves and medicines combined together." See *Flash of the Spirit*, 117-32.
- ¹⁵ Quoted by Morris, 47.
- ¹⁶ Peter McKenzie, *The Christians: Their Practices and Beliefs* (An adaptation of Friedrich Heiler's *Phenomenology of Religion*) (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988) 24.
- ¹⁷ McKenzie 25.
- ¹⁸ Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*, 5-6.



Figure 1. Bessie Harvey in her studio, August 5, 1992, Alcoa, Tennessee.



Figure 2. [upper left] Bessie Harvey, *Adam and Eve*, 1991, wood and mixed media, height c. 6', Private Collection.



Figure 3. [upper right] Bessie Harvey, *Adam and Eve* (detail of Adam), 1991, wood and mixed media, height c. 6', Private Collection.

Figure 4. [lower right] Bessie Harvey, *The Cross-Bearers*, 1988, mixed media, 74" x 63" x 28", Blue Spiral Gallery, Asheville, North Carolina.





Figure 5. Bessie Harvey, detail of *The Cross-Bearers*.



Figure 6. Bessie Harvey, detail of *The Cross-Bearers*.



Figure 7. Bessie Harvey, *Tribal Spirits*, 1988, mixed media, 45" x 26" x 20", Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas.

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