

FAITHFUL ATTRACTION

ATRACCIÓN FIEL

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ABSTRACT

Beauty's power was a constant theme in medieval discourse. Whereas God had created the cosmos and its adornments, sensual attraction potentially led to self-gratification that distracted from spiritual redemption. As Hugh of Saint-Victor put it, "attracted by the desire for temporal goods [the wanderers in this world] are unable to find the love for those things that are eternal" The Virgin Mary's beauty was an exception. So appealing that it had attracted God himself, it served as an aesthetic semaphore on the path of those seeking to the Paradise sacrificed when Eve had succumbed to temptation and sinned. Extolled in a twelfth- and thirteenth-century devotional poetry through chains of metaphors of mundane beauty – sunrise, white ivory, stars, flowers, etc. – the Virgin's *suavitas singularis* was conveyed in art through rich hues, intricate ornaments, and precious materials, understood to reflect an inner beauty painted by "God, the celestial artist." Identified with *ecclesia*, it provided a glimpse of the promised glory and, at the same time, a shield against God's own blinding splendor. As the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* put it: "Because of our sinful nature, we would never have seen the face of God, who is our light and day, without you (Mary), who is our dawn."

KEYWORDS: *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, San Marco in Venice, Sta. Maria Assunta in Torcello, Sta. Maria in Trastevere in Rome, Grünewald, Juan Gil de Zamora, acheiropoietia, desire, art and nature, Albertus Magnus, Hildebert of Lavardin .

RESUMEN

El poder de la belleza fue un tema constante en el discurso medieval. En contraposición a Dios, que había creado el cosmos y sus adornos, literalmente cosméticos, la atracción sensual llevó potencialmente a la gratificación personal, que distrajo de la redención espiritual. Como decía Hugo de Saint-Victor, "atraídos por el deseo de los bienes temporales [los vagabundos de este mundo] no pueden encontrar el amor por las cosas eternas". No obstante, la belleza

de la Virgen María constituyó una excepción. Tan atractiva era que había atraído a Dios mismo. Sirvió como un semáforo estético en el camino de aquellos que buscaban el Paraíso sacrificado, toda vez que Eva había sucumbido a la tentación y había pecado. Elogiada en una poesía devocional de los siglos XII y XIII a través de cadenas de metáforas de belleza mundana (sol, marfil blanco, estrellas, flores, etc.), la *suavitas singularis* de la Virgen fue transmitida en el arte a través de ricos matices, intrincados ornamentos y materiales preciosos, entendidos como reflejo de una belleza interior pintada por “Dios, el artista celestial”. Identificado con la *Ecclesia*, permitía vislumbrar la gloria prometida y, al mismo tiempo, era un escudo contra el propio esplendor cegador de Dios. Como dicen las *Cantigas de Santa María*: “Debido a nuestra naturaleza pecaminosa, nunca hubiéramos visto el rostro de Dios, que es nuestra luz y día, sin ti (María), que eres nuestra aurora”.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Cantigas de Santa María*, San Marcos de Venecia, Sta. Maria Assunta in Torcello, Sta. Maria in Trastevere de Roma, Grünewald, Juan Gil de Zamora, *acheiropoiet*a, deseo, arte y naturaleza, Alberto Magno, Hildeberto de Lavardin.

Beauty’s power was a constant theme in medieval written discourses and art production.¹ God had, after all, created the cosmos with its stars, plants, animals, and the Garden of Eden with trees “pleasant to sight and good for food” (*pulchrum visu et ad vescendum suave*).² As Jeffrey Hamburger has noted, human crafts emulated this divine making: “the cosmos, not just the *corpus Christi* [has the capacity] to direct the observer back to the Creator”.³ But beauty risked feeding deluding self-gratification, diverting attention from spiritual aspirations and, inevitably, leading to sin. Hugh of Saint-Victor, for example, maintained that while the attractiveness of the sun, moon, stars, blue sky, gems and other things of nature might direct the mind heavenward, the passion sensual beauty engendered impeded the seeking of higher things:

You would make a homeland of exile, if amidst this transitory existence you were to want to have eternal love. Now you are wandering in exile because, while you are attracted by the desire for

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¹ D. HASSIG, “Beauty in the Beasts. A Study in Medieval Aesthetics”, *RES*, 19/20 (1990/1991), pp. 137-161; M. CARUTHERS, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages*, Oxford, 2013; P. BINKSI, “The Rhetorical Occasions of Gothic Sculpture”, *Collegium medieval*, 30 (2018), pp. 7-32.

² Gen. 2.8. R. JAVELET, *Image et ressemblance au douzième siècle. De saint Anselme à Alain de Lille*, Paris, 1967; C. RUDOLPH, “In the Beginning: Theories and Images of Creation in Northern Europe in the Twelfth Century”, *Art History*, 22 (1999), pp. 3-55; E. ØSTREM, “*Deus artifex* and *Homo creator*: Art between the Human and the Divine”, in S. R. HAVSTEEN et al. (eds.), *Creations. Medieval Rituals, the Arts and the Concept of Creation*, Turnhout, 2007, pp. 15-48.

³ J. F. HAMBURGER, “The Medieval Work of Art: Wherein the ‘Work’? Wherein the ‘Art’?”, in *The Mind’s Eye. Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, J. F. HAMBURGER and A.-M. BOUCHE (eds.), Princeton, 2006, pp. 374-412.

temporal goods, you cannot find the love for those things that are eternal. Indeed, the important beginning of your salvation can be that you have learned to change your love for the better, since you can be separated from all love of finite things, if a greater beauty be shown you that you would more gladly embrace.⁴

A long quotation from Honorius Augustodunensis' *Speculum ecclesiae* opposite the scene of vain puppetry in Herrard of Hohenburg's *Hortus Deliciarum* makes a similar point (Strasbourg, Bibliothèque du Grand Séminaire, Ms. 37, fol. 215r).⁵ Just as Perseus deployed a mirror to protect himself from the Medusa's beauty, the faithful need a shield against the desirous things that threaten to distract from eternal reward:

This woman, Lust, whose beauty transforms the hearts of men into stones because the heart is hardened through the delight in libidinous things. Perseus was protected by the reflective shield, because looking in the mirror of virtue, the strong man averts his gaze of the face from his heart.⁶

Drawing on William Peraldus and Thomas Aquinas in his popular preachers' manual of c. 1280, *The Moral Treatise on the Eye*, the Parisian Franciscan Peter of Limoges incorporated animal lore to exemplify beauty's danger: "Just as a bear is blinded by a glowing basin-shaped lamp, so is the greedy person by the love of worldly things . . . And while he delights in its shininess and beauty, he is blinded spiritually in the manner of a bear."⁷ For Peter of Limoges's confrere, Bonaventure, objects wrought by human hands might imitate nature's beauty but could never match it.⁸ Indeed, they threatened the Christian spirit seeking everlasting redemption.

Images "not made by human hand" provided an exception and model. Of various sorts and in diverse materials, miraculously-created *acheropoieta* embodied spirit and matter. Most implicated human agency, however, among them the Mandylion impressed directly from

⁴ *De exsilio patriam faceres, si in ista vita transitoria aeternum amorem habere velles. Nunc vero in exsilio erras, quia dum traheris per concupiscentiam temporalium, amorem non invenis aeternorum. Sed magnum salutis principium tibi esse potest, quod amorem tuum didicisti mutare in melius, quia sic ab omni temporalium amore avelli poteris, si major tibi pulchritudo ostensa fuerit, quam gratus amplectaris.*

Hugh of St Victor, *Soliloquium de arrha animae*, ed. K. MÜLLER, *Kleine Texte für Vorlesungen und Übungen*, Bonn, 1913, p. 4; trans. K. HERBERT, *Soliloquy on the Earnest Money of the Soul*, Milwaukee, 1956, pp. 14-15; H. L. KESSLER, "Object as Subject in Medieval Art", *The Haskins Society Journal*, 23 (2011), pp. 201-224.

⁵ Herrard of Hohenburg, *Hortus Deliciarum*, R. B. GREEN et al. (eds.), London, 1979, vol. 2, pp. 350-51; H. L. KESSLER, "From Vanitas to Veritas: The Profane as a Fifth Mode of Romanesque Art", *Codex Aquilarensis*, 33 (2018), pp. 27-54.

⁶ *Hec femina est luxuria, que se formosam fingit per hominum pectora, sed se inspicientes in lapidem commutat, quia corda libidosorum per delectationem indurat. Ab hac se Perseus cristallino clipeo protegit, quia vir fortis speculum virtutum intendens ab hujus intuitu cordis avertit; Speculum ecclesiae, PL 172, col. 1056.*

⁷ *Sicut enim ursus excecatur per ardentem sic cupidus per terrenorum amorem ... Et dum in eius fulgo re et pulchritudine delectat instar ursi spiritualiter execat; Liber de oculo morali*, chap. 8.5, Augsburg, 1475-1477. PETER OF LIMOGES, *The Moral Treatise on the Eye*, R. G. NEWHAUSER (trans.), Toronto, 2012, p. 92.

⁸ *Et quia opus summi Artificis est excellentes omni opere humane artis, ideo addit: ... sed tamen operibus et industriae naturae, quae est opus Dei, aequari non poterat; Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae XII, 39; BONAVENTURA DOCTOR SERAPHICUS, Opera Omnia, Quaracchi, 1882-1902, vol. 7, p. 321; HASSIG, "Beauty", p. 144.*

Christ's face on a cloth Ananias held out was venerated in Byzantium,⁹ the *Acheropita* in the Lateran "which Luke the Evangelist sketched out but the power of the Lord completed through angelic obedience",¹⁰ and its Latin counterpart, the *Veronica*, imprinted on a veil offered by the eponymous saint.¹¹ Even those images attributed to a natural origin, were, to some extent, made, for instance, the marble revetment in Hagia Sophia in Constantinople that Paul the Silentiary famously described as "glittering with wondrous designs ... cut and joined like painted patterns, and in stones formed into squares or eight-sided figures the veins meet to form devices; and the stones show also the beauty of living creatures . . ."¹² Albertus Magnus attributed such images to both natural formation and human crafting when he elaborated the idea seven centuries later in a discussion of San Marco (Fig. 1):



Fig. 1. South nave wall,
Venice, San Marco
(author)

⁹ H. BELTING, *Likeness and Presence. A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Eng. trans. E. JEPHCOTT of *Bild und Kult—Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*, Munich, 1990), Chicago, 1994, pp. 47-77 et passim; H. L. KESSLER, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art*, Philadelphia, 2000).

¹⁰ *Et super hoc altare est quedam ymago salvatoris mirabiliter depicta in quadam tabula quam lucas evangelista designavit, sed virtus domini angelico perfecit obsequio*; E. A. OFTESTAD, *The Lateran Church in Rome and the Ark of the Covenant. Housing the Holy Relics of Jerusalem*, Woodbridge, 2019, p. 219.

¹¹ Of the vast literature, see most recently *The European Fortune of the Roman Veronica in the Middle Ages*, A. MURPHY et al. (eds.), Brno, 2017.

¹² M. L. FOBELLI, *Un tempio per Giustiniano. Santa Sofia di Costantinopoli e la Descrizione di Paolo Silenziario*, Rome, 2005, pp. 187-191 et passim; CARRUTHERS, *Experience of Beauty*, pp. 187-193.

When I was at Venice, as a young man, marble was being cut with saws to decorate the walls of a church. And it happened that when one [piece of] marble had been cut in two and the cut slabs were placed side by side, there appeared a most beautiful picture of a king's head with a crown and a long beard. The picture did not seem to have any fault at all except one — the middle of the forehead seemed too high, extending up towards the top of the head. And all of us who were there understood that this picture had been made in the stone by nature. And when I was asked the reason for the disproportion of the forehead, I said that the stone had been hardened from a vapour, and in the middle the vapour had risen up too far because the heat was greater there. This picture was of the same colour as the stone. There is something of the same sort in clouds when they are not disturbed by winds, and all sorts of figures appear in them and continually melt away because of the heat that raises them. But if these vapours were subjected to the influence of a place and a [mineralizing] power, they would fashion many figures in stones. This, therefore, is clear [evidence] that the shape of a simple picture is sometimes [made] by nature.¹³

In his magisterial study of the San Marco mosaics, Otto Demus introduced a face in San Marco's northeast pier — created simply by disturbing the bed of gold tesserae — that conforms to Albertus Magnus' description of an elongated head ending in a point (Fig. 2);¹⁴ and he also called attention to faces emerging from two of the marble spandrels within the portrait of the basilica in the south transept's depiction of the *Apparitio*. Finbarr Barry Flood and Philippe Cordez have recently returned to Albertus' commentary in discussions of the highly ornamental and quasi-figural revetment in San Marco, each of them introducing the 1470 block book illustration in Franz von Retza's version of Albertus' idea that matter could generate *achero-poietia* showing two men juxtaposing book-matched marble veneers.¹⁵

An elision of the difference between natural materials and beautiful images is inherent in the juxtaposition of revetments and figural mosaics throughout the basilica, for example, in the Christ Immanuel on the nave's north wall (Fig. 3), composed during Albertus' lifetime of stones, gold and silver tesserae, and abundant mother-of-pearl,¹⁶ a technique that Demus characterized as “the most precious not only in San Marco but anywhere in medieval mosaic.”¹⁷ Framed by marble panels and portraits of prophets, the image of God-Made-Man realizes the typological trope that, just as Christ had fulfilled the words of Hebrew scripture, he entered

¹³ . . . et cum a me quaereretur causa inordinationis frontis, dixi lapidem illum ex vapore fuisse coagulatum, et in medio per calorem fortiolem vaporem inordinate ascendisse ultra modum. fuit autem pictura ejusdem coloris cum lapide. Hujusmodi autem simile est in nubibus, in quibus omnes apparent figurae quando ventis non agitantur, et continue propter calidum elevans eas etiam dissipantur: quae si apprehenderentur loco et virtute, lapidibus multas effigiant figuras. Propter hoc patet ergo figuram picturae simplicis aliquando esse a natura. *De mineralibus*, l. II, tract. 3, c. 1, ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Opera omnia*, Auguste BORGNET (ed.), Paris, 1890–1899; vol. 5, pp. 48–49; trans. D. WYCKOFF, *The Book of Minerals*, Oxford, 1967, p. 128.

¹⁴ Unfortunately destroyed during a nineteenth-century restoration; O. DEMUS, *The Mosaics of San Marco in Venice*, Chicago, 1984 vol. 2, pp. 27–32.

¹⁵ F. B. FLOOD “‘God’s Wonder’: Marble as Medium and the Natural Image in Mosques and Modernism”, *West 86th Street*, 23 (2017), pp. 168–219; P. CORDEZ, “Albertus Magnus und die Steine von Venedig. Ein Beitrag zur ‘Bildwissenschaft’ des 13. Jahrhunderts”, in I. AUGART, M. SASS, and I. WENDERHOLM (eds.) *Steinformen. Materialität. Qualität. Imitation*, Berlin/Boston, 2019, pp. 191–205. Both scholars reproduce Munich, Bay. Staatsbibliothek, Xylog. 34.

¹⁶ A substance that figures the incarnation; B. FRICKE, “Matter and Meaning of Mother-of-Pearl: The Origins of Allegory in the Spheres of Things,” *Gesta*, 51–1 (2012), pp. 35–53.

¹⁷ DEMUS, *Mosaics of San Marco*, vol. 2, pp. 47–48.



Fig. 2. Head, northwest pier, Venice, San Marco (after Demus)



Fig. 3. Christ Immanuel, north nave wall, Venice, San Marco (Art Resource)

spirit into physical matter. The text Hosea proffers nearby makes a point about nature and incarnation: “his appearance is as sure as the dawn, he will come to us like the showers, like the spring rains that water the earth” (Hos. 6.3).

Art appropriates the power and beauty of creation. Nevertheless, even such close identification with the church structure was insufficient to neutralize its downward pull; the two faces taking form in the spandrel veneers of the *Apparition*, for instance, can be read as demons.

RESTORATIVE BEAUTY

Mary mediated. Like the maiden herself chosen to give birth to Christ, her beauty provided an aesthetic semaphore on the complicated tracks “wanderers in exile” in this world follow. Occupying an intermediary position between Judaism with its insistent aniconism and belief in the Incarnate Deity,¹⁸ and between nature and image, such icons as the *Madonna dello schioppo* in San Marco effected a transition from the revetment to the presence of Mary with her divine Child.¹⁹ Likewise, the Byzantine relief icon known as the *Aniketos*, inscribed

¹⁸ D. NIRENBERG, *Aesthetic Theology and Its Enemies. Judaism in Christian Painting, Poetry, and Politics*, Waltham, MA, 2015, pp. 15-78.

¹⁹ O. DEMUS, *The Church of San Marco in Venice. History, Architecture, Sculpture*, Washington, DC, 1960, pp. 188-89; B. PENTCHEVA, *The Sensual Icon. Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium*, University Park, PA, 2010, pp. 121-122 et passim.

with the claim that it was made from the rock from which Moses produced water by his prayers,²⁰ provided a kind of socle for the mosaic of the Virgin and Child in the tympanum above the Porta da Mar into the atrium.²¹ Still more dramatic, the Virgin across from the Christ Immanuel exemplifies Albertus's notion of natural images evolving into beautiful portraits (Fig. 4). In Demus's opinion second in artistic elaborateness,²² Mary wears a green, gold-trimmed maphorion made of pieces of stone and glass, adorned with fringes, pearls and gold stars, the symmetrical folds seeming to emerge from the revetment's butterfly patterning. And while she is the subject of Isaiah's prophecy "A Virgin shall conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel" (Is. 7.14), she does not hold the Child. Instead, Mary looks across the nave at her progeny and reflects his light. The quotation Solomon holds out echoes Hosea's allusion to sunrise: "Who is this that appears like the dawn [fair as the moon, bright as the sun, majestic as the stars in procession]?" (Song of Songs, 6.10). It is the perfect scriptural proof of Mary's relationship to nature's beauty and, in turn, of Marian images' potential to serve as a relay between human viewers and the ineffable Deity.

The San Marco mosaic is the culmination of a centuries-long intensification of attention to Mary's pulchritude and her steady elevation in writings and art to a position virtually equal to that of her Son.²³ According to an eleventh-century Homiliary in the Vatican (BAV, Fondo S.



Fig. 4. Mary, south nave wall, Venice, San Marco
(Art Resource)

²⁰ DEMUS, *The Church of San Marco*, pp. 187-188; H. MAGUIRE, "The Aniketos Icon and the Display of Relics in the Decoration of San Marco," in *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice*, H. MAGUIRE and R. S. NELSON (eds.), Washington, DC, 2010, pp. 91-111; T. DALE, "Epiphany at San Marco: the Sculptural Program" in E. VIO (ed.) *San Marco. La basilica di Venezia. Arte, storia, conservazione*, Padua, 2019, pp. 39-55.

²¹ K. KRAUSE, "Venedigs Sitz im Paradies. Zur Schöpfungskuppel in der Vorhalle von San Marco," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorische Institutes in Florenz*, 48 (2004), pp. 9-54; M. BACCI, "A Power of Relative Importance: San Marco and the Holy Icons," *Convivium*, 2 (2015), pp. 126-147.

²² DEMUS, *Mosaics of San Marco*, vol. 2, pp. 50-56.

²³ See Marie. *Le culte de la vierge dans la société médiévale*, D. IOGNA-PRAT, É. PALAZZO, AND D. RUSSO (eds.), Paris, 1998; M. BACCI, *Il pennello dell'Evangelista. Storia delle immagini sacre attribuite a san Luca*, Pisa, 1998; B. PENTCHEVA, *Icons and Power. The Mother of God in Byzantium*, University Park, PA, 2006.

Maria 122), for example, the apostles had commissioned the (early seventh-century) Madonna di San Sisto in Rome precisely to preserve the Virgin's beauty, likening it to Christ's:

While the blessed Virgin was living with the apostles, they decided among themselves, because of her beauty and that of the one to whom she had given birth to – to paint her most admirable visage. It was only sketched by the hand of Luke the Evangelist, and after her portrait was found, shining with marvelous beauty not through the work of human hands, but God's command.²⁴

Preserved in many copies, including one in Santa Maria in Via Lata in Rome (Fig. 5),²⁵ the *Madonna Avvocata* came to be paired with the Lucan *Acheropita* in the Lateran. By the end of the fourteenth century a version referred to as the *molt devota Verónica de madonna Santa Maria* (now in the cathedral of Valencia) was venerated in Barcelona.²⁶ Curiously, it preserves only Luke's sketch, but as Marc Sureda i Jubany has shown, the Marian Veronica generated painted copies, among them, an early fifteenth-century panel in Vic that captures the process, described in the eleventh-century text, of the divine beauty animating the Evangelist's under-drawing (Museu Episcopal de Vic; Fig. 6). Framed by a monochrome *maphorion*, Mary's pale visage is made to come to life through the pink on her right cheek, aurora's flush, and her vivid lips. The inspiring of matter is recapitulated in the trompe l'oeil porphyry slab framed by imitation marble and inscribed "MATER DEI:". A perfect dissimulation, the painting of the beautiful mother of God realizes in its very making the spirit entering the material world through the incarnation.²⁷

The emphasis on the Virgin's beauty had widespread precedents. Theodulf of Orleans referred specifically "to images of two beautiful women" when he famously compared pictures of Mary and Venus, the one to be "elevated, honored, and kissed" the other "maligned, insulted, and execrated".²⁸ A century later, the elaborate gemmed ensemble on the altar of

²⁴ *Cum autem beata Maria moraretur cum apostolis propter amorem eius, quam peperit, et suam pulchritudinem hoc inter se statuerunt, ut depingeretur ammirabilis vultus eius, et per manus Lucae evangelistae designatus tantummodo dicitur et postmodum inventa est figura ammirabili decore praefulgens non operibus manuum carnalium sed domini iussu*; G. WOLF, *Salus populi Romani. Die Geschichte römischer Kultbilder im Mittelalter*, Weinheim, 1990, pp. 162-163 and 318; R. MANIURA, *Pilgrimage to Images in the Fifteenth Century: The Origins of the Cult of Our Lady of Częstochowa*, Woodbridge, 2004, pp. 65-66; F. CAMILLETTI, "Oblique Gazes: The *Je Ne Sais Quoi* and the Uncanny as Forms of Unpredictability in Post-Enlightenment Aesthetics," in *Tension/Spannung*, C. F. E. HOLZHEY (ed.), Vienna, 2010, pp. 71-91; OFTESTAD, *Lateran Church*, p. 152.

²⁵ S. ROMANO, *Riforma e tradizione 1050-1198 (La pittura medievale a Roma 312-1431. Corpus e atlante, vol. IV)*, Milan, 2006, pp. 267-269; G. LEONE, *Icone di Roma e del Lazio*, Rome, 2012, vol. 1, pp. 60-62.

²⁶ H. L. KESSLER, "Paradigms of Movement in Medieval Art: Establishing Connections and Effecting Transitions", *Codex Aquilarensis*, 29 (2013), pp. 29-48; M. SUREDA I JUBANY, "From Holy Images to Liturgical Devices. Models, Objects and Rituals around the Veroniceae of Christ and Mary in the Crown of Aragon (1300-1500)," in *European Fortune of the Roman Veronica, Convivium*, 4 (2017), pp. 194-217.

²⁷ See: G. DIDI-HUBERMAN, *L'image ouverte*, Paris, 2007; B. BAERT, *Pneuma and the Visual Medium in the Middle Ages and Early Modernity*, Leuven, 2016, pp. 98-117 et passim.

²⁸ *Offeruntur cuilibet eorum, qui imagines adorant, verbi gratia duarum feminarum pulcrarum imagines superscriptione carentes, quas ille parvipendens abjicit abjectasque quolibet in loco iacere permittit. Dicit illi quis: "Una illarum sanctae Mariae imago est, abjici non debet; altera Veneris, quae omnino abicienda est" . . . quia superscriptionem Dei genetricis habet, erigitur, honoratur, osculatur; illa quia inscriptionem Veneris, Aeneae cuiusdam profugi genitricis, habet, deiicitur, exprobratur, execratur*; A. FREEMAN and P. MEYVAERT (eds.) *Opus caroli regis contra synodum (Libri carolini)*, Hannover, 1998, pp. 528-529.



Fig. 5. *Madonna advocata* icon, Rome, Sta. Maria in Via Lata (after Romano)



Fig. 6. *Veronica de Maria*, Vic, Museo Episcopal (© Museo Episcopal de Vic, photography Joan M. Díaz)

St-Denis, known since the sixteenth century as the “*escrain de Charlemagne*,” was topped by a spoliated blue-green beryl with a bust of Julia Flavia surmounted by a sapphire inscribed with an abbreviation in Greek of Holy Mother of God Christ.²⁹ In this case, Mary Carruthers’ ingenious discussion of the pairing of *pulchrum* and *sepulchrum* is made concrete through the ascent from some sort of box through gemmed archways to the beautiful celestial image of the Queen of Heaven.³⁰ The so-called “crypt” of the Epiphanius at San Vincenzo al Volturno of 824-42 works in a similar way.³¹ Garbed in exceptionally rich attire and decked out with a crown, prominent earrings, and garments bejeweled with fictive and inserted gems, the Virgin

²⁹ *Le trésor de Saint-Denis* (cat. of an exhibition, Paris, Musée du Louvre), Paris, 1991, pp. 92-99.

³⁰ CARRUTHERS, *Experience of Beauty*, p. 184.

³¹ F. DE MAFFEI, “Le arti a San Vincenzo al Volturno. Il ciclo della cripta di Epifanio”, in F. AVAGLIANO (ed.), *San Vincenzo al Volturno: una grande abbazia altomedievale nel Molise*, Montecassino, 1985, pp. 269-352; J. MITCHELL, “The Crypt Reappraised”, in R. HODGES (ed.), *San Vincenzo al Volturno. I: The 1980-86 Excavations*, Rome, 1993, pp. 75-114; A. PERONI, “Testi e programmi iconografici: Ambrogio Autperto da San Vincenzo al Volturno a San Pietro al Monte sopra Civate”, in A. CALZONA et al. (eds), *Immagine e ideologia. Studi in onore di Arturo Carlo Quintavalle*, Milan, 2007, pp. 138-150; F. DELL’ACQUA, “Ambrogio Autperto e la Cripta di Epifanio nella storia dell’arte medievale”, in F. MARAZZI (ed.), *La cripta dell’abate Epifanio a San Vincenzo al Volturno. Cento anni di studi e ricerche*, Cerro al Volturno, 2013, pp. 27-47 and EAD., “Magnificat. L’impatto degli orientali sull’immagine di Maria Assunta al tempo dell’Iconoclasmo”, in *Le migrazioni nell’alto medioevo* (Settimane di studio della Fondazione Centro italiano di Studi sull’alto medioevo, LXVI, April 2018), Spoleto, 2019, pp. 1025-1057. Ead., “Mary as ‘Scala Caelestis’ in Eighth- and Ninth-Century Italy in *The Reception of the Virgin*,” in T. Arentzen and M. B. Cunningham (eds.), *Byzantium. Marian Narratives in Texts and Images*, Cambridge, 2019, pp. 235-257.



Fig. 7. Christ and Mary, Rome, Sta. Maria in Trastevere, apse detail (author)

in the Annunciation above the abbot's actual tomb serves, as Francesca Dell'Acqua observed, as the "limen" between heaven and earth.³² The equation of the Virgin's beauty with gems and rich clothing became entrenched; the Via Lata *Madonna Avvocata*, for instance, portrays Mary in a dark blue *maphorion* studded with crosses, gems, and appliqué, wearing earrings, a ring, a gem-set headband, and enormous brooch. Some Marian icons were the beneficiaries of votives; the gold hand covering bearing a real ring and the cuff outlined in pearls and set with three cabochons of the Madonna di San Sisto are still preserved.³²

The *Madonna Avvocata*'s elevation in the apse of Santa Maria in Trastevere of c. 1143 (Fig. 7),³³ in turn, assimilated Mary aesthetically to the Church, as Ernst Kitzinger demonstrated in classic article,³⁴ modified and expanded by William Tronzo and Dale Kinney,³⁵ who

³² LEONE, *Icone*, vol. 2, cover.

³³ ROMANO, *Riforma e tradizione*, pp. 305-311; E. THUNO, *The Apse Mosaic in Early Medieval Rome. Time, Network, and Repetition*, New York, 2015, pp. 35-37.

³⁴ E. KITZINGER, "A Virgin's Face: Antiquarianism in Twelfth-Century Art", *Art Bulletin*, 62 (1980), pp. 6-19.

³⁵ W. TRONZO, "Apse Decoration, the Liturgy, and the Perception of Art in Medieval Rome: S. Maria in Trastevere and S. Maria Maggiore", in W. TRONZO (ed.), *Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance: Functions, Forms, and Regional Traditions*, Bologna, 1989, pp. 167-193; D. KINNEY, "The Apse Mosaic of Santa Maria in Trastevere", in E. SEARS and T. K. THOMAS (eds.), *Reading Medieval Images: The Art Historian and the Object*, Ann Arbor MI, 2002, pp. 19-26.

cite Honorius Augustodunensis' *Commentary on the Song of Song*. So lavishly garbed that her body disappears beneath an armor of ornament, Mary dissolves into the mosaic and her beauty becomes literally merged with the structure, realizing the accompanying verses pictorially:

In your honor, shining Mother, this palace of godly honor glows with brightness of beauty. Where you sit, Christ will be a seat beyond time; worthy of your right hand is she enveloped by the golden robe.³⁶

METAPHORS OF TRANSCENDENCE

An illustration accompanying *Cantiga 29* in Alfonso el Sabio's *Cantigas de Santa María* distills the discourse about Mary's attractiveness and simultaneously dilates it (El Escorial, MS T.I.1, fol. 44^r; Fig. 8).³⁷ Rocío Sánchez Ameijeiras,³⁸ Felipe Pereda,³⁹ Alejandro García Avilés,⁴⁰ and Francisco Prado-Vilar⁴¹ have disclosed how the illustration draws inventively on iconophilic theory embedded also in the writings of Juan Gil de Zamora, a disciple of Bonaventure and contemporary of Peter of Limoges, who dedicated his *Officium Almiplue Virginis* to King Alfonso in 1278, that is, about the time the miniature was being painted.⁴² Like Honorius' discourse on the medusa, *Cantiga 29* refers to figures in stone and a mirror, not Perseus' shield that staved off mortal petrification but an image of Christ in his mother's arms that, to the contrary, penetrated human consciousness and softened human hearts. The illustrated story reports how an image of the Hodegetria miraculously appeared on one of the columns of the Virgin's memorial church at Gethsemane, depicted not by human hands but pictured with the brightness of a mirror and worthy of worship:

³⁶ HEC IN HONORE TUO PREFULGIDA MATER HONORIS/REGIA DIVINI RUTILAT FULGORE DECORIS./IN QUA C[H]RISTE SEDES MANET ULTRA SEcula SEDES/DIGNA TUIS DEXTRIS EST QUA[M] TEGIT AUREA VESTIS./ /CU[M] MOLES RUITURA VETUS FORET HINC ORIUNDUS/ INNOCENTIUS HANC RENOVAVIT PAPA SECUNDUS; ROMANO, *Riforma e tradizione*, p. 307; S. RICCIONI, "The Word in the Image: an Epiconographic Analysis of Mosaics of the Reform in Rome", in K. B. AAVITSLAND and Th. K. SEIM (eds.), *Inscriptions in Liturgical Spaces (Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia)*, 24 [n.s. 10] (2011), pp. 85-137. In San Marco, David expresses the same idea through Psalm 132.11: "The fruit of your womb, I will set on your throne."

³⁷ L. FERNÁNDEZ FERNÁNDEZ and J. C. RUIZ SOUZA (eds.), *Las Cantigas de Santa María: Codice Rico. Ms. T-I-1. Real biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial*, Madrid, 2011; K. KENNEDY, "Seeing is Believing: The Miniatures in the Cantigas de Santa María and Medieval Devotional Practices", in C. PAZOS ALONSO and C. WILLIAMS (eds.), *Medieval Mode: Collected Essays in Honour of Stephen Parkinson on his Retirement (Portuguese Studies)*, 31 (2015), pp. 169-182.

³⁸ R. SÁNCHEZ AMEJEIRAS, "Imaxes e teoría de imaxe nas *Cantigas de Santa María*", in E. FIDALGO (ed.), *As Cantigas de Santa María*, Vigo, 2011, pp. 247-330; and EAD., "Rimando imágenes para Santa María: sobre el género de la poesía visual en la Edad Media", in *Cantigas de Santa María*, pp. 445-473; EAD., *Los rostros de las palabras. Imágenes y teoría literaria en el Occidente medieval*, Madrid, 2014; R. P. KINKADE and J. E. KELLER, "Myth and Reality in the Miracle of *Cantiga 29*", *La Corónica*, 28.1 (1999-2000), pp. 35-69.

³⁹ F. PEREDA, *Las imágenes de la discordia. Política y poética de la imagen sagrada en la España del 400*, Madrid, 2007, pp. 166-173.

⁴⁰ A. GARCÍA AVILÉS, "Este rey tenno que enos idolos cree: Imágenes milagrosas en las Cantigas de Santa María," in *Cantigas de Santa María*, pp. 523-559.

⁴¹ F. PRADO-VILAR, "The Parchment of the Sky: Poiesis of a Gothic Universe", in *Cantigas de Santa María*, pp. 473-455.

⁴² JUAN GIL DE ZAMORA, *Officium almiplue Virginis*, in E. PÉREZ RODRÍGUEZ (ed.), *Obra Poética: Ymago, ymitago quid uigoris, quid amoris Officium almiplue Virginis Estudio, edición crítica y traducción anotada*, Madrid, 2019.



Fig. 8. *Cantiga 29*, El Escorial, MS T.I.1, fol. 44r

This is how Holy Mary made likenesses of Herself appear on the stones.

We should always keep in our minds the features of the Virgin, for the hard stones received their impressions.

As I have heard from men who went there, in holy Gethsemane likenesses of the Mother of God were found which were not paintings.

Neither were they carved, as God is my witness, but there appeared the semblances of the Gracious Lady with Her Son accurately done to their exact proportions.⁴³

The illustration in the *Cantigas* begins with a conventional image of the King singing to his courtiers about the renowned *acheropoieton* at Mary's tomb, shown in the second panel being venerated by two groups of pilgrims to Gethsemane. Mary's red lips, and here and there Christ's, subtly introduce a sense of life that reciprocates the pilgrims' kissing. Mimicking the second vignette but leaving the space between the columns blank, the third panel provides

⁴³ Esta é como Santa Maria fez parecer nas pedras omages a ssa semellança. Nas mentes senpre teer/ devemos-las sas feituradas da Virgen, pois receber/ as foron as pedras duras. Per quant' eu dizer oy/a muitos que foron y/na santa Gessemani/foron achadas figuras/da Madre de Deus, assi/que non foron de pinturas. Nas mentes senpre teer . . . Nen ar entalladas non/Foron, se Deus me perdon/E avia y fayçon/da Señor das aposturas/con sseu Fill', e per razõn/feitas ben per sas medidas.

place for the reader to pause, sing the verses transcribed on the facing folio, and emulate the homage travelers to the actual *locus sanctus* paid to the image.⁴⁴ A fourth vignette dramatizes the claim that God himself, not a human artisan, had pictured the Virgin and Child; accompanied by two angels, Christ grasps the column with one hand and brings forth the image with the other, the marble yielding slightly under the pressure of the divine finger.

Alfonso may have learned the story about images emerging from marble directly from Albertus Magnus who, just after describing such revetments in his *De mineralibus*, referred to his meeting “the son of the King of Castile” in Paris.⁴⁵ More likely, the two shared a common source. The miniature accompanying *Cantiga 29* tethers the trope to Mary, after all, and to her tomb at Gethsemane which had an independent history.⁴⁶ As Sánchez Ameijeiras and Prado-Vilar have noted, moreover, the illustration of *Cantiga 29* maps *Cantiga 342* onto the basic narrative, which already shifts the image to a Marian venue:

It happened in Constantinople, as I learned, that the good Emperor don Manuel ordered a very noble church to be built there. And, as I heard, he had blocks of marble brought there from far away and sawed in the middle to make great tablets to place around the altar of the Holy Virgin, Mother of our Lord. While they were sawing one of them, they saw her image inside, painted in colors, just as God had painted it . . . holding her Son, who took on flesh from her, in her arms. When the emperor heard of this, he mounted his horse at once, and when he saw the image, he worshipped it and had it placed in the main entrance. And there it sits today, and all hold it in great reverence. The Holy Virgin did this to show that she can transform the heart of the sinner by her grace, since she transformed the hard stone into her image.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Prado-Vilar has characterized the folio’s contemplative rather than narrative mode; PRADO-VILAR, “Parchment of the Sky”, pp. 499-506.

⁴⁵ H. SALVADOR MARTÍNEZ, *Alfonso, the Learned*, O. CISNEROS (trans.), Leiden, 2010, pp. 47-48.

⁴⁶ Already in the eighth century, Andrew of Crete reported that an acheiropoietic Mary and the Christ Child had appeared in stone “in sancta gethsemane”; and the Sancta Sanctorum reliquary box in the altar beneath the Lateran Acheropita included a fragment *de lapide sepulchri sancta marie*. In the next century, Bernard the Frank had brought home from Gethsemane “squared marble stones of such refinement” on which “one could catch sight of all the things a person might possibly wish to see as if on a mirror”. Although he did not refer explicitly to the Virgin or her tomb, the context and reference to a mirror imply Mary and the incarnation, P. E. DUTTON, *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader*, 2nd ed., Toronto, 2004, pp. 472-479 and *Id.*, “The Identification of Persons in Frankish Europe,” *Early Medieval Europe*, 26 (2018), pp. 135-173 and 166-170; J. ACKERMANN, *Das “Itinerarium Bernardi Monachi.” Edition-Übersetzung-Kommentar*, Hannover, 2010, pp. 8, 127, 135; BACCI, *Pennello*, pp. 258-259; OFTESTAD, *Lateran Church*, pp. 152 and 220. Juan Gil provided a similar account: *In sancta gessemani que est inter iherusalem et montem oliueti in medio posita, ubi monumentum beatæ Mariæ adest, ubi ipsa sepulta fuit, sunt ibi columnæ virides quatuor. Super unam de his columnis, in sinistro latere posita est imago quasi Christum dei filium in manibus portans. Quæ tantam habet claritatem sicut speculum, quæ manibus hominum non est facta, neque depicta, & ualde ibidem pro eius amore, id est Mariæ ueneratur* (*Liber Mariæ*, Tract XVI, chap. 6); KINKADE and KELLER, “Myth and Reality”; PEREDA, *Imágenes de la discordia*, p. 168; PRADO-VILAR, “Parchment of the Sky”, pp. 499-506.

⁴⁷ *Por end'en Constantinopla/aveo com'aprendi, que Don Manuhel a boo/ Emperador, madou yfaze igreja mui nobre/ e momes com'oy mandu trage mui longe/ e per meo asserrar. Con rason nas creaturas/ figura pode mostrar [Deus] de si ou de sa madre/ poise elas quis fegurar. Por fazer tavoas grades/ pora poer en redordo altar da Virgen santa/ Madre de Nostro Sennor. E u serravan uu deles/ viron dentro de coora ssa omagen pintada/ ben qual xa quis Deus pintar. . . .teendo seu Fill'en braco/ que dela carne fillou. Poi-lo Emperador esto soube, logo cavalgou, e pois que viu a omagen, tan toste a aoroue fez-la poer na porta per u avian d'entrar/ E aly ssé oge dia en que gran devoçontodos. E a Santa Virgen fez esto por tal rason, porque pode do culpado omayar-l'l'o coraçõda sa graça, poi la pedra mui dura foi omayar.*

Two centuries later, Von Retza also applied Albertus' claim to the Virgin Mary by including the exemplum labelled *Homo si in lapide vi coeli pingi valet. Cur almi spiritus ope virgo non generaret. Albertus. ii. minorarium tractatu ii. capitulo primo* among the fifty-six excerpts in his *Defensorium inviolate virginittatis Mariae*, a compendium of wonders compiled to refute any assertion that "a virgin should not give birth".⁴⁸

The lowest register of the *Cantiga 29* illustration does the same (Fig. 9). Picturing the last line of the text on the facing page (meant to be read rather than sung), it depicts God's entering human flesh in the Annunciation:

Furthermore, she made them shine and glow, by which sign we must believe that she is Mistress of all things in nature and has power over all things to bring light out of darkness. God chose to depict her features on stone to demonstrate to us that all creatures should honor his Mother, for he descended from heaven to take on human flesh in her.⁴⁹

In contrast to the monochrome sketch of the icon in the Gethsemane columns, Mary is garbed in purple robes overlaid with heavy gold ornaments trimmed in gem-set bands lined with pearls, the most ornate garments in the *Cantigas*.⁵⁰ She completes what Albertus Magnus referred to as the *forma picturae simplex*, her beauty conveyed by rich hues, intricate ornament, and precious materials.⁵¹ Mary's sensual attraction was extolled in a twelfth/thirteenth-century Spanish tract known as the *Advocaciones de la Virgen*: "the beautiful mother of God's beauty and ornament in which the Son of Man germinated".⁵² García Avilés, citing Lucas of Tuy, understood her beauty as a reflection of Mary's inner spiritual purity; and, indeed, Juan Gil maintained in the *Officium's* first lesson (which begins with the antiphon *Specia tua et puchritudine tua*) that "when [Mary] reached her adolescence she was clothed in such a beautiful appearance that she attracted God Himself and turned the divinity back to her eyes"⁵³ (Hamburger's specularity).

⁴⁸ Both Sánchez Ameijeiras and Prado-Vilar cite Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo's early fifteenth-century likening of Byzantine marbles to clouds.

⁴⁹ *Nas mentes senpre teer. Poren as rebrandecer/fez tan muit' e parecer/per que devemos creer/que nas cousas á poder/de fazer craras d' escuras. Nas mentes senpre teer. Deus x' as quise figurar/en pedra por nos mostrar/ que a ssa Madre onrrar/deven todas creaturas/pois deceu carne fillar/en ela das sas alturas. Nas mentes senpre teer.* W. METTMANN (ed.), *Cantigas de Santa María*, Madrid, 1986-1989; ALFONSO X EL SABIO, *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, the Wise*, K. KULP-HILL (trans.), Tempe (AZ), 2000, p. 40.

⁵⁰ J. M. ZIOLKOWSKI, *The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity*, Vol. 3: *The American Middle Ages*, Cambridge, 2018, pp. 159-192.

⁵¹ In the well-known passage in which he considered a one-eyed Virgin to be deformed, Lucas of Tuy contrasted the worship of Venus to that of the Virgin (*De altera vita*, 3.4); *Cantiga 162* reports that the bishop of Cuenca removed a sculpture of Mary from the altar. because it was not beautiful; "porque a non viu de bon semellar", Mettmann, vol. 2, p. 160; A. GARCÍA AVILÉS, "Imágenes 'vivientes': Idolatría y herejía en Las Cantigas de Alfonso X El Sabio", *Goya. Revista de arte*, 321 (2007), pp. 324-42 and Id., "Este rey", p. 548.

⁵² A. SINUÉS RUÍZ, "Advocaciones de la Virgen en un códice del siglo XII," *Analecta sacra tarraconensia: Revista de ciències historicoeclesiàstiques*, 21 (1948), pp. 1-34.

⁵³ *Finalmente nace María y, al llegar a sus años núbiles, se reviste de tan Hermosa apariencia que atrae al propio Dios y hace que la divinidad vuelva los ojos hacia ella*, *Obra poética*, p. 238.



Fig. 9. detail of Fig. 8

An unusual detail introduces a note of foreboding into the *Cantiga* narrative, however; the light that impregnates Mary begins as blood issuing from the left side of Christ's chest, an allusion to the Passion evoked also in *Cantiga 42* (On the Annunciation): "And when [Gabriel] said 'The Lord is with thee' then she was pregnant with him who to save his own gladly died at the hands of the Jews." Within the rays, moreover, a homunculus (of the type used to represent souls elsewhere in the manuscript) makes its way toward Mary, head-first and with its arms extended in front, an iconography noted in works produced only a generation later.⁵⁴ Christ gives birth to himself from a vulva-shaped wound issuing blood,⁵⁵ just as in the scene directly above, he generates a picture of himself in his mother's arms.

So extravagant that it had attracted even God, Mary's beauty also commanded the attention of brute beasts, depicted at the lower left in accord with the accompanying text.⁵⁶ Quoting Ovid, Peter of Limoges pointed out that, while the other animals, bent over, look at the earth, [God] gave humankind a lofty countenance, and commanded him to view the heavens and to lift his upright gaze to the stars".⁵⁷ The Virgin garbed in rich garments argues the same, cautioning that the bling that attracts these creatures (including a mottled giraffe and striped zebra that embody the aesthetic principle of superficial enticement that Carruthers discusses in this volume), like the glowing lamp that distracts Peter's bear with its "shininess and beauty", does not direct the spirit heavenward. Prado-Vilar has identified the impact of animal lore elsewhere in the *Cantigas*; and Sánchez Ameijeiras has argued that the depiction is a counterpart of the picture at the upper right showing pilgrims kneeling and kissing the sacred *acheiropoieton*. Addressing the viewer, the centralized figure is an icon, as Sánchez Ameijeiras has noted, which coaxes the viewer not to stop, as the animals do, with the Virgin's beauty but to affect a spiritual *transitus*.

Mary intermediates. In a way that recalls nothing so much as God Blessing the Animals on the sixth day as represented in the *Hortus Deliciarum* (fol. 8v),⁵⁸ or Adam Naming the

⁵⁴ The iconography seems to have been provoked by the *Bible moralisée* in Toledo (Catedral, tesoro, fol. 21^r), mentioned in Alfonso's will (J. LOWDEN, *The Making of the Bibles Moralisées*, University Park, PA, 2000, vol. 1, pp. 132-134), which includes a roundel showing Christ hovering in a cloud above Gabriel, the two simultaneously transferring the cross-nimbed Child into Mary's arms while the dove of the Holy Spirit hovers at the Virgin's ear; D. ROBB, "The Iconography of the Annunciation in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries", *Art Bulletin*, 18 (1936), pp. 480-526; S. DRUMMOND, *Divine Conception: The Art of the Annunciation*, London, 2018, pp. 62-71. In the fourteenth century, the Passion reference is affected by picturing the homunculus carrying cross as he descends; DRUMMOND, *DIVINE CONCEPTION*, pp. 67-70. Also BAERT, *Pneuma*, pp. 53-80.

⁵⁵ See: C. W. BYNUM, "The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg", *Renaissance Quarterly*, 39-3 (1986), pp. 399-439 (reprinted in C. W. BYNUM, *Fragmentation and Redemption. Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*, New York, 1992, pp. 79-117).

⁵⁶ Echoing a Marian prayer of uncertain date preserved in a fifteenth-century compendium: "Let the lion, the goat, the deer, the boar, the bear, and the field animals expand their hearts in honor and beauty;" G. DINKOVA-BRUUN, "Healing God's Creation: Mary as Medicine in Two Devotional Poems from the Late Middle Ages", *Filologia mediolatina*, 23 (2016), pp. 269-94. KINKADE and KELLER, "Myth and Reality"; KENNEDY, "Seeing is Believing", pp. 169-182; E. FIDALGO FRANCISCO, "Los animales de las *Cantigas de Santa María*. Una lectura en clave simbólica", *Revista de literatura medieval*, 29 (2017), pp. 107-127.

⁵⁷ *Pronaque quum spectent animalia cetera terram, Os homini sublime dedit, coelumque tueri iussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus; De Oculo*, chap. 13.4; *Moral Treatise*, p. 178.

⁵⁸ GREEN, *Hortus*, vol. 1, p. 15.

Animals as in San Piero in Valle near Ferentillo,⁵⁹ she occupies the space between Creator and creation. In fact, the paired vignettes in the lower register set up a contrast to Eve who, as Paul Binski has noted (quoting Honorius), had suspended rational judgment when she succumbed to the *serpens persuadens*.⁶⁰ (In the fourth vignette above, the Christ child reaches for a fruit in Mary's hand.) The illustration of *Cantiga 29* is, in fact, one of many that appeal to the Virgin to regain "the reward that Eve lost for us" (as *Cantiga 45* puts it) and that play out a Mary/Eve *paragone*. Cued by the Annunciation, the pictorial gloss of *Cantiga 60* (fol. 88^v; Fig. 10), for example, shows the first woman taking the fruit from the serpent's mouth even as she hands another piece to Adam who is about to bite into it,⁶¹ envisioning the "great gulf" between "Ave" and "Eva" pictured in the second register by opposing the primogenitors' expulsion from Eden with Mary's returning a pious new Adam and Eve to Eden.⁶² The finale extends the paradisiacal imagery to heaven, figured as a deep blue semi-circle studded with gold stars and enclosed by a vivid rainbow-lined cloud;⁶³ at the left, Eve closes the portal; in a second version of the Annunciation at the right, Gabriel

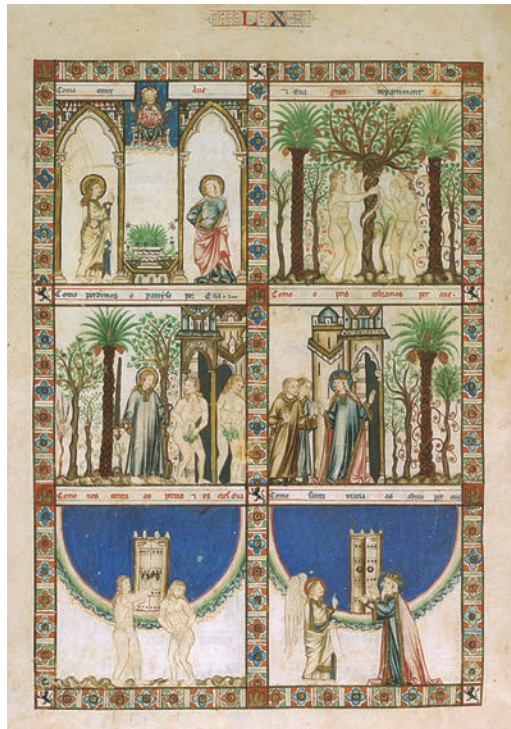


Fig. 10. *Cantiga 60*, El Escorial, MS T.I.1, fol. 88^v

⁵⁹ *Gli affreschi di San Pietro in Valle a Ferentillo. Le storie dell'Antico e del Nuovo Testament*, G. TAMANTI (ed.), Naples, 2003; H. L. KESSLER, "Topografías de la fe en el arte medieval", *Codex Aquilarensis*, 28 (2013), pp. 11-28.

⁶⁰ P. BINSKI, "Medieval Invention and its Potencies", *British Art Studies*, 6, <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-06/pbinski>. See: P. SEILER, "Schönheit und Scham, sinnliches Temperament und moralische Temperantia. Überlegungen zu einigen Antikenadaptionen in der spätmittelalterlichen Bildhauerei Italiens", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 70 (2007), pp. 473-512; E. M. SOLBERG, *Virgin Whore*, Ithaca, NY., 2018, pp. 75-100 et passim.

⁶¹ *Entre Ave e Eva gran departiment' á/ ca Eva nos tolleu/o parais'e Deus/Ave nos l meteu:/ por end'amigos meus/ Entre Ave e Eva . . ./ Eva nos foi deitar/do dem'en sa prizon/e Ave én sacar/e por est razon/ Entre Ave e Eva . . ./Eva nos fez perder/amor de Deus e ben,/e pois Ave aver/no-lo fez; e por én/ Entre Ave e Eva . . ./Eva nos enserrou/os ceos sen chave/e Maria britou/as portas per "Ave"/ Entre Ave e Eva.*

⁶² SÁNCHEZ AMEJEIRAS, *Rostros*, pp. 213-217. As Prado-Vilar has noted, the paradise opened to the faithful is imagined through Islamic models; PRADO-VILAR, "Parchment of the Sky", p. 487 and *Id.*, "Arte y Diplomacia: El discurso del regalo en las relaciones con Oriente," in *Alfonso X el Sabio*, Murcia, 2009, pp. 186-189.

⁶³ What appear to be white circles on the deep blue ground are, in fact, vestiges of gold (or colored) stars that have fallen off; some gold remains and red dots. The rainbow is more brilliant than in the facsimile.

has Mary unbolt the door and open it a crack. The caption reads: “How Eve closed the gates of heaven to us, and, through Ave, Holy Mary opened them”.

The trope goes back to Carolingian art. As Dell’Acqua has pointed out, Mary is the *porta coeli* in the San Vincenzo fresco which pictures Gabriel approaching from outside a painted door that frames the real opening of the *fenestella confessionis*. The comparison of Eve and Mary is well-known from Bernward’s Hildesheim doors, which juxtapose the story of humankind’s fall to its redemption through Christ, along the way creating parallels between the lost Eden and the paradise promised to the faithful.⁶⁴ The parallel is reiterated in the frontispiece to Bernward’s Gospels which, as Jennifer Kingsley has detailed, deploys inscriptions and pictorial elements to identify Mary also with the Church. Holding the Child, Mary is flanked by two doorways labeled *porta paradisi*. The one at the right topped by a medallion bust of Eve, closed and bolted-shut is inscribed: “The door of Paradise closed through the first Eve”, the one at the left, portraying the Virgin, completes the couplet: “is now through Holy Mary thrown open to all.”⁶⁵ A cross, the new Tree of Life, occupies the doorway; and epithets, each introduced with Gabriel’s salutary “Ave”, hail the Virgin as the “temple unlocked by the Holy Spirit”, “door of God closed after the birth through the ages”.⁶⁶ The same themes dominate the twelfth-century mosaic of Torcello, where Mary is portrayed on the apsidal arch grasping a spindle as Gabriel approaches and the inscription around the conch declares that she is the doorway of salvation and the vanquisher of the first couple’s sin [Fig. 11].⁶⁷ The similar text that accompanies the Virgin and Child over the door of San Marco’s Porta da Mar in nearby Venice, “The fall of humankind came through the mouth of a woman. /The worthy Mother of

⁶⁴ A. COHEN and A. DERBES, “Bernward and Eve at Hildesheim,” *Gesta*, 40 (2001), pp. 19-38; H. STAHL, “Eve’s Reach: A Note on Dramatic Elements in the Hildesheim Doors,” in *Reading Medieval Images*, pp. 162-175; J. P. KINGSLEY, *The Bernward Gospels. Art, Memory, and the Episcopate in Medieval Germany*, University Park, PA, 2014; M. BRANDT, “*Mentem et oculos pascere*. Bernwards Kunst,” *Niederdeutsche Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte*, n.s. 2 (2016), pp. 9-26; I. MARCHESIN, *L’arbre & la colonne*, Paris, 2017. Nicholas Maniacutius, the mid-twelfth-century Lateran canon, introduced the same themes in relation to the Roman icons: *Haec est dominica; qua videlicet die in utero beatae Mariae semper virginis angelo fuerat annuntiante conceptus et in qua caelum et terram ante tempora multa creaverat, ut eo die opus restaurationis inciperet, quo scilicet opus creationis inceperat. Cum ergo destructa morte victor ab inferis surrexisset, primo apparuit Mariae Magdalene, innuens gratiam feminis restitutam quae in Eva videbatur amissa*; M. PETOLETTI, “‘*Ut patenter omnibus innotescat*.’ Il trattato di Nicola Maniacutia (Sec. XII) sull’immagine acheroptia del Laterano” in EDUARDO D’ANGELO and JAN ZIOLKOWSKI (eds.), *Auctor et Auctoritas in Latinis Medii Aevi Litteris. Author and Authorship in Medieval Latin Literature*, Florence, 2014, pp. 847-864.

⁶⁵ *Porta paradisi primeval[m] clausa per aevam. Nunc est per s[an]c[t]am cunctis patefacta Maria[m]*; KINGSLEY, *Bernward Gospels*, pp. 20 and 127.

⁶⁶ *Ave stella maris karismate lucida p[ro]p[ri]etis / Ave spiritus s[an]c[t]o temple[m] reseratu[m] / Ave porta d[e]i post partu[m] clausa p[er] evum*; KINGSLEY, *Bernward Gospels*, pp. 19-28 and 127.

⁶⁷ FORMULA VIRTUTIS MARIS ASTRUM PORTA SAVTIS. PROLE MARIA LEVAT QUOS CONJUGE SUBDIDIT EVA. K. KRAUSE, “Venedigs Sitz im Paradies. Zur Schöpfungskuppel in der Vorhalle von San Marco”, *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 48 (2004), pp. 9-53, part. 36-42; EAD., “Die Inschriften der Genesismosaiken”, in *The Atrium of San Marco in Venice. The Genesis and Medieval Reality of the Genesis Mosaics*, M. BÜCHEL, H. L. KESSLER, and R. MÜLLER (eds.), Berlin, 2014, pp. 143-76; I. ANDREESCU-TREADGOLD and J. HENDERSON with M. ROE, “Glass from the Mosaics on the West Wall of Torcello’s Basilica”, *Arte medievale*, 5-2, n.s. 1 (2006), pp. 87-140; and G. CAPUTO and G. GENTILI (eds.), *Torcello. Alle origini di Venezia tra occidente e oriente*, Venice, 2009.



Fig. 11. Virgin Hodegetria and Annunciation, apse mosaic, Sta. Maria Assunta, Torcello (Beat Brenk)

God is the World's redeemer",⁶⁸ reassured those viewing Paradise in the first atrium bay that humankind's sin is recoverable through the Virgin Mary and her Son.

AFFECTIVE *AMPLIFICATIO*

In these diverse examples, Mary is figured as the door. So, too, in the San Marco nave mosaic where the fish-scale grid that closes off the starry blue ground behind the Virgin alludes to grates throughout the basilica, including on the Porta da Mar,⁶⁹ and where Ezekiel holds a

⁶⁸ HVMANI GENERIS CASVS FVIT OS MVLIERIS. DIGNA DEI GENETRIX MVNDI FVIT ISTA REDEMPTRIX.

⁶⁹ H. L. KESSLER, "La Genèse Cotton est morte," in M. ANGEBEN (ed.), *Les stratégies de la narration dans la peinture médiévale : la représentation de l'Ancien Testament aux IV^e-XII^e siècles*, Turnhout, pp. 373-402. Eve's grasping Mary's spindle and distaff, as pictured also in the Annunciation on the Torcello apsidal arch, reinforces the message.

titulus declaring: “This gate is to remain shut, it must not be opened.”⁷⁰ The door metaphor was extended to windows, certainly because light passing through glass without breaking it was the most common of all Marian tropes.⁷¹ The *Advocaciones* links Mary’s virginity to “in your light we see the Light;” Alain de Lille asserted that glass represent the *sigillum virginitatis*, the unbroken hymen through which the Holy Spirit entered her body.⁷² A window interrupts the inscription at Torcello, providing a platform for the Hodegetria; and, realizing the epithet, “FONS LUCIS”, a window is emblazoned in gold on the Virgin’s left shoulder in the *via Lata Avvocata*, filled like a setting of gemstones held in place by mullions.

Other analogies also figured Mary’s virginal beauty as the source of the kind of sensual delight humankind had once enjoyed in Eden.⁷³ Flowers, for example, including the ubiquitous lilies of Annunciation scenes, as in the *Cantigas* where they are (royal) purple with gold anthers. In Torcello, a basket of white and red blooms refers to Eve’s sin redeemed by Mary, as Bernard of Clairvaux explained in his well-known Advent sermon:

God was pleased to take flesh of a woman who was a virgin, and so to restore like by like, to cure a contrary by a contrary, to draw out the poisonous thorn, and most effectively to blot out the decree of sin. Eve was a thorn; Mary is a rose. Eve was a thorn in her wounding; Mary, a rose in the sweetening of the affections of all. Eve was a thorn fastening death upon all; Mary is a rose giving the heritage of salvation back to all.⁷⁴

The gold ground behind the Madonna on the Vic panel is embossed with petals.

Mary was also likened to stars.⁷⁵ The *stella maris* was featured already in Bernward’s Gospels which identifies Mary as “star of the sea, shining through the grace of the Son” and on the *via Lata* panel; and a fresco in San Gregorio Nazianzeno in Rome pictures the *Madonna Avvocata* itself literally as a lodestar for the three men who, according to legend, brought the precious Marian image to safety.⁷⁶ The *Advocaciones* compared Mary to the constellations—originary heavenly images—and likened her specifically to Polaris and the Pleiades which guide lost ships, just as she “leads humankind submerged in the dangerous seas of this world

⁷⁰ *Porta hec quam vides clausa erit et non aperietur*; DEMUS, *Mosaics of San Marco* vol. 2, pp. 45-56. N. PIANO, “I mosaici della cattedrale di Torcello: l’interazione fra architettura e iconografia attraverso il tema della porta”, *Arte Veneta*, 62 (2005), pp. 6-13 and EAD, “De la porte close du temple de Salomon à la porte ouverte du Paradis, Histoire d’une image mariale dans l’exégèse et la liturgie médiévales (IV^e-XIII^e siècles)”, *Studi medievali*, 50 (2009), pp. 133-157.

⁷¹ A. BREEZE, “The Blessed Virgin and the Sunbeam through Glass”, *Celtica*, 23 (1999), pp. 19-29; DRUMMOND, *Divine Conception*, pp. 72-81.

⁷² *Sententiarum, De Nativitate domini* (PL 210, col. 233).

⁷³ DRUMMOND, *Divine Conception*, pp. 83-93.

⁷⁴ *Deus de femina sed virgine. . . dignatus est carnem assumere, ut similem simili redderet, contrarium contrario curare. . . . Eva ergo spina fuit, Maria rosa exstitit: Eva spina, vulnerando; Maria rosa, omnium affectus mulcendo. Eva spina, infigans omnibus mortem: Maria rosa, reddens salutiferam omnibus sortem*; PL 184, col. 1020. H. L. KESSLER, “Consider the glass, it can teach you’: the Medium’s Lesson,” in B. KURMANN-SCHWARZ and E. PASTAN (eds.) *Investigations in Medieval Stained Glass. Materials, Methods, and Expressions*, Leiden, 2019, pp. 143-156.

⁷⁵ A. G. REMENSNYDER, “Mary, Star of the Multi-Confessional Mediterranean: Ships, Shrines and Sailors”, in N. JASPERS, C. A. NEUMANN, and MARCO DI BRANCO (eds.), *Ein Meer und seine Heiligen. Hagiographie im mittelalterlichen Mittelalterneum*, Paderborn, 2018, pp. 299-325.

⁷⁶ WOLF, *Salus populi romani*, pp. 263-264; BELTING, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 317-318.

to the door of the heavenly kingdom.”⁷⁷ Mary was the steady beacon for humanity buffeted by dangerous waters; like the beam that impregnated her without destroying her chastity, she shimmers clearly even at night to lead ultimately to the much-desired port. John of Garland hailed Mary as the “star of the sea, light of the sun, port, and anchor”.⁷⁸ The *Cantigas* praise her as the morning star that heralded the arrival of the sun, further tethering her to Venus.⁷⁹ At Torcello, Mary is identified as the *maris astrum* and her *maphorion* is adorned with stars.

Like the aurora references, the allusions to stars underscored Mary’s capacity to protect sinners against God’s dazzling visage. As *Cantiga* 45 puts it: “Because of our sinful nature, we would never have seen the face of God, who is our light and day, without you (Mary) who is our dawn”. A knob from a twelfth-century bishop’s crook in Lyon (Musée des Beaux-Arts) demonstrates how, like the Eucharist, depictions of Mary served as a buffer. One side shows God in Majesty blessing; the other presents angels bearing a clypeus enclosing the Mother and Child inscribed: “O star, mother of the sun, direct the favor of your Son to the worshippers.”⁸⁰ The same reciprocity between *proles* and *solis* is engaged in San Marco, where Mary is the celestial membrane that introduces the image of Christ across the nave, clothed in brilliant garments against a starry dark-blue sky.⁸¹ Juan Gil favored the imagery especially: “When you conceived a Sun of Justice, as the moon also illuminated by the beneficent action of the brilliant sun.”⁸² Giotto developed the theme in his Baroncelli altarpiece (Florence, Sta. Croce) which pictures saints and angels witnessing Christ crowning his mother, but which pictured God the Father in the pinnacle approached by angels holding a darkened glass and a mirror for protection (San Diego, Museum of Art).⁸³ The fourteenth-century *Omne bonum* (London, Brit. Lib. Royal MS 6 E VI, fol. 6^v) separates the blazing face of the Deity through layers of filters – the lowest picturing the world with Adam and Eve at the center, the middle occupied with saints, and the upper one dominated by a solar face of Christ approachable only by the soul.⁸⁴

⁷⁷ *Stella maris Dei mater dicitur, quia sicut stella pliadum in maris nautis errantibus crebro apparet, et suo signo eos ad potatum perducit portum, sic beata Virgo suis meritis et precibus genus humanum in periculoso mari huius mundi submersione perducit ad portum regni celorum*; Ruiz, “Advocaciones,” p. 21. In the Leiden Aratus (Universiteitsbibliotheek, VLQ 79, fol. 42^v), the Pleiades’s central “star” is the only one veiled like Mary.

⁷⁸ GARCÍA AVILÉS, “Imágenes ‘vivientes’”.

⁷⁹ PRADO-VILAR, “Parchment of the Skies”, p. 496.

⁸⁰ STELLA PARENS SOLIS CULTORES DIRIGE PROLIS; V. DEBIAIS, *La croisée des signes. L’écriture et les images médiévales (800-1200)*, Paris, 2017, pp. 298-300.

⁸¹ Seeing God directly with corporeal eyes was deemed impossible as the tract, *Four Loves and the Three Heavens*, makes explicit in relation to the sacraments: A. KUMLER, *Translating Truth. Ambitious Images and Religious Knowledge in Late Medieval France and England*, New Haven and London, 2011, pp. 222-228.

⁸² *Cum solem iusticie concipis, more lune etiam fulgentis solis beneficio illustraris. Luna enim a sole lumen mutuatur, quod ei natura spissioris corporis negat; unde quicquid habet pulcritudinis habet splendoris beneficio mutuatur. Cum solem iusticie paris, soli congrua similitudine conpararis. Sicut enim de prolato radio non corrumpitur aut minuitur solis corpus, sic te parientem non uiolat transciende a toda criatura por la altura de sus méritos; es sublime porque el Hijo del Altísimo la proveyó desde la eternidad*; *Obra Poética*, pp. 241-242.

⁸³ Looking at Christ even through in images could be dangerous. Gervase of Tilbury reported that Pope Alexander III had to have the Lateran *Acheroptia* “covered with a large silk cloth because it caused such violent trembling in people who gazed at too intently that there was a risk of death”; S.E. BANKS and J. W. BINNS (eds.), *Otia Imperialia. Recreation for an Emperor*, Oxford, 2002, pp. 606-607.

⁸⁴ L. FREEMAN SANDLER, *Omne Bonum. A Fourteenth-Century Encyclopedia of Universal Knowledge. British Library MSS Royal 6 E VI-6 E VII*, London, 1996, vol. 1, p. 94.

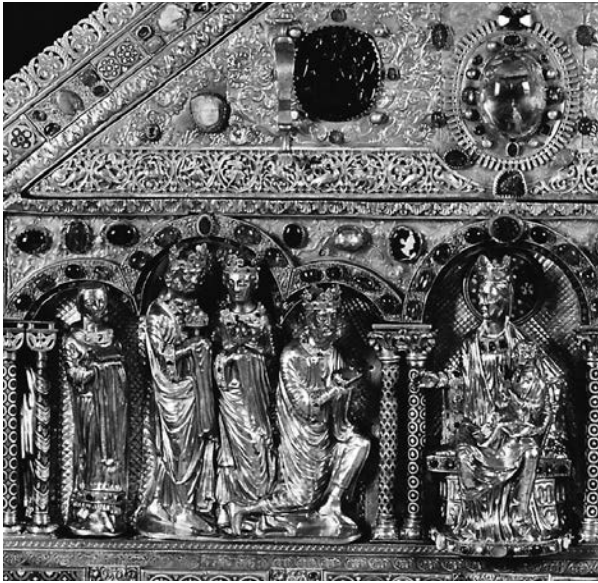


Fig. 12. Adoration of the Three Magi, Magi reliquary, Cologne, cathedral.

Like Perseus' reflective armor that repelled and reflected the Medusa's dangerous face, Mary simultaneously buffers the radiance of the *verus sol iustitia* and saves humankind from the calamity of shipwreck on the perilous shoals of sensual things. Thus, she was rendered on the *Häupterplatte* of the Three Magi shrine in Cologne (Fig. 12), both as a star that directs the kings toward Christ and also as an ancient Medusa cameo, its head shaved of the snakes so that it stands in for the Virgin, facing toward a Carolingian relief of Christ made of sapphire.⁸⁵ Albertus Magnus was intrigued by the Shrine, especially by the central imperial cameo (now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna) which, tellingly, he verified was "a work of nature and not art".⁸⁶ A remarkable miniature at the head of the Florence volume of the *Cantigas* also engages the idea that the Mary protects the faithful from the Deity's blinding radiance (Biblioteca nazionale centrale, MS. BR 20; fol. 1r; Fig. 13).⁸⁷ In a brilliant autoreferential conceit

⁸⁵ W. TELESKO, "Das theologische Programm des Kölner Dreikönigenschreins. Tradition und Innovation in der hochmittelalterlichen Ikonographie", *Jahrbuch des Kölnischen Geschichtsvereins*, 68 (1997), pp. 25-50; G. KORNBLUTH, "The Heavenly Jerusalem and the Lord of Lords: a Sapphire Christ at the Court of Charlemagne and the Shrine of the Magi", *Cahiers archéologiques*, 49 (2001), 47-68; P. CORDEZ "La chasse des rois mages. Cologne et la christianisation des pierres magiques aux XII^e et XIII^e siècles" in *Le trésor au Moyen Âge. Discours, pratiques et objets*, L. BURKART et al. (eds.) Florence, 2010, pp. 315-332. H. WESTERMANN-ANGERHAUSEN, "Spolia as Relics, Relics as spoils?: the Meaning and Functions of Spolia in Western Medieval Reliquaries," in C. HAHN and H. KLEIN *Saints and Sacred Matter. The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*, Washington, DC, 2015, pp. 173-192.

⁸⁶ *Probavi autem quod non est vitrum, sed lapis, propter quod praesumpsi picturam illa esse a natura et non ab arte. De mineralibus*, 1. II, 3, c. 2; CORDEZ, "La chasse des rois mages".

⁸⁷ S. DISALVO, "El *planctus* de la Virgen en la Península Ibérica, desde el *Quis dabit* hasta las *Cantigas* de Santa María," in *IX Congreso Argentino de Hispanistas "El Hispanismo ante el Bicentenario"*, La Plata, 27-30 de abril de 2010, <http://ixcah.fahce.unlp.edu.ar>; SÁNCHEZ AMEIRJEIRAS, *Rostros*, p. 217.



Fig. 13. Florence, Bib. nazionale centrale, MS BR 20, fol. 1^r (Art Resource)

that Sánchez Ameijeiras has analyzed, the reader opening the book and singing “What opened the gates of heaven to save us has the power in this world to open and close them” confronts the Virgin and Child pulling back the celestial gates to reveal the enthroned Deity, holding a cosmic globe and blessing impressed onto a gold field. God’s face and hands are rendered in opaque white and his garments merely outlined. When the ambient light is dim, the Lord virtually dissolves in the gold; when it is bright, he emerges – the interplay of image and light conveying Christ’s dual nature effected through Mary. Light also differentiates the portal from the world inside; the valves are silver (now mostly lost), a lower metal that reinforces the notion of transition by reflecting the reader’s face and engaging touch.

ART AS MARIAN METAPHOR

Is the shuttered entrance in the Florence manuscript a portal, a window, a book, a painting? Because of the very instability of figuring Mary’s nature as the accumulation of comparisons, it is construable as all these things. Like Psalm verses and liturgical chants, writings about the Virgin delighted in stringing chains of epithets together. A widely-circulated poem on the Annunciation attributed to Hildebert of Lavardin, for instance, likened Mary to myriad beautiful things in nature – rivers of honey, gold, roses, dawn, clouds obscuring the sun, and a rainbow created when white light is broken up by a prism, its multiple colors providing an analogue for the constituent pigments of a painter’s work.⁸⁸ Juan Gil wrote: “How happy is this Virgin,

⁸⁸ *Sol, nubes, et aqua coelestis luminis irim Conficiunt; partum Virginis ista notant. Sol deitas, nubes carnis species, aqua sanctus Spiritus est, Iris stella Maria maris*, PL 171, col. 1390.

wife and mother of the almighty king, door of heaven, pleasure of paradise, lady of the angels, queen of the world, happiness of saints, advocate for the faithful, strength of soldiers, signal for travelers, medicine for the penitent . . . Oh, unique salvation, life, inexhaustible treasury of truth, grace, peace, and mercy, port in a storm,”⁸⁹ and, even, “unmatched attractiveness” (*sua-vitas singularis*), that complex conception that Mary Carruthers has decoded.⁹⁰ One of Juan Gil’s epithets for Mary is “treasure.”⁹¹ A connection between literary conventions and visual representations was occasionally direct. The twelfth-century *Arnsteiner Mariengebet*, for instance, is related to windows from the abbey now in Münster (Westfälisches Landesmuseum): Marian typologies in stained glass.⁹² Two lines of Hildebert’s poem were excerpted as a *titulus* for the enthroned Virgin and Child in Lucy of Vere’s obituary scroll of ca. 1230 (London, British Library, Egerton MS 2849),⁹³ labelled “star of the sea, pure white ivory, mirror of Paradise, fountain of grace, doorway of life.”⁹⁴

More often and more important, Marian art converted literary similes into metaphors, as the Incarnation itself had transformed Gabriel’s words into flesh, rendering the Divine apprehensible and accessible. Hildebert conceived God as a “celestial painter who had himself painted the Virgin “inside and out.”⁹⁵ For Bonaventure, she was the medium between mundane art and divine spirit: “Since through sin the rational creature had clouded his eye of contemplation, it is most courteous that the eternal and invisible be made visible that he might lead us home. Therefore, considering the light of mechanical art with respect to the production of a work, we will witness the incarnation and generation of the Word, that is divinity and humanity and the health of all the faithful.”⁹⁶

As Elizabeth Cropper demonstrated in a classic article on Parmigianino’s *Madonna of the Long Neck*, Marian metaphors had a long and important Renaissance history as a trope

⁸⁹ *Cuán feliz es esta Virgen, que es esposa y madre del sumo Rey, puerta del cielo, encanto del paraíso, de los ángeles señora, reina del mundo, de los santos alegría, abogada de los creyentes, fortaleza de los combatientes, llamada de los caminantes, de los penitentes medicina! ¡Oh segura salvación! ¡Oh compendio de vida! ¡Oh única esperanza de perdón! ¡Oh suavidad singular!; Obra Poética, p. 240.*

⁹⁰ CARRUTHERS, *Experience of Beauty*, pp. 94-96 et passim.

⁹¹ *Reconditi sunt apud te thesauri indeficientes ueritatis et gracie, pacie et misericordie, salutis et sapientie, glorie et honoris, Obra Poética, p. 241.*

⁹² A. WAAG (ed.), *Kleinere deutsche Gedichte des XI. und XIII. Jahrhunderts* (Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, nr. 10), Tübingen 1929, vol. 2, pp. 173-183; D. PARELLO, “Fünf Felder eines typologischen Zyklus aus Arnstein”, in *Kulturstiftung der Länder u. LWL-Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Münster. Die Glasgemäldesammlung des Freiherrn vom Stein, Münster 2007*, pp. 23-39 and 92-93; J. HAMBURGER, “The Hand of God and the Hand of the Scribe: Craft and Collaboration at Arnstein”, in M. EMBACH (ed.), *Die Bibliothek des Mittelalters als dynamischer Prozess*, Wiesbaden, 2012, pp. 55-80; KESSLER, “Consider the Glass”.

⁹³ N. MORGAN, *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, London, 1982, vol. I, no. 56, pl. 20.

⁹⁴ Mary’s plain but insistent epithets contrast with the puzzle of crossed words that accompany the smaller and more distanced Crucifixion with an inscription that engaged the more difficult concept of God’s suffering death: *Crux bona crux digna lignum super omnia ligna/ Me tibi consigna redemens a peste maligna.*

⁹⁵ *Haec est quam coeli Pictor Deus intus et extra Pinxit, et anglica dote polivit eam. PL 171, col. 1381-83.*

⁹⁶ *Et quoniam per peccatum rationalis creatura oculum contemplationis obnubilatum habuit; decentissimum fuit, ut aeternum et invisibile fieret visibile et assumeret carnem, ut nos ad Patrem reduceret . . . Et ideo dicitur “Verbum caro factum”. Considerantes igitur illuminationem artis mechanicae quantum ad operis egressum, intuebimur ibi Verbum generatum et incarnatum, id est Divinitatem et humanitatem et totius fidei integritatem; Opera Omnia, vol. 5, p. 323; CARRUTHERS, *Experience of Beauty*, pp. 201-05.*



Fig. 14. Mathias
Grünewald,
Madonna and
Child, Stuppach,
Pfarrkirche
(author's archive)

of artmaking.⁹⁷ A decade before Parmigianino, Mathias Grünewald assembled the references to Mary to much the same end in the Madonna and Child for the Parish church at Stuppach (Pfarrkirche Mariä Krönung; Fig. 14), equating Mary's beauty with painting's through the Virgin's ivory-white skin and gold hair, and by means of natural metaphors of the Virgin's glamor, most prominently roses, lilies, other flowers growing in an enclosed garden, gems and glass, beehives of honey, dawn's pink clouds, and the rainbow created by light passing through rain.⁹⁸ A cross overgrown with leaves at the left reminds the faithful of the Child's fate that made the

⁹⁷ E. CROPPER, "On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, Petrarchismo, and the Vernacular Style," *Art Bulletin*, 58 (1976), pp. 374-394.

⁹⁸ H. HUBACH, *Matthias Grünewald: Der Aschaffener Maria-Schnee-Altar. Geschichte – Rekonstruktion – Ikonographie. Mit einem Exkurs zur Geschichte der Maria Schnee-Legende, ihrer Verbreitung und Illustrationen*, Mainz, 1996; E. WIEMANN, *Die Stuppacher Madonna* (Exhib. catalogue Staatsgalerie), Stuttgart 1998.

Church necessary, represented with prominent windows in the right background and a sunlit Gothic shrine containing a statue of the Virgin and Child, and shown being entered by the devout as the first step toward union with God who, as also in Günewald's Isenheim altar, dissolves into the sun's blinding splendor.

The faithful can approach the Ineffable only through intermediaries, most notably, through the Virgin Mary's whose beauty surpasses even nature's and situates *Ecclesia* abounding in art as the closest thing to Eden in this world. The animals bowing before Mary clothed in gems and rich garments in *Cantiga 29* make the same argument and, even more, the awe and wonder registered on the faces of Alfonso's audience at the top before the fusion of matter and spirit in the monochrome image miraculously imprinted on the Gethsemane column. The incarnation through Mary and the material images it enabled,⁹⁹ in short, offered a "greater beauty" of the sort that Hugh of Saint-Victor hoped might replace the "desire for temporal goods." Peter of Limoges imagined it in his vision of angels marveling at Mary and proclaiming: "'Who is she who goes forth like the dawn?' . . . As often as the life's vain pomp delights you, as often as you see some worldly conceit, ascend to paradise in your mind".¹⁰⁰ Then, recounting how Mary restored a cleric's sight, he proclaims: "how great the glorious Virgin's beauty is and how delightful it is to see her with one's eyes."¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ See: CARRUTHERS, *Experience of Beauty*, pp. 202-205.

¹⁰⁰ *Quotiens te vana seculi delectat ambitio, quotiens videris aliquid gloriosum sic ad paradysum mente transcendere; De oculo*, chap. 13.3; see NEWHAUSER (trans.), p. 178.

¹⁰¹ *... ei oculum restauravit. Ex quo possumus perpendere quanta sit pulcritudo virginis gloriosae et quam delectabile est eam oculis videre; De oculo*, chap. 14.1; NEWHAUSER (trans.), pp. 181-82.